

=KINGS OF THE BIBLE=

Lesson 3

Rehoboam

AIM: to teach my pupils the sins and tragedy of the first king of the Southern Kingdom.

POINT OF CONTACT: Saul was the first king of Israel. He was succeeded by David, who in turn was succeeded by his son, Solomon. One day during the reign of Solomon, a man named Jeroboam was walking outside Jerusalem and was met by a prophet whose name was Ahijah. Ahijah was clad in a new garment. He took it off and rent it in twelve pieces. He gave ten to Jeroboam and told him that Jehovah had destined him (Jeroboam) to become king over ten of the twelve tribes. He was not the direct descendant of Solomon's kingdom, neither was he Solomon's immediate successor; rather, Rehoboam succeeded his father, Solomon. The prophecy was fulfilled when the kingdom was divided under Rehoboam. Judah and most of Benjamin went with Rehoboam, but the other ten tribes organized the Northern Kingdom and chose Jeroboam for their king.

A good point of contact would be to take a cloth, maybe an old shirt that is beyond use. Let some member of the class be Ahijah. He would wear the shirt, then take it off and tear it in twelve pieces, giving ten pieces to some member of the class representing Jeroboam and two pieces to another member of the class representing Rehoboam. Explain to them that the two pieces represent the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom and the ten pieces represent the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom.

INTRODUCTION: When Solomon died, Rehoboam was his successor. Representatives of each of the twelve tribes promptly assembled at Shechem to make Rehoboam the king. The people had recently suffered under terrible taxation levied to support Solomon's extravagant way of life. At this meeting to anoint Rehoboam, the grievance of the people were presented to him. The spokesman to voice these grievances was Jeroboam, whom we have mentioned. Hence, we come to the fourth king of Israel, Rehoboam. We will study his life, his sins, and his troubles.

I REHOBAM TOOK WRONG COUNSEL. When the complaints came at Shechem from Jeroboam, who was representing the twelve tribes, Rehoboam asked for three days to deliberate. He consulted the old men who were counselors to his father. They advised him to speak well to the people and to relieve the heavy taxation burden, and they would be his servants forever.

He then consulted the young men who had grown up with him, and they urged him to say to the people, "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. 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," I Kings 12:10d, 11.

The tragic thing is that Rehoboam took the counsel of the young men rather than the old men. When he did this, ten of the twelve tribes renounced their allegiance to him, left their homes, and started a Northern Kingdom. This left only Judah and a large part of Benjamin to Rehoboam. (Probably nothing is more important to a child, young person, or for that matter, any person, than the type counsel he seeks and the type of counsel he follows. It is a good idea for one to seek counsel from people who are successful in the field chosen by the person. It is never a good idea for a person to avoid counsel. Solomon said that there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors. He also said, "...in the multitude of counsellors there is safety," and other similar statements.

II. REHOBAM FOLLOWED IN THE SINS OF HIS DAD.

1. High taxation. Solomon, in order to keep up his splendor, had needlessly taxed the people. Rehoboam followed in his dad's footsteps. How important it is for a dad to be careful so as to influence his son for the right!
2. Polygamy. Solomon had many wives. Rehoboam also followed in the same sin. He had eighteen wives and sixty concubines, twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. (II Chronicles 11:21)

3. Idolatry. I Kings 14:23 shows he was guilty of idolatry. This also followed his dad's example. You will recall that Solomon married many wives. They turned his heart away from the Lord. He tolerated their idols, and later he built idols for their heathen religion and shrines for their idols.

- III. REHOBOAM LED THE NATION TO IMMORALITY. Read I Kings 14:24. Notice, the Sodomites (those guilty of homosexuality) were here. Add this to the awful sins of adultery and fornication, and you have simply a sensual beehive. (Teacher: Spend a while here teaching the pupils to be morally clean. Too much could never be said about this.)

- IV. REHOBOAM WAS SELFISH. See I Kings 12:13, 14.

- V. REHOBOAM HAD NO LOVE FOR THE PEOPLE. Notice I Kings 12:15.

- VI. REHOBOAM REIGNED FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS. He died about 951 B.C., leaving his son, Abijam, to take the throne (I Kings 14:21-31).

- VII. REHOBOAM'S DEFEAT CAME AT THE HANDS OF SHISHAK, KING OF EGYPT. Shishak invaded the kingdom, captured the cities, and finally took Jerusalem and destroyed the temple and the palace. Sin always ends this way. A weakened life always ends this way. This tragic story may be found in I Kings 14:25-31. (Teacher, tell the pupils the wages of sin. Ask them to give you the names of people in the Bible whose sin caused them ruin. Examples of this would be Samson, David, Saul, Solomon, etc. If you have time at the end of the lesson, you might even want to tell about some of these tragic examples.)

- VIII. REHOBOAM'S SON, ABIJAM, FOLLOWED HIS FOOTSTEPS. Your sins will not stop with you. Your children, your children's children, and their children and on down, will be affected by your sins. This is so graphically shown at least three times in this story.
 1. Solomon's sins are found in the sins of Rehoboam.
 2. Rehoboam's sins are found in the life of his son, Abijam. Abijam had fourteen wives, twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters.
 3. Often overlooked is Rehoboam's mother, Naamah. She was one of Solomon's wives and was an Ammonitess. Now think of this for a minute: The Ammonites were descendants of Lot and his wicked sin of incest with his daughters. This took place a thousand years before Solomon, and yet Lot's descendants, through this wicked sin, are still weak people and cause weak kings. For a thousand years, Lot's sin hounded him and caused trouble. It has now been four thousand years since Lot, and the Ammonites are still causing trouble. How important it is that we live right for the sake of those who follow us!