

**100 Great Events of the  
Old Testament**  
**Lesson #66 – The Kingdom Divides**  
**Family / Teacher Notes**  
**For Sunday, March 21<sup>st</sup>**  
**I Kings 11-13; II Chronicles 10**

“Now it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, that he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel along with him.”

(2 Chronicles 12:1)



We learned in our last lesson how King Solomon allowed his many foreign wives and concubines, and their pagan practices, to turn his heart away from God. And we remember that God told him, “Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes...I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen” (I Kings 11:11-13). Now it was time for God to fulfill His sad promise.

**Jeroboam.** During the days that Solomon was having a construction crew repair part of Jerusalem, he noticed a young man there who worked very hard and seemed to be very good man. Jeroboam was the man’s name and Solomon put him in charge of all the other workers there. One day when Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, God spoke to him through the prophet Ahijah. This prophet told Jeroboam that God would deal with Solomon’s sins by tearing the kingdom from Solomon’s son and would put Jeroboam over the ten tribes of the north.

God promised Jeroboam, “If you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you.” Evidently Solomon heard about what the prophet said and tried to have Jeroboam killed. But Jeroboam escaped to Egypt, where he stayed until Solomon died.

**Solomon Dies and Rehoboam Reigns.** “Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.” The Bible doesn’t have much to say about Solomon’s death. Solomon had been king for 40 years. In some ways he was such a great king who accomplished so much, but because he tolerated his wives idolatry, his whole history was ruined. Now his son Rehoboam would be the next king. [We were just talking about Jeroboam, now we are going to find out about Solomon’s son who was named Rehoboam. Since the names sound alike, it may be a little hard to keep straight.]

**Jeroboam Speaks to Rehoboam.** Solomon had spent years building many different structures. Since those kind of projects cost lots of money to build, he had made the Israelites pay very high taxes for many years. When Rehoboam became king, the Israelites hoped he would give them a time of relief from such high taxes.

The leaders of the 10 northern tribes called for Jeroboam to come back home.

[Remember he had been in Egypt because Solomon wanted to kill him. The prophet said he would be the king over the northern tribes.] They went to Rehoboam and let Jeroboam speak for them. Jeroboam told King Rehoboam, “Your father Solomon taxed us very heavily. If you reduce our taxes, we will serve you” (I Kings 12:4).

King Rehoboam told Jeroboam and the others to come back in three days for his decision. At first, Rehoboam asked the advice from older men who had served his father Solomon. They advised him that the people’s request was reasonable. “If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.”

Rehoboam then asked the advice of some of the younger men he had grown up with. But they told this to Rehoboam: “You should say this to the people who came to you, “My father put a heavy yoke on you. I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions” (I Kings 12:10-11). Rehoboam followed the advice of the younger men and told the people he would raise their taxes, and make them even worse. He was more interested in increasing his own wealth than in helping the people of Israel.



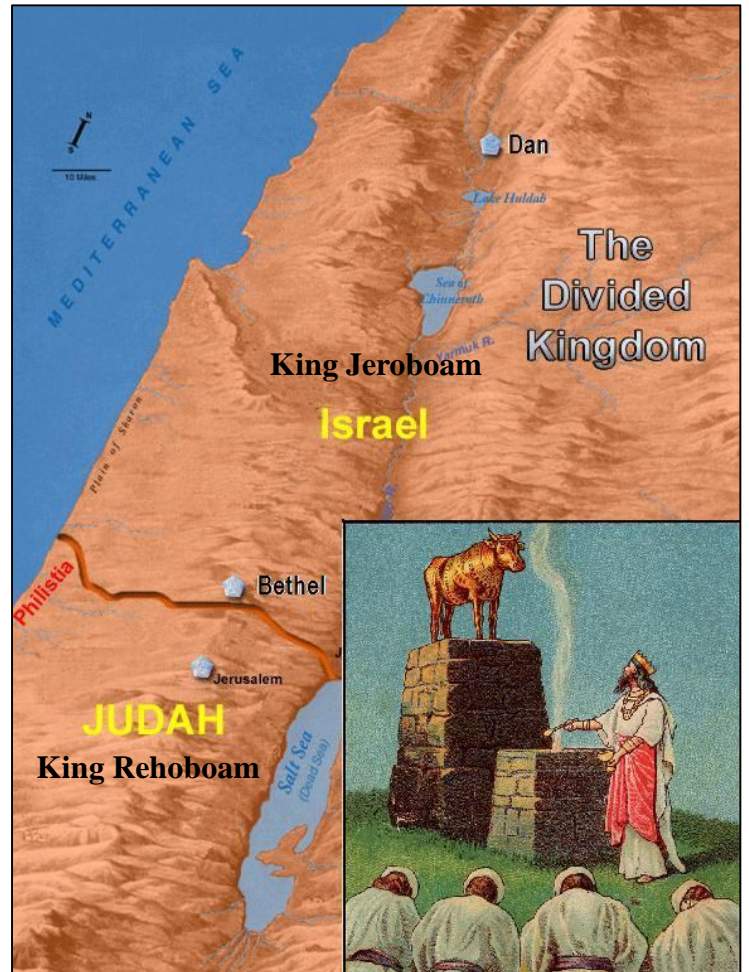
**Israel Rejects Rehoboam.** When they heard what Rehoboam said, the ten northern tribes of Israel rebelled. They said they would not obey him any longer. So they returned back to their homes. Rehoboam sent a man named Adoram to collect their taxes, but the ten tribes killed Adoram. Rehoboam became very afraid. He intended to send an army to force them to obey him. But God sent the prophet Shemaiah to warn Rehoboam not to do this. Rehoboam called off the invasion.

Just as God had told Solomon, his son Rehoboam was left with only Judah (this included the tribe of Benjamin which by that time was pretty much considered part of Judah). After this they would be known as the kingdom of Judah. God would always leave Jerusalem as the place of worship in Judah. All future kings of Judah would still come through David’s descendants.

The northern tribes would form their own separate nation. They asked Jeroboam to be their king. He built up the city of Shechem and reigned there. From here on God's people would be divided into these two nations.

**Jeroboam, the King of Israel, Forsakes the Lord.** Even though God had promised to be with Jeroboam if he would be faithful to the Lord, Jeroboam feared that all his people might soon reject him as king. He was especially afraid that when the special feast days (like Passover and Pentecost) were held, that his people might want to go down to Jerusalem to worship. Jeroboam decided to invent a whole new way of worship in order to keep the people from going back to Jerusalem and worshipping the Lord.

- **He made idols.** "He made two calves of gold... Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" Instead of an invisible God, Jeroboam gave them gods they could see and gods that were like what all the nations worshipped. He and his false priests led Israel into idolatry.
- **He made it more convenient.** Jeroboam said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." He put one of the golden calves in Bethel, and the other he put in the city of Dan. As you can see from the map, Bethel is way down in the far south of Israel, and Dan is in the far north of Israel. This way no one in all of Israel would have to go far to worship. Worshipping at these other cities may have been more convenient, but it wasn't where the Lord's temple was.



- **Jeroboam made priests who were not from the tribe of Levi.** Jeroboam appointed men to be priests from all tribes, men that were not Levites. He chose the men rather than listening to what God's Word said. When this happened most of the Levitical priests left Israel and went down to Judah (II Chronicles 11:13-17)

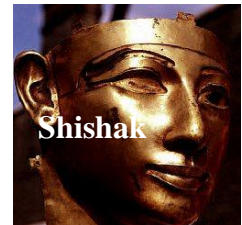
- **He started new feast days.** Jeroboam started new feast days that were like the ones God had commanded, but at different times. As I Kings 12:33 puts it, “in the month which he had devised in his own heart.”

It was a shame that Jeroboam did all of this in order to hold on to his power over the nation. The sad part is that God had already promised that Jeroboam could have this power and that God would be with him. He did not trust God! God sent prophets to warn him, but Jeroboam would not listen to them. He ruled for 22 years, but his sons ultimately died and his descendants did not continue on the throne.

**Rehoboam’s Wicked Reign.** Solomon’s son Rehoboam continued his reign over Judah. In the first few years of his reign many of the priests that left Israel came to Judah and helped to strengthen Rehoboam (II Chron. 11:13-17). But 2 Chronicles 12:1 tells us, “Now it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, that he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel along with him.” The stronger he got the less he depended on God.

Through Solomon and Rehoboam’s influence, many of God’s people began to turn away from Him to worship idols. I Kings 14:22-24 says, “Now Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. For they also built for themselves high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. And there were also perverted persons in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.”

In the fifth year of King Rehoboam’s reign, God said that He would send Shishak king of Egypt against them because they had transgressed against the LORD. The Egyptian King had already taken several of the fortified cities of Judah, and was now coming against Jerusalem. Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah and told them, “Thus says the LORD: ‘You have forsaken Me, and therefore I also have left you in the hand of Shishak.’” King Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah humbled themselves and admitted that the Lord was righteous. So the Lord spared them from Egypt’s attack, but they had to pay money to Shishak. He took away all the treasures of the Temple and the king’s house.



Rehoboam reigned a total of 17 years. After he died, his son Abijah reigned.



Rom. 15:4 “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

**God Holds Everyone Including Kings Accountable.** Let's notice one very important truth. God expects everyone, including kings and leaders, to obey His Word. He held David accountable. He held Solomon accountable. And He held Rehoboam accountable. If we keep God's laws, they will help keep us. If we break them, they will break us.

**Jeroboam's Man-Made Religion.** Jeroboam invented a whole new religion. In some ways he made it like the true religion of the Lord, but he also changed many things. Many religions in our time are man-made. They worship the ways that men have thought up, not in ways that God commanded. In Matthew 15:9 Jesus said, "In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." We can never worship God properly when we teach and practice what men say instead of what God tells us.