

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM AND DEPARTURE INTO IDOLATRY

BIBLE TEXT : **I Kings 12:1-33; 14:21-23; II Chronicles 12:1-16.**

LESSON 287 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Proverbs 12:15).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Kings 12:1-33 ¹ And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king.

² And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;)

³ That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying,

⁴ Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.

⁵ And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

⁶ And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?

⁷ And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

⁸ But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him:

⁹ And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter?

¹⁰ And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.

¹¹ And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

¹² So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.

¹³ And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him;

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Revolt at Shechem

1. The northern tribes request a reduction in taxes, I Kings 12:1-5.

2. The king seeks counsel of both the young and the old men, I Kings 12:6-11;

Proverbs 1:25-33 ²⁵ But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

²⁷ When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

²⁸ Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

²⁹ For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

³⁰ They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

³¹ Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

³² For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

³³ But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

3. The king answers after the counsel of the young men, I Kings 12:12-15.

4. The northern tribes rebel, I Kings 12:16-19.

II The Northern Kingdom of Israel

1. Jeroboam is made king, I Kings 12:20, 25.

2. He plans a religion to suit his political needs, I Kings 12:26-33;

Galatians 1:6 ⁶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

III The Southern Kingdom of Judah

1. Rehoboam plans war, but heeds the warning of God to desist, I Kings 12:21-24.

2. Rehoboam leads Judah deeper into idolatry, I Kings 14:21-23;

2 Chronicles 12:1 ¹ And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.

3. The Lord uses Shishak, king of Egypt, to chastise them, II Chronicles 12:2-5;

Judges 2:14 ¹⁴ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

¹⁴ And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father *also* chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

¹⁵ Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

¹⁶ So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither *have we* inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

¹⁷ But *as for* the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

¹⁸ Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who *was* over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

¹⁹ So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

²⁰ And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

²¹ And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

²² But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

²³ Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying,

²⁴ Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.

²⁵ Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel.

²⁶ And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David:

²⁷ If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again

Judges 3:7-8 ⁷ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

⁸ Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years.

Judges 3:12 ¹² And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

4. God shows mercy when Rehoboam humbles himself, II Chronicles 12:6-12; I Kings 21:29.
5. Rehoboam's reign is summed up as being evil, II Chronicles 12:13-16.

NOTES:

A Poor Example

"Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?" (Ecclesiastes 2:18, 19). Well might Solomon be concerned about the conduct of his son, but how much better it would have been had he left a godly example to follow. Solomon's departure from the Lord in his old age is most pathetic. It is unbelievable that the one whom the Lord had blessed above every other king would forsake God and turn to idolatry. What an evil influence he had upon his son as well as upon all the people! How could he point his son to a knowledge of the true God when his own life and conduct were just the opposite? Some parents today want their children to follow a course from which they themselves have departed. How much wiser it would be for them to set the example for their children!

Rash Judgment

As soon as Solomon was dead the people of Israel sent for Jeroboam to return from Egypt. The Lord had promised him ten tribes and the people knew it and sought him. It was through him that the ten northern tribes of Israel sought to bargain with Rehoboam for lighter taxes.

God had given Solomon great wisdom, but deprived Solomon's son of good judgment on this occasion. The Giver of every good and perfect gift is also able to withhold His hand when His judgment so decrees. He who gave Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom and majesty and glory and honour also brought him low and deprived him of his reason. Those who walk in pride He is able to abase. "Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD" (I Kings 12:15). This decision that was so rash on the part of Rehoboam was God's way of taking part of the kingdom from him.

Man-Made Religion

Upon being refused their request, the northern tribes rebelled and made Jeroboam their king. He had but to walk in the commandment of the Lord and his kingdom was sure. Instead of obeying and trusting God, he turned to his own ingenuity and started a religion of his own. He sought not the truth but a fabrication that would suit his own political desires. He created an

to Rehoboam king of Judah.

²⁸ Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

²⁹ And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

³⁰ And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan.

³¹ And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

³² And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

³³ So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

1 Kings 14:21-23 ²¹ And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam *was* forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name *was* Naamah an Ammonitess.

²² And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.

²³ For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.

2 Chronicles 12:1-16 ¹ And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.

² And it came to pass, *that* in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD,

³ With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people *were* without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians.

⁴ And he took the fenced cities which *pertained* to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.

⁵ Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and *to* the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem

easier way of worship for the Children of Israel and they accepted it by the hundreds. "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem," was the slogan by which Jeroboam led Israel into a form of worship with its feasts and ceremonies, but with no power in it to transform their lives.

The social gospel with feasts, which Jeroboam devised from his own heart compares with much of so-called Christianity today. Many people have departed from the old paths and have found easier ways. No more do they consider it necessary to kneel at an old-fashioned altar in true repentance in order to be born again. With a handshake, a pledge card and the request that you "accept Christ as your personal Saviour," you are a Christian, they say. But real salvation goes deeper than that. Bitter tears of repentance, a cry for mercy, a change deep in the heart, and a witness from God that all sins are forgiven mark those who in God's way prepare themselves for Heaven. Of what value are the rites, assemblies, and religious pretexts if in the end a man loses his own soul?

The religion of Jeroboam found favour with those who loved sin, those who saw no harm in social drinking, dancing, or other sinful pleasures. The world today is filled with religious people who do not believe it is possible to live above sin. They close their eyes to the truth and try to find a way around the Word of God, which says plainly, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (I John 3:9). Some professors of religion are so positive they are on the right road although they are living in sin, that it makes one shudder and fear that they are among those who have "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." God's Word states that "for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:10-12).

False Teachers

One would think that a man-made religion such as Jeroboam set forth would soon lose its popularity and be cast aside; but so deep are the roots of sin in the human nature, and so sinful is the unregenerated heart of man, that Israel followed the idolatrous calf-worship until they were carried into captivity more than two hundred years later. The Prophet has written: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9, 10). Many people try to be so liberal in their beliefs that they will accept almost anything in the name of religion, but we are warned against false prophets. "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, . . . " (II Peter 2:1-4). God is not going to accept every one who merely names the name of Jesus. He gives us to understand that we must follow the truth and live a life free from sin in order to

because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.

⁶ Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD *is* righteous.

⁷ And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; *therefore* I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.

⁸ Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.

⁹ So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

¹⁰ Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed *them* to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house.

¹¹ And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber.

¹² And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy *him* altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

¹³ So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam *was* one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name *was* Naamah an Ammonitess.

¹⁴ And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.

¹⁵ Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies? And *there were* wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.

¹⁶ And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

Rehoboam

Rehoboam did not realize how deep the roots of rebellion had gone until he sent Adoram, who was over the tribute, to Israel. It was then that Rehoboam fled in his chariot to Jerusalem for refuge and called out the army from Judah and Benjamin to put down the rebellion. It is to his credit, however, that he listened to the word of the Lord and did not go out to fight against Israel. It is also to his credit, and that of his princes, that they humbled themselves when Shishak king of Egypt came against Jerusalem; but for the most part Rehoboam "did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD" (II Chronicles 12:14).

The End of a Golden Age

How quickly the splendour of the kingdom that God gave Solomon degenerated because of idolatry! As soon as Solomon died the kingdom was divided into two parts; the northern kingdom composed of ten tribes was known as Israel, and the southern kingdom composed of Judah and Benjamin was known as Judah. Not only was the kingdom divided but soon, in the fifth year after Rehoboam began to reign, Shishak, king of Egypt, came to Jerusalem and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king's house. Instead of shields of gold, Rehoboam substituted shields of brass. An attempt was made to carry on the outward show, but the true glory of Jerusalem had departed; her gold had become brass, and her joy but a "tinkling cymbas." The sons of Israel should have wept and mourned, and the daughters of Jerusalem should have lamented, for the glorious kingdom had deteriorated because Judah had forsaken her God!

QUESTIONS

1. What proposition did Israel lay before Rehoboam?
2. What do you think of his answer?
3. Why did Rehoboam answer thus?
4. Which tribes were with Jeroboam? With Rehoboam?
5. How long were the kingdoms divided?
6. What prevented Rehoboam from fighting Israel?
7. Why did Jeroboam erect golden calves?
8. Where did Jeroboam get his ideas for his religion?
9. How was God's mercy manifested to Rehoboam?
10. What is the summary given of Rehoboam's reign?