

# Casting Shadows

**Introduction.** In a land of opportunity, you can literally be anything if you try hard enough. There is something you will always be, whether you try or not -- an example. Examples are important. Jesus, the greatest teacher of all time, used examples as one of His chief means of teaching. He spoke of people: Abraham, David, Solomon, Moses, Jonah, and Noah. He mentioned places: Sodom, Gomorrah, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Tyre, and Sidon. He referred to objects: the temple, sparrows, lilies, seed, salt, and light.

Wherever there is an example, there is an influence, and an evil influence is worthless (Matthew 5:13-16; Mark 9:50). In Romans 5:19, Paul goes all the way back to Adam to show the advantage of influence. It may frighten us -- and if it does, it should -- to realize that our influence will exist for a long time (3 John 11; cf. 1 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 5:1). People who lived centuries ago are still influencing us and our children (Hebrews 11:4).

## I. *Casting Shadows In Ancient Israel*

- A. The southern kingdom had a noble standard in David (1 Samuel 16:7; Acts 13:22). Judah had the fantastic opportunity of having six good kings, who although only representing 30% of the number of kings, reigned for 68% of the time. These six men could not save the nation in the end, but I am sure there are many Israelites in heaven because of the shadow cast by David.
- B. For Israel, there was no true godliness which would cast a lingering shadow over the throne. The standard according to which the Israelite kings are judged is the shameful reign of Jeroboam, the first king who occupied the throne of the northern kingdom after the split of the ten tribes from Judah. The distinguishing epitaph of Jeroboam, is "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin" (1 Kings 22:52).
- C. Again and again, in the records of kings, Jeroboam is referred to by this distinction, until the words become almost a refrain. It is written of 15 out of the 19 kings who followed Jeroboam on the throne of Israel that "he did evil" like Jeroboam. So he projected his wicked shadow over the throne of the northern kingdom for 250 years, until at last, degraded and deported, it was torn to pieces by the Assyrian Empire.

## II. *Casting Shadows Today*

- A. You cast your shadow to your family.
  - 1. The responsibility and opportunity of parents (Genesis 18:19; 2 Timothy 1:5).
  - 2. The responsibility and opportunity of children (Acts 12:25; 16:1-2).

- B. You cast your shadow to your congregation.
  1. Aquila and Priscilla influenced the work at Ephesus and Corinth (Acts 18:18, 26). Most churches grow largely because of the untiring efforts of just a few members.
  2. Unfaithful members can be admonished and exhorted by you (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20; Revelation 2:1-5).
- C. You cast your shadow to your neighbors.
  1. In John 4:39, it is said of the Samaritan woman that "many people believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified" (cf. John 4:29).
  2. You have heard people say, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one." Loving our neighbor shines into the world of darkness to demonstrate our influence.
- D. You cast your shadow to your community.
  1. Paul changed the religious environment of a whole city (Acts 19:10, 26-27). Most did not believe, but truth existed in a place where it did not before.
  2. People throughout the world were influenced by Christians in Rome (Romans 1:8) and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

### III. ***Some Questions To Ponder***

- A. Do you realize your influence is being "poured out" upon others?
- B. Do you try to lead others to Christ by doing what is right yourself?
- C. Are you willing for your children or your friends to do what you do?
- D. Can you be counted on to be a vital, active part of the Lord's work?
- E. Would your friends vouch for you as an example of believers?
- F. How many people can you name who have obeyed the gospel because of your example and influence -- including your helping them to understand the truth?
- G. Do you admit that your example and influence could be improved upon?
- H. Do you have a double set of standards -- one when you are with your Christian friends, and another when you are with your other friends?

**Conclusion.** We do well to reflect on the shadows cast by David and Jeroboam. Just as our bodies cast their shadows, so are we continually casting the shadow of our moral and spiritual influence. We can determine the kind of shadow we will cast.

Our influence is so crucial that it may contribute to the salvation or the condemnation of other souls. Our shadow may furthermore linger when we pass on, as was the case with David and Jeroboam. Perhaps some of you are even now thanking God for the lingering shadow of a departed saintly father or mother, or of some other beloved, departed Christian.

God help us to cast the shadow of a sanctified influence which will linger on to heal and bless, as Peter's shadow, long ago in Jerusalem, healed the sick ones on whom it fell (Acts 5:15).