

Solomon had been warned by the LORD that the kingdom would be taken from his descendants because of his disobedience. This judgment happened when Solomon's son, Rehobam, became king and foolishly let his pride and ego influence his judgment. His arrogance compelled the people of Israel to rebel against the leadership of David's family line and the nation split into two kingdoms.

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

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The location selected for Rehoboam's coronation as king was Shechem, a city with a significant political and religious history. Representatives from all of the tribes of Israel came to Shechem to determine if they would accept Rehoboam's leadership, a decision that would depend on Rehoboam's response to the grievances that they would present to the new king.

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2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;)

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We are introduced to Jeroboam in the previous chapter (1 Kings 11:26-40). Solomon had recognized that Jeroboam was a man with the ability to get things done and had placed him in charge of many building projects in Israel. However, a prophet named Ahijah approached him one day and revealed that the LORD would make him king over ten of the tribes of Israel and that if he would obey the LORD as David had, then his descendants would be secure on the throne. This prophecy may have motivated Jeroboam to rebel against Solomon (1 Kings 11:26 says that Jeroboam was "lifting up his hand against the king") and also it's possible that Solomon had heard about this prophecy. As a result, Jeroboam had been forced to flee to Egypt when Solomon tried to have him killed (1 King 11:40).

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3 That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying,  
4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.

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**"That they sent and called him"** – Jeroboam was apparently a recognized leader that had accumulated a following before he had fled to Egypt. Israel's grievances were against Solomon's leadership practices and so it was only natural that they would select a like-minded leader to voice their grievances. Jeroboam was still living in Egypt, so they sent for him to return to Israel and represent them.

**"And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying"** – Jeroboam is leading the people of Israel and speaking for them at this meeting with Rehoboam. Knowing that the LORD had promised to give him the kingdom, Jeroboam might have guessed that this was the time or he may have been stirring up dissatisfaction with the Davidic leadership.

**"Thy father made our yoke grievous [difficult; burdensome]"** – Solomon had made great demands on the people, through excessive taxes and compulsory labor on his various building projects. The people considered these burdens to be overly severe and had suffered under them for many years.

**"now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee"** – The people of Israel were looking for some relief from these heavy burdens that Solomon had placed on them. If Rehoboam would be willing to give them the relief they were looking for then they would accept his leadership as king.

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5 And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed. 6 And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?

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**"And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed"** – Rehoboam requests three days to decide how he will respond to their demands. He apparently understands that his response could make or break his ability to remain as king, so he wants time to consider his options.

**"And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived"** – These were older men, which spoke of their experience at giving advice and the wisdom they had acquired over their lifetime. The fact that they had been advisors to Solomon, the wisest man on earth, also speaks to their ability to give sound advice. Solomon had been wise enough to realize that even he needed input from other wise men (**Prov. 15:22** "*Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established*").

**"and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?"** – Rehoboam initially asks the older, experienced advisors how they think he should answer the demands of the people. These men were in the best position to give a wise answer.

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7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

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**"And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them"** – These older men gave both a scriptural and diplomatic answer. The first part of their answer centered on being a servant-leader of the people, which is what scripture teaches that a good leader should do. The God-given responsibility of a leader is to serve the best interests of those that he leads.

**"and answer them, and speak good [pleasant; beneficial] words to them"** – The second part of the older men's answer advised diplomacy. Rehoboam should "answer them" (indicating that he heard and understood their grievances) and "speak good words to them" (indicating that he is willing to address their grievances).

**"then they will be thy servants for ever"** – These older men wisely understood that if Rehoboam did not make concessions to the people then they would likely rebel. However, if he did as they asked then he would win their loyalty. The older men gave wise counsel, but was the LORD's will that the people would rebel against Rehoboam (v. 24).

8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, *and* which stood before him: 9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter?

**“But he forsook [to leave; abandon] the counsel of the old men, which they had given him”** – Apparently Rehoboam did not like the advice that these older men gave him, so he decided not to follow it. It may be that he was not willing to make concessions to the people because of his ego and pride.

**“and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him”** – Rehoboam looked to men his age that thought like him for advice. He likely believed their advice would be more in agreement with his way of thinking.

**“And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter?”** – Rehoboam now directs the question to these younger inexperienced men who obviously think like him.

10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins. 11 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.

The advice of the young men is harsh. Rather than conceding to the people's request, they advise Rehoboam to do the opposite. They suggest that he should tell the people that he will be even harder on them than his father had been. Not only would his hand upon them be heavier but his punishments for disobedience would be even more severe than that of his father's.

**Verses 12-15:** When the people returned after three days to hear Rehoboam's response to their requests, he showed none of the compassion that the older men had advised. Instead he used the harsh and unyielding answer suggested by the younger men.

16 So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither *have we* inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

**“So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them”** – They realized that the king was not willing to listen to and address their grievances. He showed no sign of agreeing to any of their terms.

**“the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse”** – Since David was the first in the family line to be king, the people refer to him as the patriarch of the family line. Now the people of Israel reject the sovereignty of David's family over them, stating that they have no obligation to obey and follow the leadership of this family.

**“to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents”** – Of all of the tribes of Israel, only the tribe of Judah could be said to have “a portion in David” or “inheritance in the son of Jesse.” Thus, the rest of Israel abandoned David's family, with only Judah remaining loyal to their leadership.

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

The territory occupied by the other tribes of Israel became a separate nation from the tribe of Judah. However, there apparently were some people from these tribes that dwelt in various cities inside the territory of Judah. Instead of leaving, they remained where they were and submitted to the authority of Rehoboam.

18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

**“Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute [body of forced laborers]”** – Apparently Rehoboam underestimated how serious the people were or he thought he could force the issue, because he sent the head man who was over the forced laborers in an apparent attempt to compel the people to return to work.

**“and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died”** – This move by Rehoboam must have angered the people because they killed Adoram, which sent the strong message indicating that they no longer considered Rehoboam to be their king and refused to obey his commands.

**“Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem”** – After the people had killed Adoram, Rehoboam realized that his own life was potentially in danger, which compelled him to flee Shechem and return to Jerusalem.

**“So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day”** – At the time this passage was written, Israel was still refusing to follow the house of David.

20 And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

It appears that the 10 tribes unanimously approved of making Jeroboam their king, the man who had led the confrontation between the people of Israel and Rehoboam (v. 3). The only tribe that continued to follow the leadership of David's family line was Judah.

**Verses 21-25:** Upon his return to Jerusalem, Rehoboam starts making preparations to use military means to force Israel to return to him but the LORD forbade Rehoboam from doing so. They were not to fight against their brethren at this time because the division of the kingdom had been orchestrated by Him as a judgment for Solomon's sins (v. 24; 1 Kings 11:9-13).