

2 Chronicles 10 - Rehoboam (Judah) Takes Over; People Revolt; The Kingdom Divides

IV. Judah's Kings (2 Chr 10:1—36:23)

(1) The kingdom is divided (2 Chr 10:1—11:23)

(A) Rehoboam's excessive taxation caused a split in the kingdom (2 Chr 10:1—11:4)

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Of the 26 chapters devoted to Solomon's successors, about half of the material presented is unique to 2 Chronicles. The vast majority of the non-synoptic material is directly in the service of "retribution theology" (the primary theme of the Chronicler) as they seek to provide the theological rationale for the events he narrates.

The reason for this approach seems to be that the Chronicler wanted to encourage and warn his audience that both obedience and disobedience usually have immediate consequences. The Book of Job deals with the fact that retribution is not always immediate.

The Chronicler never regarded the northern monarchy as anything but illegitimate and a rebellion against God's chosen dynasty. As far as he was concerned, all Israel had one and only one ruling family.

The writer continued his "sermon" (1 and 2 Chronicles) by evaluating each of Solomon's successors with the same yardstick he had used on Solomon, namely, the example of David. His intent appears to have been to show that none of David's descendants measured up to him, much less surpassed him. Consequently, the promised Son of David was yet to appear. The relationship of each king to temple worship showed his heart commitment to God. So there is much in what follows that deals with the kings' relationship to the temple and temple worship.

(1) The kingdom is divided (2 Chr 10:1—11:23) (Cf. 1 Kings 12; 1 Chr 10)

(A) Rehoboam's excessive taxation caused a split in the kingdom (2 Chr 10:1—11:4)

1 Then **Rehoboam** went to **Shechem**, because all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.

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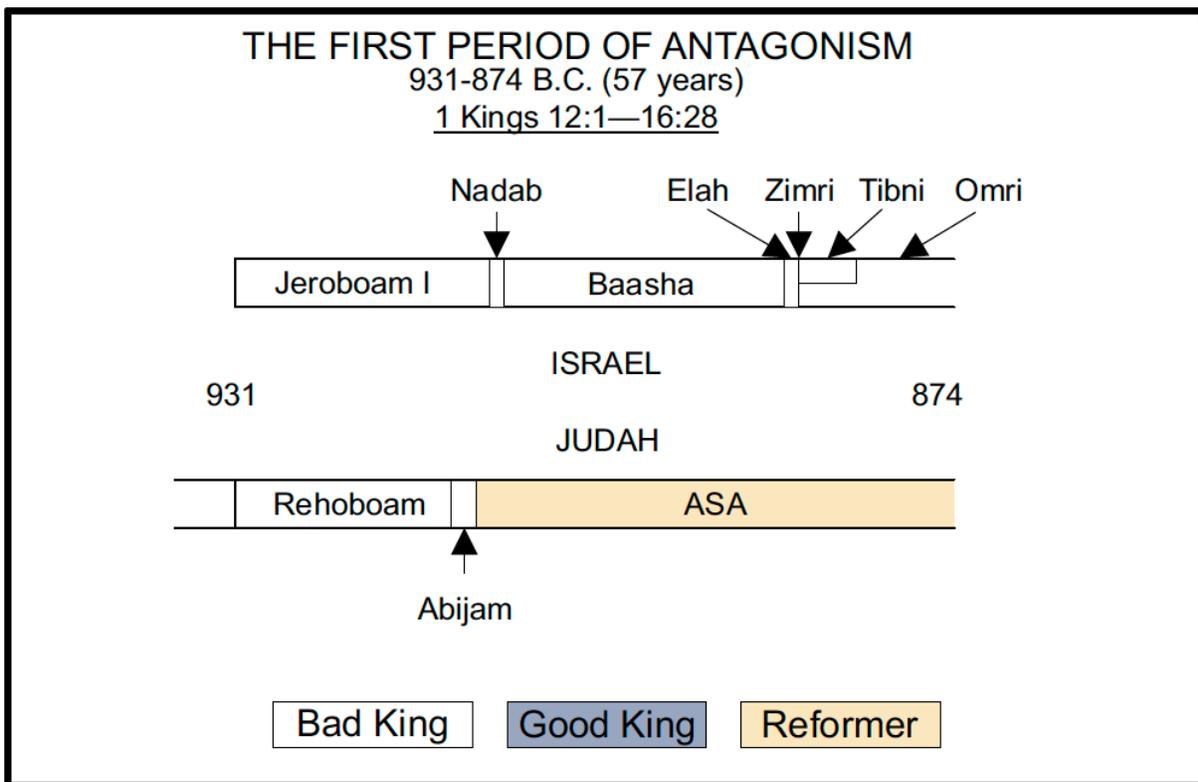
1 Rehoboam traveled to Shechem, because all of Israel went there to install him as king.

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

- "...Rehoboam" - the only son of Solomon mentioned in Scripture, had doubtless been appointed by his father to succeed him

- "...Shechem" - a fitting site for the coronation of a king of Israel (although Jerusalem was the natural coronation site):

- At Shechem, *Yahweh* first appeared to Abraham in the land and promised to give him all of Canaan; it was the site the covenant was received and renewed (Cf. Gen 12:6-7; 33:18-20; Joshua 8; 24)
- Jacob later settled there (Gen 33:18-20) and Joseph was buried there (Joshua 24:32)
- After they had entered the Promised Land the Israelites, at Shechem in the valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, dedicated themselves to keep the Mosaic Law (Joshua 24:1-27)
- This sacred spot now reminded the Israelites of their divinely revealed destiny as a nation and of God's faithfulness



2 When Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard *about it* (he was in Egypt where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon), Jeroboam **returned from Egypt**.

2 When Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was in Egypt where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon), Jeroboam returned from Egypt.

2 Nebat's son Jeroboam heard about it in Egypt, where he had fled to get away from Solomon the king. Jeroboam returned from Egypt

2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of Solomon the king, heard it, that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt.

- Though Solomon must have had many sons, none is mentioned except Rehoboam, whom he begot by Naamah the Ammonitess (Cf. 1 Kings 14:21)

— Having no doubt sensed the increasing spirit of alienation on the part of Israelites in the northern part of the kingdom against his father, Rehoboam went to Shechem to be formally coronated

— This city had held an important part in Israel's life since the time of Abraham. Joshua had reaffirmed the Mosaic Covenant there, and from that time Shechem had been more or less the unofficial capital of the north (Cf. Joshua 24:1-28)

- "...returned from Egypt" - his story leading to his return from Egypt is found in 1 Kings 11:26-40

3 So they sent *word* and summoned him. When Jeroboam and all Israel came, they spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

3 So they sent and summoned him. When Jeroboam and all Israel came, they spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

3 after being summoned. When Jeroboam and all of Israel arrived, they spoke to Rehoboam,

3 And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying,

- Jeroboam was formerly the foreman of labor in Ephraim, in which Shechem was located. When he heard that Solomon had died, he returned from Egypt where he had fled from Solomon sometime previously (Cf. 1 Kings 11:26-28,40).

— By popular demand, Jeroboam headed a delegation which appealed to Rehoboam to lighten their load of labor and taxation

— Jeroboam had, of course, been told by the Prophet Ahijah that the kingdom would be divided and that he would rule 10 of the tribes (11:31-39). But he seems to have decided to let events take their course rather than initiating an unprovoked revolution.

4 "Your father made our **yoke** hard; but now, lighten the hard labor *imposed by* your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you."

4 "Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you."

4 "Your father made our burdens unbearable. Therefore you must lighten your father's requirements and his heavy burden that he placed on us, and we'll serve you."

4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee.

- "...yoke" - Solomon had imposed heavy taxation, forced labor and other burdens on the Israelites

Solomon's method of governing was oppression. He taxed the people greatly and conscripted them into government service. The result was material magnificence. He multiplied riches and manifested great displays in the temple, the palace, and throughout his kingdom. He increased the military strength of the nation. Nevertheless in the process, he ground down the people. He kept them under his thumb. The state became more important than the people. The result was dissatisfaction with Solomon's method of government.

In reaction to this method, Rehoboam, in the south, chose a new method of government: autocracy. He decided to tighten his grip on the people so that he could control them (v14). He believed the people should trust in their rulers, but he did not trust in God.

Consequently, he failed. Autocracy led to revolution (v16).

Jeroboam, in the north, chose a third method of government: democracy. He let the people determine how they would live. While this resulted in more pleasant conditions for the people, it also resulted in ultimate disaster for his nation. Notice what democracy produced in Jeroboam's day: idolatry (v27-29). People cannot rule themselves effectively. We need God to govern us. Jeroboam believed rulers should trust in the people, but he, like Rehoboam, did not trust in God, either. Consequently, he failed. He made religion convenient, and the people became corrupt (v30-31).

Rehoboam's successors in Judah chose a method of government that we could call government by policy. That is, they chose to follow precedent, the pattern of their predecessors, rather than getting and following God's direction for their nation. There were some exceptions to this approach, but on the whole this was Judah's method of government.

Jeroboam's successors in Israel, however, chose a different method of government: selfishness. The kings of Israel cared little for the people of Israel. What concerned them primarily was what they could get for themselves out of being king. That is why the story of the kingdom of Israel is a story of intrigue, assassinations, and much bloodshed.

In summary, every form of human government results in disastrous failure if people do not acknowledge God's sovereignty. People cannot govern themselves effectively. The result is

always decline, disruption, and disintegration. This is one of the great revelations of 1 Kings. The message of that book, therefore, is that when people exclude God, every method of human government will fail. Nonetheless, God is still on His throne and is in control.

5 He said to them, "Return to me again in three days." So the people departed.

5 He said to them, "Return to me again in three days." So the people departed.

5 "Come back again in three days," Rehoboam told them. So the people left

5 And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed.

- Asking for three days to consider the matter, Rehoboam consulted with the old advisers of his father, who counseled him to listen to the Israelites

— By reducing the tax load and by lightening the labor conscription requirements on his people, King Rehoboam could have won the support of his petitioners, but he said that he wanted three days to think about their suggestion.

6 And then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you advise *me* to answer this people?"

6 Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you counsel *me* to answer this people?"

6 while King Rehoboam conferred with his advisors who had worked with his father Solomon during his administration. He asked them, "What is your advice as to what response I should return to these people?"

6 And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people?

- Rehoboam's response to the request of the Israelites (to lighten their load, v4) was the same as Pharaoh's: he consulted with his counselors and then refused to ease their burden, but increased it

7 They spoke to him, saying, "If you are kind to this people and please them and speak pleasant words to them, then they will be your servants always."

7 They spoke to him, saying, "If you will be kind to this people and please them and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

7 In reply, they told him, "If you will be kind to this people, please them, and speak appropriately to them with kind words, they'll serve you forever."

7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever.

- The king asked two groups of counselors for their advice. The elders were probably about the same age as his father Solomon, having served as the former king's official advisers; they were elders both by reason of years and by their office in the government.

— This group’s counsel was wise—to lighten the tax and work load, as the people asked. If taken, this advice would have resulted in peace, at least for a time.

8 But he ignored the advice of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and served him.

8 But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him.

8 But Rehoboam ignored the counsel that his elder advisors had given him. Instead, he consulted the younger men who had grown up with him and worked for him.

8 But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him. Then he turned to his own young peers who urged him not to relent but rather to make the people’s yoke all the heavier.

9 He said to them, “What advice do you give, so that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, ‘Lighten the yoke which your father put on us’?”

9 So he said to them, “What counsel do you give that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, ‘Lighten the yoke which your father put on us’?”

9 As a result, he asked them, “What’s your advice, so we can give an answer to these people who have asked me, ‘Please lighten the burden that your father put on us’?”

9 And he said unto them, What advice give ye that we may return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us? - Rehoboam's choice was whether he would regard himself as the people's servant under Yahweh's authority, as David and Solomon had done, or as the supreme authority in Israel, as Saul had done. His pride led to his downfall.

10 The young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, “This is what you should say to the people who spoke to you, saying: ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter for us!’ You should speak this way to them: ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist!’

10 The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, “Thus you shall say to the people who spoke to you, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter for us.’ Thus you shall say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins!’

10 “This is what you should tell the people who asked you: ‘Your father made our burden heavy, but you must make it lighter for us!’” the young men who had grown up with Rehoboam replied. “Tell them ‘My little finger will be thicker than my father’s whole body!’

10 And the young men that were brought up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but

make thou it somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.

- The younger men's counsel was the opposite from what the elders had given, but just what Rehoboam wanted to hear

— The wording of Rehoboam's reply to his petitioners, as suggested by his younger advisers, seems almost designed to provoke hostility: he would be far more harsh than his father, for his little finger was thicker than his father's waist (an obvious hyperbole intended to express his greater power)

11 Now then, my father loaded you with a heavy yoke; yet I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with **whips**, but I *will discipline you* with **scorpions!**"

11 Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I *will discipline you* with scorpions."

11 Not only that, but since my father loaded you down heavily, I'm going to add to that burden. If my father disciplined you with whips, I'm going to do so with scorpions!"

11 For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

- "...whips" - plain leather straps

- "...scorpions" - a particularly cruel type of whip that contained sharp pieces of metal; it was used in the castigation of slaves

— Because of the contrast with whips in this verse, it's clear that animal scorpions are not meant here

- The king was no child at this time; he was 41 years old (14:21). Nor was his decision made on the spur of the moment; he had three days to think it over (v5). It was a deliberate choice possibly based on what he believed was needed most in the nation at that time.

— Perhaps the king and his counselors thought intimidation would send the potential rebels scurrying for cover and would drive any ideas of insurrection far from their minds.

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, just as the king had directed, saying, "Return to me on the third day."

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, "Return to me on the third day."

12 So Jeroboam and all the people went back to Rehoboam on the third day, just as they had been directed when the king said, "Come back again in three days."

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

13 The king answered them harshly, and King Rehoboam ignored the advice of the elders.

13 The king answered them harshly, and King Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the elders.

13 But the king answered them strictly and ignored the counsel of his elders.

13 And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men,

14 He spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father disciplined you with whips, but I *will discipline you with scorpions.*"

14 He spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father disciplined you with whips, but I *will discipline you with scorpions.*"

14 Instead, Rehoboam spoke to them along the lines of what the younger men suggested. He told them, "My father burdened you heavily, but I will add to that burden. If my father disciplined you with whips, I will, too—with scorpions!"

14 And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

15 So the king did not listen to the people, because it was a turn of events from God so that the LORD might establish His word, which He spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

15 So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn *of events* from God that the LORD might establish His word, which He spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

15 The king would not listen to the people because the turn of events was from God, so that the LORD might fulfill his prediction that he spoke through Nebat's son Ahijah the Shilonite.

15 So the king hearkened not unto the people: for the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

- Rehoboam's decision resulted in what God had predicted to Solomon (1 Kings 11:11-13), Ahijah, and Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:31-39)

The Kingdom Divided; Jeroboam Rules Israel

16 When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people replied to the king, saying, "What share do we have in David? *We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.*

Everyone to your tents, Israel! Now look after your own house, David!" So all Israel went away to their tents.

16 When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them the people answered the king, saying, "What portion do we have in David? *We have* no inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to your tents, O Israel; Now look after your own house, David." So all Israel departed to their tents.

16 All of Israel—since the king wasn't going to listen to them—the people responded to the king, "What's the point in following David? We have no inheritance in the descendants of Jesse. Let's go home, Israel! David, take care of your own household!" So all of Israel left for home.

16 And when all Israel saw that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and we have none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: and now, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents.

- The division of the kingdom looked like a tragedy, but it was part of God's plan for His people—because of Solomon's sins

— This would have given hope to the original readers since the captivity looked like a tragedy, but prophets had foretold it too. It was part of God's sovereign will.

- "...Everyone to your tents, Israel!" - the reply of the Israelites evidently had become a battle cry; it was used years earlier by Sheba who rebelled against David (2 Sam 20:1)

— With these words, they turned their backs on their heritage to seek out new paths with their newly chosen leader, Jeroboam

- Rehoboam's insensitivity to the Israelites' hardships extinguished any hope they may have entertained of economic recovery. His dictatorial threat alienated his suffering subjects. Then and there they seceded and broke the union of the 12 tribes. Thus the unity of the Davidic house was repudiated by the majority of Israel.

17 But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

17 But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

17 And so Rehoboam ruled over the Israelis who lived in the cities of Judah.

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

- Rehoboam was only able to retain the support of one tribe: Judah (along with a very small tribe, Benjamin, Cf. 1 Kings 12:21)

18 Then King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was in charge of the forced labor, and the sons of Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

18 Then King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was over the forced labor, and the sons of Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

18 King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was in charge of conscripted labor, but the Israelis stoned him to death, and King Rehoboam had to jump in his chariot and flee back in a hurry to Jerusalem.

18 Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram that was over the tribute; and the children of Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. But king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

- What could have motivated Rehoboam to send Adoram, the personification of oppression (the foreman of forced labor) to meet with the rebels at that crucial moment?

— Perhaps Adoram was the best-qualified ambassador. Whatever the reason, Rehoboam's "wisdom" proved foolish again. Adoram died as the target of the rebels' wrath and Rehoboam barely escaped with his own life.

19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

19 That's how Israel came to be in rebellion against David's dynasty to this day.

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

- So serious was the cleavage that Adoniram (Heb. *Hadoram*, a variant spelling), probably the new work manager over Ephraim (Cf. 1 Kings 4:6), was stoned to death by the Israelites when Rehoboam sent him to them to arbitrate their differences.