

1 Kings 12.1-24**Rehoboam: The Kingdom is Divided****Read 1 Kings 11.9 – 12.24****I / MAKING THE CONNECTION**

1. The purpose of the books of **1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings** tell the whole story of the nation of Israel under the reigns of their kings until both the northern and southern kingdoms lost their respective independence by being conquered by their enemies and were carried off into captivity: Saul, David, Solomon, divided kingdom beginning with Rehoboam over Judah and Jeroboam over Israel
2. Today's lesson will tell the story about how the united kingdom of Israel was divided into two kingdoms as a result of the split or secession that occurred after the death of Solomon and because of his sin / **see ch 11.9-13 & 33**
3. From the time of this story, the divided kingdoms will be called by two names:
 - a. **Israel:** which will be comprised of the ten northern tribes
 - b. **Judah:** which will be comprised of the southern tribe of Judah [and also the tribe of Benjamin / **see ch 12.21**]

II / LET'S MEET OUR CAST OF MAIN CHARACTERS

[1] **Rehoboam:** he is the son of Solomon and his successor to the kingship / **1 Kings 11.42-43**

[2] **Jeroboam:** he was a former 'servant' of Solomon / **ch 11.11 & 26**

1. When Solomon was king, he conducted many major building projects in Jerusalem besides building the Temple for Yahweh. These multiple building projects went on for many years and at great expense to the citizens of the kingdom [excessive taxation] and a heavy burden to the physical workforce required to build them. **This will form the context of the protest and the complaint that the citizens of Israel will bring to Rehoboam as we go through this story / see ch 12.3-4**
2. Solomon imposed a widespread draft or conscription among the men of Israel to serve in these building projects / **see ch 5.13-18**
3. Solomon appointed Rehoboam to be the chief superintendent of all the workforces of laborers that were required to conduct all these building projects / **see ch 11.26-28**. You might even say that he 'served' as Solomon's Chief Officer of the Department of Labor [conscripted/forced].
4. **It was while Rehoboam was on one of his missions to oversee one of these projects that the prophet Ahijah met him with the word from the LORD to announce to him that the LORD had determined to 'tear' the kingdom away from Solomon's son and give the reign of the ten northern tribes to him** [signified by the tearing of his new garment] / **see ch 11.29-39**
5. Word of this meeting between Ahijah and Rehoboam got back to King Solomon, and he attempted to assassinate Rehoboam to eliminate him and prevent this from happening / **ch 11.40a**
6. Rehoboam then fled for his life to find refuge in Egypt, and he bided his time there until he heard that Solomon had died ... his own survival and Solomon's death would provide him with the opportunity to fulfill the prophecy that Ahijah had given him earlier from the LORD / **ch 11.40b**

III / REHOBOAM IS PRESENTED WITH A PETITION FOR REDRESS / vv 1-5

1. **v 1** / Rehoboam prepared himself to be coronated and inaugurated as Israel's king following the death of his father, Solomon
 - a. Shechem was a town about 30 miles N of Jerusalem. It had long been the place where Israel renewed their covenant vows of faithfulness to Yahweh / **for example, Joshua 24**
 - b. Perhaps Rehoboam thought that by going to Shechem, he might co-opt some of that historical significance for himself – that they would renew their faithfulness to him
2. **vv 2-3** / Instead, when he arrived at Shechem, he discovered that the citizens of Israel had been conducting their own townhall meetings among themselves – they were gathered together to present

Rehoboam with some serious complaints – an ultimatum – about Solomon’s oppressive demands on them, and they were insisting that Rehoboam reign over them with more respect and consideration

3. Not only that, but the citizens of Israel had sent word to Jeroboam [who had fled to Egypt to escape Solomon] to come and be their spokesman/advocate to represent them in seeking their redress and relief
4. **v 4** / The gist of their demands was this: *“Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you.”*
 - a. They are referring to the conscriptions to do the hard and manual labor of Solomon’s many building projects for all those years ... and also for the excessive taxation Solomon had imposed on them to finance them / see II, 1-3
5. Here’s the irony of this whole situation: Rehoboam may have thought that by going to Shechem, he could co-opt the significance of the site [covenant renewal] to gain their support for him. BUT what he discovered when he got there was that the people were speaking in terms reminiscent of Israel’s oppressive and enslaved labor in Egypt under the Pharaohs. And here was Jeroboam speaking for them having just come back from Egypt ... as if Jeroboam would be their new ‘Moses’ to deliver them from their bondage and hard labor!
6. Rehoboam realizes he’s in a fix ... at a crossroads. He’s going to have to make a decision to act on these demands. This crisis is not going to just blow over or go away. He needs some time to consult with his advisors.
7. So he asks them for a recess – he needs to huddle with counsel: **“He said to them, ‘Go away for three days, then come again to me.’ So the people went away.”**
8. NOTE: None of us is sufficiently wise or experienced to make decisions – especially serious and consequential decisions – on our own. We all need wisdom from others.
 - a. First, we need to seek God in His Word and through prayer for the wisdom we need. Solomon, his father, had done this in the beginnings of his reign, and Yahweh responded by giving him the wisdom he asked for / **ch 3.1-15 & Proverbs 3.1-8**
 - b. Then we need to seek the counsel from our fellow believers who also are seeking the Lord for their wisdom / **Romans 15.14 & Proverbs 11.14; 15.22; 24.1-7**
9. So – what counsel does Rehoboam seek ... and listen to?

IV / REHOBAM CONSULTS WITH HIS ADVISORS / vv 6-11

vv 6-7 / Then Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, “How do you advise me to answer this people?”

1. Now we have to realize that these older counselors had been with Solomon from the beginnings of his reign through until the bitter end. They had witnessed Solomon’s wise beginnings when he was seeking Yahweh. They watched and observed – and maybe even tried to warn and counter-advise – as Solomon began to depart from loving Yahweh as he careened on his downgrade, downslide, and ultimate downfall. They were privy to Yahweh’s prophecy to Jeroboam. They were well aware of the issues Rehoboam and the kingdom were facing in this crisis. They had seen it all!
2. So they advised Rehoboam to listen to the people’s valid protests and grant them the concessions they were demanding. If he would follow their advice, maybe the kingdom could be preserved: **And they said to him, “If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.”** Sounds good and reasonable, doesn’t it? / see **Romans 12.16 & Philippians 2.3-4**
3. In truth: the counsel of the old men sounds like what Jesus commands us to do in **Matthew 20.25–28: But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,**

and to give His life as a ransom for many.” It’s called ‘servant-leadership’ – leading others not by lording over them for your own advancement, gratification, or the promotion of your own personal agenda ... but rather for the benefit and well-being of those you are leading.

vv 8-11 / But, NO! **He abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men [‘children’] who had grown up with him and stood before him.** Rehoboam had no intentions of following this wise counsel even before he asked for it.

1. These ‘young men’ or ‘children’ were the peers he had grown up with. You have to know that these younger peers had grown up in the same privileges of power and luxury that they had all enjoyed together. They have their own agenda to preserve. They are not going to jeopardize or forfeit their principal seats at the tables of power to take into consideration any of these demands of these ‘underlings’ whom they expect to serve them like they had served Solomon.
2. The advice they gave Rehoboam to give the common people is the quintessential expression of haughtiness, conceit, self-centeredness, self-interest, and self-serving arrogance. “Don’t you dare to cave to their demands! We will all lose our shares of power and privilege with you!”
 - a. **And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, “Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us,’ thus shall you say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s thighs. ¹¹ And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”**
 - b. By the way, this word ‘scorpions’ appears to be a reference to a barbed whip used at the time for extreme punishment. Again, it is reminiscent of Pharaoh’s extreme and oppressive treatments and beatings he administered to the Israelites in Egypt / see **Exodus 5.1-14.**
 - c. In other words: *“I’m not going to concede anything to you! In fact, if you think my father was hard on you, you haven’t seen anything yet! My smallest demand on you will be heavier than my father’s greatest demands. So, prepare to get in line and keep your place as my servants for whatever ambitions I want you to fulfill for myself! LET’S GO!”*
3. **vv 12-14** / So that’s exactly what Rehoboam answered back to the people when they re-assembled on the third day to hear his response to their protests
4. **v 15** / **NOTE:** what you see here is a perfect example of both the sovereignty of God and the agency of man working in coordination with each other. **So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that He might fulfill His word, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.**
 - a. This turn of events is what Yahweh had prophesied to Jeroboam through the prophet Ahijah in **ch 11.29-39**
 - b. But it is also the consequences that Yahweh had repeatedly warned Solomon would be the result of his insistent, protracted, and rebellious sins that Solomon had committed against the covenant that Yahweh had made with David his father / see **ch 11.33**
 - c. So Yahweh did not arbitrarily or capriciously bring this judgment upon Rehoboam without cause. This is Yahweh’s administration of justice in perfect fulfillment of His often-repeated stated word and will.
 - d. Solomon broke faith with Yahweh and His covenant and so did Rehoboam. **They brought this judgment on themselves – but Yahweh was faithful to His word also by bringing this judgment to pass.**

V / THE NORTHERN TRIBES SECEDE – THE KINGDOM IS DIVIDED / vv 16-20

1. **v 16** / When the people heard Rehoboam’s response, their grievances were confirmed: they knew that Rehoboam had no interest, respect, or consideration of their well-being ... only in his own.

Rehoboam had violated one of the primary tenets of kingship and leadership that his grandfather David had spoken from Yahweh in **2 Samuel 23.3-4**: **³The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, ⁴he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.**

2. So they seceded. They broke away from the united kingdom and established a separate kingdom.
3. **vv 17-18** / Rehoboam reigned over the tribe of Judah. When he sent Adoram, his minister over the conscription, to attempt to re-muster the citizens back into service, they stoned him to death. Rehoboam recognized he had lost control over the ten northern tribes, so he fled for his own life back to Jerusalem.
4. **v 19** / **So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.** The kingdom would be divided until both the N and S kingdoms were exiled into their respective captivities.
5. **v 20** / Jeroboam assumed the kingship and reign over the northern kingdom which from that time would be called *'Israel.'* The southern kingdom of the tribe of Judah would be called *'Judah.'*
6. **vv 21-24** / When Rehoboam gathered an army and thought he would go to war against them to reunite the kingdom as before, once again Yahweh stopped him through the message of another prophet, Shemaiah, to remind Rehoboam, **"...this thing is from Me."**

VI / THE MESSIANIC MESSAGE & GOSPEL PROMISE IN ALL THIS...

1. **"How can this break-up and dividing of the Davidic kingdom and secession of the northern tribes possibly be a pointer to the need and coming of Jesus Christ and His Gospel?"** you may ask ... **"How can this be a pre-enactment of Christ?"** In these ways...
2. It all goes back to the covenant Yahweh made with David in **2 Samuel 7.11b-17** [read it]. Yahweh made two relevant promises in that covenant: [1] *He would never take away His steadfast love from David or his Offspring after him – He would establish His kingdom forever, and David's Offspring would possess His throne forever* – but [2] if David's merely human offspring proved to be unfaithful to Him and broke faith and covenant, He would **'discipline him with the rod of men.'**
3. **None of David's merely human offspring could possibly fulfill such high standards of faithfulness ... only Christ can, and when He comes, He will!**
4. When Yahweh told Jeroboam He would give him the kingship of the northern kingdom, His one caveat was this: **And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes ³²(but he shall have one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel)..."** / **ch 11.31-32** ... and again, **"Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of David my servant whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my statutes. ³⁵But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and will give it to you, ten tribes. ³⁶Yet to his son I will give one tribe, that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my Name."** / **ch 11.34-36**
5. Yahweh knew and purposed that His covenant was made with Christ who ***must*** come, and ***would*** come, to faithfully fulfill these promises. **He established this covenant and made these promises to Christ** – but through David. **The everlasting Kingdom and Throne have always been Christ's! Yahweh was keeping it for Christ and would give it to Him when He comes!**

"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David,

³³and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

Luke 1.31-33