



LESSON 2 REHOBOAM & THE RUPTURE OF THE KINGDOM

One of the great Messianic promises recorded in the Old Testament was given when David desired to build a house for the Lord (2Samuel 7). David was told that he would not build the Lord's house, but "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (vss. 12-13).

Israel		Judah	
Jeroboam	931–910	Rehoboam	931–913
Nadab	910–909	Abijah	913–911
Baasha	909–886	Asa	911–870
Elah	886–885		
Zimri	885		
Omri	885–874		
Ahab	874–853	Jehoshaphat	873–848
Ahaziah	853–852		
Joram	852–841	Jehoram	848–841
Jehu	841–814	Ahaziah	841
		Athaliah	841–835
Jehoahaz	814–798	Joash	835–796
Jehoash	798–782	Amaziah	796–767
Jeroboam II	793–753	Uzziah	792–740
Zechariah	753		
Shallum	752		
Menahem	752–742	Jotham	750–731
Pekahiah	742–740		
Pekah	752–732	Ahaz	735–715
Hoshea	732–722	Hezekiah	729–686
		Manasseh	696–642
		Amon	642–640
		Josiah	640–609
		Jehoahaz	609
		Jehoiakim	608–598
		Jehoiachin	598–597
		Zedekiah	597–586

The Lord's promise to David finds it's ultimate fulfillment in the reign of Jesus the Christ (see Isaiah 9.6-7). However, there was a lesser fulfillment for David's physical descendants. Solomon, David's son by Bathsheba, was established on the throne of Israel (1Kings 1-3) and he built a temple for the Lord (1Kings 6-8). However, because of Solomon's unfaithfulness the Lord was going to "tear the kingdom" from Solomon's line, leaving only "one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen" (1Kings 11.11,13).

The Kingdom Divides (1Kings 12.1-24; 2Chron. 10.1-11.4)

In our introductory lesson we noted the tribal rivalries that had been present in Israel for generations. These rivalries, and particularly Solomon's favoritism to his own tribe of Judah, would culminate in 10 tribes breaking away from Solomon's house, even as the Lord had foretold.

Notes from the text:

» Shechem (1Kings 12.1). It's of interest that Rehoboam's coronation occurred at Shechem

rather than Jerusalem. It could be that the site was chosen for its rich history, being Abraham's first stop in Canaan (Genesis 12.6-7) and where Israel reaffirmed the covenant in the days of Joshua (Joshua 24.1). However, Shechem could have been chosen in recognition of the tribal strife that had been brewing under Solomon.



- » Jeroboam (1Kings 12.2-3). We will focus on Jeroboam in our next lesson, but for now it is important to note that God promised to make him king over 10 tribes (1Kings 11.29-39). This promise prompted Jeroboam to rebel against Solomon, but his rebellion was unsuccessful and he was forced to flee to Egypt (1Kings 11.26,40).
- » Yoke (1Kings 12.4) Recall from our previous lesson that Solomon's "heavy yoke" seemed to exclude his own tribe of Judah (see 1Kings 4.7-19).
- » Counsel of the elders (1Kings 12.6-7). Note that the elders' appeal is in line with God's will for the king, that he not have a heart lifted above the people (see Deuteronomy 17.20).
- » Scorpions (1Kings 12.11). "Scorpions" may refer to whips with tips of metal tied to the ends of the chords. Thus, a harsher punishment than the "whips" of Solomon.
- » Jeroboam (1Kings 12.12). Note Jeroboam's prominence. Being from the tribe of Ephraim (1Kings 11.26) he would have shared their grievances. We do not know the extent of his earlier rebellion, but it would seem that he was already a popular hero among the northern tribes.
- » "from the Lord" (1Kings 12.15). The Lord had decreed that this would happen (1Kings 11.29-39). However, I do not take this as the Lord forcing Rehoboam to reject wise counsel, rather the Lord orchestrated events knowing the heart and predisposition of Rehoboam.
- » "What portion do we have in David?..." (1Kings 12.16). The same rallying cry when Sheba rebelled against David (2Samuel 20.1). "The tendency of chiefdoms and empires is to fragment at the least provocation. Now the cost of unity and the differing perspectives of north and south easily drove a wedge between them when it became clear to the northern tribes that Judah and the Davidic house had no intention of compromising with their requests for more local autonomy and lower taxes." (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- » Jeroboam made king (1Kings 12.20). Note once again the fulfillment of the

Lord's words in 1Kings 11.29-39.

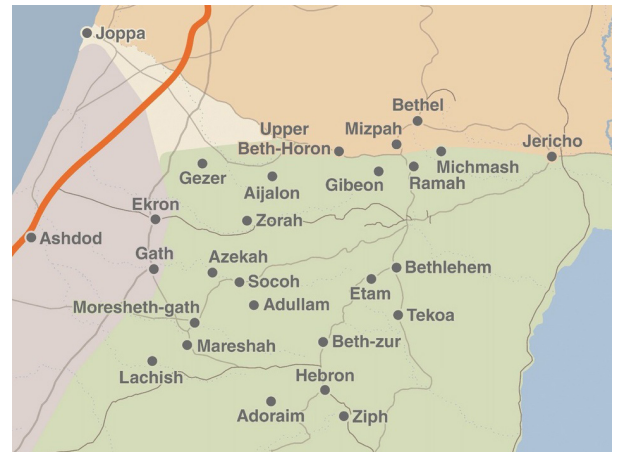
- » 180,000 chosen men (1Kings 12.21). There is some pushback to the numbers listed for Rehoboam's army. If the number was actually 180,000 men it was a much larger army than most of the contemporary forces. However, the word translated as "thousand" also has the meaning of "clan", so it could be that Rehoboam assembled 180 "clans" of Judah and Benjamin. Note, Benjamin likely remained with Rehoboam because of geographic proximity. Judah was by far the larger tribe and had assimilated much of Benjamin by this time.

Rehoboam Strengthens His Kingdom (2Chron. 11.5-23)

The kingdom divided as a result of Solomon's unfaithfulness. However, Rehoboam still had the choice to be faithful to the covenant and thus enjoy the blessings and protection of the Lord. Tragically, the king chose to rely on his own ability to strengthen the kingdom. His efforts would prove futile.

Notes from the text:

- » Cities for defense (2Chron. 11.5-10). "The fifteen "towns for defense in Judah" were located along strategic roads and intersections on the western and southern approaches to the Judean heartland (2 Chron. 11:5-17). This network of fortresses strengthened Solomon's defense system that is described in 1 Kings 8. The conspicuous lack of fortresses in the north most likely reflects Rehoboam's continued control of Benjamin and his desire to reincorporate the northern tribes into a united monarchy under his rule." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » Levites relocate (1Chron. 11.13-17). We will consider Jeroboam's reign, and his idolatrous practices, in our next lesson. However, this passage reveals some of the consequences of his rejection of God. The priests and Levites who lived in the northern tribes relocated to the southern kingdom of Judah. This would have disastrous ramifications for the people of the northern kingdom as a valuable source of instruction in God's word was now gone. By contrast, Judah was strengthened by the presence of the priests and Levites, albeit for a short period of time. In 1Kings 12.22-24 we find Rehoboam willing to heed the voice of the Lord, thus walking in the ways of David. However, his faithfulness to the Lord was short-lived.



Rehoboam's Unfaithfulness (1Kings 14.21-24; 2Chron. 12.1)

We read in 1Kings 11.4 that “when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.” As we will see in this passage, Solomon's marriages also had a negative influence on his son resulting in continued unfaithfulness to Jehovah.

Notes from the text:

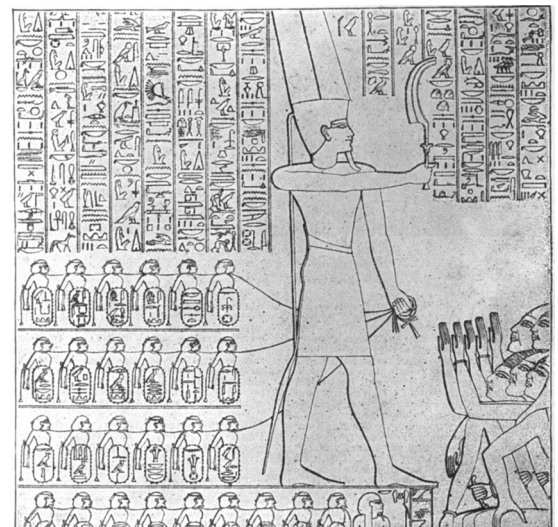
- » Rehoboam's mother (1Kings 14.21). It's significant that the text twice mentions Rehoboam's mother being “Naamah the Ammonitess” (1Kings 14.21,31). We are to understand that Rehoboam was influenced by her idolatrous background.

Egypt Invades (1Kings 14.25-28; 2Chron. 12.2-14)

Rehoboam had gone to great lengths to fortify his kingdom, but he had ignored the source of Israel's strength: the Lord. The king's unfaithfulness had weakened the kingdom, inviting interference from the surrounding powers.

Notes from the text:

- » Reason for invasion (2Chron. 12.2-5). The Chronicler emphasizes that the Egyptian invasion was successful because Rehoboam had forsaken the Lord (vss. 2,5). Rehoboam's fortifications (vs. 4; 2Chron. 11.5-10) were for nothing without the Lord's protection!
- » Regarding Shishak (also known as Shoshenq) (2Chron. 12.2): “This celebrated founder of Egypt's Twenty-Second Dynasty was the first pharaoh in many years to recapture the greatness of ancient Egypt. In the course of his twenty-one-year reign (945–924),¹⁸ he reunited Upper and Lower Egypt, reestablished foreign-trade alliances with Byblos and other Phoenician and Aramaean states, and waited patiently for events in Israel to work to his advantage. He had already provided sanctuary to Jeroboam, Solomon's enemy and Israel's king-to-be—an act prompted not so much by mercy as by political ambition. When Solomon died in 931 BC, Shoshenq did not delay long before



Shoshenq Leading Jews Captive

he made his move. Using as an excuse a border incident with some Semitic tribesmen, Shoshenq moved north to Judah." (Eugene Merrill, Kingdom of Priests page 340).

- » Golden shields (2Chron. 12.9). See 1Kings 10.16-17. Likely this was the required tribute for Shishak to relinquish his siege of Jerusalem.

Death of Rehoboam (1Kings 14.29-31; 2Chron. 12.15-16)

Notes from the text:

- » War (1Kings 14.30). Recall that previously Rehoboam had heeded the Lord's command to not war against his brethren (1Kings 12.21-24). However, when Rehoboam forsook Jehovah for the idols of the nations, this instruction fell on deaf ears.

Takeaway: Faithfulness Is Our Greatest Security

The account of Rehoboam shows what happens when we rely on our own strength, or on the strength of men, for our security. The king fortified cities for his protection (2Chron. 11.5-17), but those fortifications were worthless when the king forsook his God. The Egyptian Pharaoh invaded, seized those fortifications and placed Rehoboam under his yoke (2Chron. 12.1-9). They had forsaken the Lord, so He had forsaken them (vs. 7).

As Jesus spoke about being the good shepherd He stated, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." (John 10:27-29, NASB95) There is no greater security than having Jesus as our shepherd, but that security exists only for those who hear His voice and follow Him... even if that means following Him to death (cf. Revelation 2.10).