

LESSON 37

The Secession* of the Ten Tribes

I Kings 12; II Chronicles 10, 11

BEFORE WE BEGIN, the problems and disagreements between Israel and Judah had a long history. Already in the time of the judges, the tribe of Ephraim troubled Gideon; and later, Abner made Ishbosheth king of Israel, while David ruled in Judah. Their differences came to a climax at the time of King Solomon's death. Keep in mind that God, in His counsel, had planned the split in Israel; but He accomplished His plans through the sins of men: through the way of Solomon's disobedience, and through the rebellious hearts of the men in the ten tribes.

LESSON OUTLINE

Read I Kings 12:1 and 2

A. The Gathering at Shechem

1. The nation of Israel had no right to choose another king, one who was not a descendant of David. For Israel was a theocracy, a nation ruled by God; and He decreed that David's sons should sit upon the throne.
2. But the ten tribes, led by Ephraim, disobeyed. They did not want a man from David's line on the throne. They would not even go to Jerusalem, in Judah, to choose their king! They gathered at Shechem, in the tribe of Ephraim.
3. Furthermore, the ten tribes called Jeroboam from Egypt, and Jeroboam had a place of leadership in the gathering of the tribes, verse 3.
4. What about Rehoboam? He was very weak and unwise when he came to Shechem. The ten tribes were rebelling against God! Because God had decreed that only David's seed would rule in Jerusalem, it was wrong for Rehoboam to try to be chosen in Shechem.

Read verses 3-15

B. The Request

1. Jeroboam and the representatives from the ten tribes described the years of King Solomon's rule as a grievous time: a time of wearing a heavy and grievous yoke*, a burden far too heavy. It is true that Solomon did tax the people and he did require their labor part of the time, but these men forgot something: the peace and plenty, and the wealth and prosperity throughout

the land in Solomon's time. They forgot to count their blessings. They asked Rehoboam to make their yoke lighter.

2. Rehoboam was not ready to answer. He asked for three days to consider the request.

a. First he asked advice from the older men who had been King Solomon's counsellors. All the wise men agreed: "Speak good words to them, and they will be your servants forever."

b. Then he asked advice from the younger men who had grown up with him, who were unwise and inexperienced men. They gave the advice of verses 10 and 11. Read it again. It is picture language:

1) Rehoboam's little finger will come down harder than his father's hip.

2) Rehoboam would add to their yoke.

3) Rehoboam's whips would have barbed points, which would hurt like a scorpion's* sting.

3. These were the words of the tyrant, not those which should have come from the mouth of a theocratic king.

4. Verse 15 explains that God worked out His plan in the way of Rehoboam's foolishness.

Read verses 16-24

C. The Separation

1. Do you realize what Israel meant when they said in verse 16: "We have no portion in David and no inheritance in Jesse?"

a. They meant that their dissatisfaction was not merely that they were jealous of Judah.

b. Their reasons went much deeper. They did not want any part of God's chosen king, nor the inheritance to which all God's people looked forward: the inheritance Who was Jesus. They wanted no part of God's law, His rule, nor His salvation.

2. Rehoboam sent Adoram, the tax collector, through Israel, very likely to come to an agreement about taxes and to make peace with the ten tribes. But Israel was in no mood to compromise. They stoned Adoram to death; and Rehoboam, who must have accompanied him, fled for his life. Then the ten tribes made Jeroboam king.

3. After his attempted compromise with the ten tribes did not work, Rehoboam decided to try force to bring Israel back under his rule. He

gathered 108,000 fighting men to go to war with Israel.

- a. The prophet Shemaiah brought Rehoboam the word of God: "Do not fight your brethren, the children of Israel. . . for this thing is of me."
- b. The men of Judah listened to Jehovah and did not fight their brothers. They listened and obeyed the Lord when He insisted that the people whom He called would be but a small part of the nation of Israel.

Discuss in class why God's people are always an unimportant remnant in the world.

D. Rehoboam's Rule

1. In II Chronicles 11:14 you learn that the Levites left the area of the ten tribes and lived in Judah. Also, the people from the ten tribes who wanted to serve the God of their fathers and sacrifice to Him came to live in Judah. For three years Rehoboam walked in obedience to the Lord.
2. During these three years, Rehoboam built cities for defense in Judah, which he stocked with weapons and food.
3. King Rehoboam, following the example of his father, took many wives when he was king: eighteen wives and sixteen concubines. His favorite wife was Maachah, a grand-daughter of Absalom, whose son Abijam succeeded Rehoboam as king.
4. During the first three years of his reign, Rehoboam outwardly followed the worship of Jehovah. Then a change came:
 - a. Under Rehoboam's rule, Judah did more evil than their fathers had done.
 - b. He built high places to sacrifice to the idols of the heathen.
 - c. Judah worshipped the idols of all the heathen nations (I Kings 14:22-24).
5. For the next two years Judah multiplied idols. In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, Jehovah sent Shishak, king of Egypt, to Jerusalem. Read what he did in II Chronicles 12:2-4.
6. Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and his princes with these words from God: "You have forsaken me. . . I also left you in the hand of Shishak."
 - a. The princes of Judah humbled themselves before Jehovah.
 - b. And Jehovah gave them deliverance from their enemies.
 - c. But Shishak took treasures from the Lord's house and the king's house; also the golden shields which Solomon had made.
7. Rehoboam, who began to reign when he was forty-one years old, ruled

seventeen years, and died in his wickedness, because he did not prepare his heart to seek Jehovah, II Chronicles 12:14.

DO NOT FORGET that the people of the ten tribes forgot to count their blessings from the Lord, because their hearts were hard. They did not ask God for a humble and thankful heart to see all the good things He brings. Do you?

WORD STUDIES

1. secession – withdrawal from fellowship (such as a church)
2. yoke – a frame for shoulders, designed to carry burdens
3. scorpion – a type of spider with a poisonous sting in its tail