

## 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 12

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**Ecclesiastes 2:18-19**      “<sup>18</sup>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.  
<sup>19</sup>And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?...”

- According to 1 Kings 14:21 Rehoboam was 41 years old when he began to reign. Since Solomon reigned for 40 years this means that Rehoboam was born before Solomon became king. This in turn means that Pharaoh's daughter was not Solomon's first wife.

V: 1 Rehoboam went to Shechem which is part of the tribe of Ephraim.

- Rehoboam = “He Enlarges the People”

(Map)

- The city of Shechem is located in the valley between Mt. Gerizim & Mt. Ebal, it is first mentioned when Abraham camped there in **Genesis 12:6** – where the Lord appeared to him and promised to give him the land.
- Jacob camped there and eventually his daughter Dinah is raped and Simeon & Levi slaughter all the inhabitants using the ruse of circumcision in the process.
- Later God directed Moses to place half the tribes on Mt. Gerizim, and the other half on Mt. Ebal and they read the word of God out loud pronouncing blessings and cursings while sacrifices were made down below.
- Saul was anointed king in Gibeah, David in Hebron, Solomon in Jerusalem – why Shechem?

V: 2 The prophet Ahijah had been sent by God to tell Jeroboam about how he would become king over the Northern kingdom. The prophet had taken his garment and torn it into 12 pieces and had given ten of them to Jeroboam – when Solomon heard of it he tried to kill Jeroboam.

- Jeroboam was a natural leader and had been in exile because of Solomon's attempt to kill him, when he heard that Solomon was dead and that they were going to anoint Rehoboam as king – he returned to Israel to receive his portion from the Lord.

V: 3-5 As Rehoboam is anointed king he is immediately challenged by his “subjects” who lay out certain conditions or demands which if met, they will submit to Rehoboam as king.

- Their complaint was legitimate; Solomon had along with the Temple build the walls around Jerusalem, he built various fortress cities and other expensive, monumental projects burdening the people in the process.
- Basically that want the king to lighten the load, reduce the taxes and tribute – and they will serve him.
- Rehoboam proves that Solomon’s wisdom was truly from God as opposed to being inherited, he wasn’t quite as sharp as his dad.
- Big decisions shouldn’t be “rushed”, but should be thought through carefully.

**Proverbs 29:20** “Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him.”

V: 6-7 Rehoboam seeks out the counsel of the older men that stood before his father.

- Because Solomon was the wisest man that ever lived we don’t read about his seeking out the counsel of men, these men must have stood about Solomon listening, which would in turn make them wise.

**Proverbs 11:14** “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

- The older men responded that if the king would be a servant (like David) that the people would in turn serve him.

**Matthew 23:11** “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”

1. David was a king who risked his life for the people and served them.
2. Solomon was a king who didn’t serve the people, but used them to satisfy his own desires.
3. Rehoboam was a king who ignored the lessons of the past and turned his ears away from the voices of the sufferings of his people. He was unfit to rule.

V: 8 But Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the older men and turned to his younger friends, his contemporaries.

V: 9-11 Their answer / counsel to Rehoboam demonstrated that they were just as in-experienced and out of touch with the plight of the people as Rehoboam was.

- There is no compassion in their counsel nor is there any regard for the welfare of the sheep of Israel.

**Ezekiel 34:31** “And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.”

- The ancient world honored age and maturity, but our modern society worships youth.

V: 12 3 days had been enough time for Rehoboam to travel from Shechem back to Jerusalem, 1 days journey away – stay there one day and receive counsel, then return back to Shechem by the 3<sup>rd</sup> day.

- Rehoboam sought counsel from the older men, then from the younger men, but most notably not from the Lord.

**James 1:5** “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

V: 13-14 Rehoboam answers the people roughly, forsaking the older men’s counsel.

**Proverbs 15:1** “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”

- Rehoboam tells them that he will increase their burdens – being self deceived into thinking that he can actually do it.
- The people being chastised with whips may be figurative language, somewhat exaggerating their plight, or it may be literal in the sense of Solomon causing more and more of the people being driven into slavery in service of the king.
- This might also be a reference to those who were chastised with whips to make them work harder, harkening back to their bondage in Egypt. The Romans used a whip that had little hooks embedded in it – it was called the “scorpio”, because the little hooks were like the sting of a scorpion.
- In a sense he was saying “my father used a whip to chastise you, but I’m going to use the scorpio...”

V: 15 The king didn’t listen to the people, because this cause was from the Lord.

- On the surface Rehoboam appears stupid and insensitive, but behind the scene is the Lord – who has already prophesied through Ahijah what would happen.
- This raises a question: Rehoboam committed folly, appearing to be stupid – yet God ordained it, or predestined this outcome.
- This brings us to the place of trying to reconcile the free choice and responsibility of man and the sovereignty of God.

1. We have a very difficult time with the idea of predestination, and trying to balance in our minds where our responsibility comes in.
2. If God has already ordained that a thing is going to happen, then how can we change it?
3. What part do we play, we seemingly make our own choices, am I just a victim of fate and the predestined plans of God?
4. This becomes one of those theological problems that divides many churches: there are those that get onto the predestined, sovereign side of things and begin to logically follow the conclusions that come from that.
5. If God has pre-destined something to happen then there is no way that we can stop it from happening, and we become his instrument through which it happens and we like Rehoboam become a victim – we can't help it.
6. Where does human responsibility come in? We can take the sovereignty of God to it's logical extreme and eliminate human responsibility all together.
7. On the other hand, scripture teaches that man is responsible and will be held accountable, that God has given us the capacity of choice – and demands that we choose.
8. These positions can be taken to extremes with both sides being able to cite scripture to support their positions.
9. This is because scripture does teach the sovereignty of God, and scripture also teaches the free choice and responsibility of man.
10. How do we reconcile them? The answer is that we don't.
11. The real problem isn't which one is right – the real problem is one of our own limitations to understand and comprehend – our inability to understand to think in comparison to God's capacity.
12. God is omniscient, God knows all things – which means He can't learn anything new. If anything can be known or will ever be known – He knows it already, because He's omniscient.
13. God knows the outcome of every choice before the choice is ever made.
14. God, knowing the choices that will be made can speak of the things that are going to be before they ever happen, because he knows they are going to happen and He knows the circumstances why which they are going to be brought to pass.

15. If God is ever going to know who's going to be saved, then He's always known who was going to be saved. When you get to heaven He's not going to say "what a surprise! How did you get here?"
16. If we were omniscient we might be able to reconcile these truths, but we're not – and so we can't.

**Hebrews 11:1** "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

17. Faith is believing what we don't understand. I don't understand how God can be sovereign, and yet I have to be responsible, yet the Bible teaches both, so I believe both and just leave it there.
18. Just believing only what I can reason through or explain is not faith, believing what I don't understand takes faith.
19. God has forced me to a place of faith, to a place of faith where I have to believe what in my mind are two irreconcilable positions, positions that I cannot bring together.
20. We haven't been called to understand everything, just to believe and trust in Him.

V: 16-18 All Israel, meaning the 10 Northern tribes saw that the king didn't listen to them, or even care, then rebelled against Rehoboam and left.

- So Rehoboam reigned over the tribe of Judah which by that time included Simeon, and Benjamin which encompassed Jerusalem.
- The 10 Northern tribes which included Ephraim & Manassah representing Joseph.
- There are and weren't any "lost" tribes. No one today can say which tribe they are from because all the records were destroyed along with the Temple in 70 AD)
- Seemingly not dealing with reality Rehoboam sends Adoram to his death trying to collect tribute from the 10 rebellious tribes and himself has to make a hasty retreat back to Jerusalem.

V: 19-20 The prophesy of God comes true, the kingdom is divided – Jeroboam is made king over the 10 northern tribes.

- Rehoboam retains Judah and Benjamin.

- This takes place at about 920 BC. In 726 BC the ten Northern tribes, the Northern kingdom is carried away into captivity by the Assyrians and eventually lost. The Southern tribe of Judah & Benjamin are taken by the Babylonians in 586 BC.
- The Southern kingdom of Judah had 19 kings, 8 good kings and 11 bad ones.
- The Northern kingdom never had a single good king.
- The Jews from the Southern kingdom who had been carried away to Babylon would later return under Ezra and Nehemiah's leadership.

**Ezekiel 37:19** "... thus saith the Lord God; behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick and they shall be one in mine hand."

- The Northern and Southern tribes would not be united again until May 14, 1948 – in fulfillment of this prophesy.

V: 21-24 Upon his return to Jerusalem, Rehoboam musters an army with the intent of taking the 10 Northern tribes back – but God intervenes sending "the Word of God" through a "man of God."

- Man of God and Word of God are always joined together, they are in-separable.

**Psalms 1:2** "But his delight is in the Law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

- Rehoboam listened, they hearkened to the Word of the Lord and stood down.

V: 25-27 Jeroboam made Shechem his capital in the midst of Ephraim, building or fortifying it. ([Map](#))

- Peniel ([Map](#)) was also fortified becoming a defensive position, anticipating an attack.
- Jeroboam's mind started working against him as he reasoned in his heart.
- He reasoned that if the people returned to Jerusalem to worship and sacrifice that their hearts would be turned away from him, and that they would eventually return to Rehoboam.
- The first evidence of un-belief is fear.
- Jeroboam disbelieved God's promise to him that if he was faithful and obedient that God would bless and preserve him.

**1 Kings 11:38** “And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in My ways, and do that is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as David My servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.”

V: 27-30 Rehoboam leads the charge into idolatry making two golden calves saying to Israel, “behold thy gods – which brought thee up out of Egypt.”

- (Map) He placed one in Dan and one in Bethel – because it was too much for them to go up to Jerusalem.
- Jeroboam’s excuse was that it was too hard for them to go to Jerusalem to worship so he would make it easier on them, give them an “easy” religion.
- The Northernmost tribes wouldn’t have to travel all the way to Jerusalem, they only had to go to Dan, and the tribes of the middle regions / Ephraim area would only have to go to Bethel, how convenient!

V: 31-33 Jeroboam made it up as he went, making high places, making priests of the “lowest” people – because the sons of Levi the real priests all went to Jerusalem and wouldn’t have anything to do with the false man made religion of convenience.

- Jeroboam instituted a substitutionary feast in place of the regular feasts. The people were accustomed to the feasts and were going to want to participate in the regular feasts unless there was an alternative.
- The fact that the people of the 10 Northern tribes accepted all of this is telling. The Israelites had once before worshipped a golden calf and had paid the price for it. There had been others who weren’t qualified but sought the priesthood – and paid for it with their lives – as the nation digresses back to these same things corporately they will pay for dearly for it and be lost forever.
- All these things were the machinations of his own mind – when men reject the true and living God they always make another god in their own image or of their own design.
- Jeroboam’s religion incorporated elements from the Law of Moses and from pagan nations that the Jews had conquered. His system was what is today called “eclectic” (selective) or “syncretic” (combining many parts), but God calls it heresy and apostasy.
- When Isaiah the prophet confronted the new religions in his day, he cried out:

**Isaiah 8:20** “To the law and to the testimony: If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”