

## 2 Chronicles 10-12

Chapter 9 comes to a close with the death of Solomon. The glory of the nation of Israel has reached its summit peak and its overall only downhill from here. Now there will be a smattering of good kings in Judah's history here and there that will make for glimmers of hope along the way and bring about some reformation, turning the people back to God and all for a season. But the overwhelming majority of what takes place from here on out is only bad news. We mentioned as we were coming to a close last week how that its amazing how fast things can crumble from being in that exalted place, to becoming completely abased. Once you start down those slopes of spiritual/moral declension; they get real slick, real fast and before you know it you're at the bottom of the barrel. You know you go to a water park or something and you want to hit those massive tube slides or the giant straight slide and so you start heading up the steps. You walk and you walk, and then you wait and you wait, and you walk, and you walk, it may take you 30-45 minutes to get there by the time it's all said and done and everyone has gone before you. So you hop in that thing and away you go and in less than 10-15 seconds you're at the bottom. And that's sorta the way it is even spiritually, the path to exaltation is a slow go, because it's rooted in humiliation, self-sacrifice, and servant hood, it takes discipline, patience, and obedience. Not in a sense of legalism but simply an exercise of wisdom as you walk *with* the Lord, draw near *to* the Lord, seek to find your strength *in* the Lord by grace through faith. But years of leading a life of dedication, and of consecration can be desecrated and destroyed in a moment's time, a spiritually fatal decision. And I'm not talking about matters of salvation even, but how we can disqualify ourselves from service and bring to an end what's taken years to build up in a comparatively brief amount of time. Now God can restore, He can renew and revive, but it's another long haul. All that to say that for the most part the glory of Israel comes to a swift and decisive end with the death of Solomon (and had actually began before his death) and it never recovers, it never regains the ground and the glory that it had up to this point. Solomon is dead, and Rehoboam his son rules in his place.

Vs1

Now here's something you may or may not find interesting. Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines, and the bible only mentions this 1 son of his. Now you would think that he had to have more than 1 son from 1,000 women, but the bible only records Rehoboam, and in a sad twist of irony (Solomon being the wisest man outside of Christ to ever live) Rehoboam his son was a fool. I don't want to make a mountain out of a mole hill here but it would seem to me that we're already seeing some evidence of the fact that he's on some shaky ground and hasn't really rallied the respect of the nation because we note here that he went to Shechem for his coronation, his crowning ceremony. "What difference does that make?" Well, where did the king reside? Jerusalem, when Solomon was made king the leaders of the nation came to Jerusalem to submit themselves to him. But Rehoboam went up north to Shechem to meet with them.

Vs2

In order to understand why this is inserted here you have to go back to 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Ch 11. There you find this young man Jeroboam who was industrious, he was a mighty man of valor and he was an Ephraimite whom Solomon seeing potential in him made him an officer over all of the house of Joseph. Now earlier on in that chapter you find that Solomon's heart had turned from the Lord, he'd fallen into idolatry even after God had appeared to him twice. So one day Jeroboam made his way out of Jerusalem and a prophet by the name of Ahijah met him on the way and they were alone in a field.

And Ahijah took this new garment that he'd clothed himself with, took it off and tore it in 12 pieces. And he told Jeroboam to take 10 pieces unto himself and then he said, "Thus says the Lord I will tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give 10 tribes to you. But he's going to continue to rule over 1 tribe for the sake of My servant David." And He said, "I'm not going to do this during Solomon's lifetime but I will take the kingdom from his son's hand and give it to you." Well when Solomon caught wind of that he sought to have Jeroboam put to death and so he fled as a refugee to Egypt. Now he's heard that Solomon is dead and so he returns to Israel.

Vs3-5

You don't have to be some sorta detective or something to realize that Jeroboam had an interest in the son of Solomon and so it's no surprise to us that he's a part of the group of elders that approach Rehoboam regarding what they're looking for in their next leader. And the short of it is that they want a tax break. They say, "Look man, your dad was a heavy handed ruler, he demanded a lot of the people." Obviously the enormity of projects that Solomon embarked upon didn't get done for free, the people were paying for those things with their taxes and so they say, "We want a break, we need some tax relief, you meet us there and we'll serve you loyally."

Really they were simply experiencing what God told them they would when they were demanding a king be over them like the other nations. God intended the nation of Israel to be a Theocracy, a nation governed by God, but they wanted a human king like the nations around them. God told them through Samuel that their king would be one who took from them, made servants of them, and in essence would be burdensome to them. and Here they're really bearing witness to that reality. The sad part is that they only made material demands of him, they didn't make even one spiritual demand, it would seem as though the idolatry and apostasy of Solomon didn't bother them much.

So after hearing them out Rehoboam says, "Give me 3 days and then come back and I'll tell ya what I'm going to do." and I think that this was the right thing to do, he didn't want to make a hasty decision. He said, "Give me a little time to think this through, come back in a few days and I'll give you my decision on that."

Don't allow yourself to be pressed into snap decisions if there's any way you can avoid it, take the time to pray through it, seek counsel on it if necessary, you don't want to make a quick decision that you'll later regret, better to wait it out on the front side as opposed to regretting your decision on the back side.

#### Vs6-7

Now this was a wise move on his behalf, he sought out the counsel of the men who stood before his dad, who were advisers to his dad. And obviously none of them were where Solomon was "wisdom-wise" but when you've sat in his counsels and advised with him for a # a years, you've got some insight that's ready to be tapped and drawn from. These are the guys of whom the Queen of Sheba said, "*Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom!*" 1 Kings 10:8 The proverbs tell us, "*He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.*" Proverbs 13:20 Which is to say that if you want to grow in wisdom you do well to hang out with people in whom you see wisdom displayed, you hang out with a bunch of idiots (pardon the harshness just don't know how else to say it) that are always getting themselves in trouble, or making stupid decisions, well you'll wind up in that boat as well. Another proverb put it like this, "*The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.*" Proverbs 12:26 Be careful regarding whom you choose to hang with or to get advice and seek counsel from. This was a good move on Rehoboam's behalf, he grabbed those guys whom his dad had invested into for all those years and said, "What do you think?" They gave him some solid advice. "You serve the people, and the people will serve you."

The idea here is not one that's foreign to scripture; a *ruler of God's people* must be a *servant to God's people*. Remember Jesus (in talking to His disciples) said, "*...whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*" Matt 20:26-28 This is kind of the idea that they're communicating to him, that for them to serve him, he needs 1<sup>st</sup> to serve them. It's sort of like people not caring how much you know till they know how much you care. Besides all that he's not Solomon, he can't expect that they should relate to him like they did to his dad, his dad had grown with them, earned loyalty and trust from them. They need to know that Rehoboam's for them, he's on their side, wants to work with them, it's good advice.

#### Vs8-11

He did well in taking in the advice of the men who'd stood with his father. He did foolishly in rejecting it and looking for someone to tell him what he wanted to hear. You see, don't think that he heard the 2 sides and then weighed them out carefully and considered the young men's counsel as the better of the 2. In Verse 8 we read that he'd already *rejected* the advice that the elder's had given him before he ever heard what his peers had to say.

This is something that we might refer to as “advice shopping” or shopping for advice. You know how this works. You want to justify something you want to do, or I want to cover my tracks in saying I sought advice before I acted so I seek out advice. The problem comes in when I didn’t get the advice I was looking for. So I throw that advice in the trash and look for advice somewhere else, and I’ll continue to do that until I finally hear what I want to hear and then I’ll say, “You know that’s what I was thinking to, that really bears witness or confirms it for me.” And then I go ahead and do what I wanted to do. The bible tells us that when we’re in the hearing of a fool, just save your breath, he’ll just despise the wisdom of your words. (Proverbs 23:9)

Rehoboam rejected their advice, turned to his buddies and they told him what he wanted to hear. Now I’m not saying that all older men are wise, and all younger men are unwise; ultimately you want to hear from the Lord and you and I are to be looking to godly individuals when we’re confronted with decisions that we desire to be counseled in. But they were all, “Tell them that your little finger will be thicker than your dad’s waist!” In other words, “My weakness will be heavier or stronger than his strength. You just *thought* he was heavy handed, demanding and overbearing, you ain’t seen nothing yet!”

And it’s true that Solomon seemed to demand a lot from the people, but we don’t get the impression that Israel went along with him out of fear but rather they shared a common vision, they believed in what Solomon wanted to do and were willing to sacrifice to see it come together. Rehoboam didn’t really appeal to any sense of shared vision or purpose. He just wanted the people to obey him *really* out of the fear of a tyrant.

Vs12-15

Now this isn’t saying that God made Rehoboam make this choice, he made his own choice. But the Lord did utilize his choice to bring about His word to Jeroboam, this is sort of a backstage point of view, we’re able to see a window of God’s sovereignty woven throughout the pages of history here. And as we’ll see this is what split the kingdom, and it’s one of the very things Solomon worried about. In Ecclesiastes 2:18-19, “*Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun.*” “I’ve spent all this time building this up and for what? The next guy in line might just throw it all away through foolishness.”

And that’s exactly what happened, before he was even established on the throne he’d lost over 80% of the kingdom through foolishness. So we kinda got a couple of things happening here because on the one hand Rehoboam is in fact suffering the ramifications of his own choice. Yet on the other hand in a very real way this is the result of Solomon’s sin because God told Jeroboam that He was going to tear the kingdom from him because Solomon’s heart had turned from Him. So we’re seeing here individual accountability as well as the fact that our decisions in life impact people around us sometime for generations to follow.

That's just another reason to draw near and stick *to* the Lord, because there is inherent danger in turning our back *on* and walking away *from* the Lord not only for us but for those around us as well.

Vs16-17

Not only did they reject Rehoboam they rejected the entire Davidic dynasty! Rehoboam acted foolishly, yet for David's sake God acted graciously in allowing him to remain in power over Judah and Benjamin. From this point forward as a general rule (though not without exception) when we read of Israel it's speaking of the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom, and when you read of Judah it's a reference to the southern kingdom that comprises Judah and Benjamin.

Vs18-19

It would seem that perhaps Rehoboam didn't take their rebellion too seriously until they killed his tax man and then he hightailed it back to Jerusalem. Which by the way how wise was it to have who was probably one of the most hated men in Israel, (Solomon's hard nosed enforcer of labor/tax man) Hadoram the embodiment of oppression, to now enforce Rehoboam's new plan of oppression? But after they killed him Rehoboam was like, "Oh man they were serious!" So he booked it back to Jerusalem before they got a hold of him.

## Ch 11

Vs1-4

Rehoboam gets back to Jerusalem and thinks, "If they won't live under my rule by choice, then they'll live under my rule by force." And he embarks upon what would've become a civil war had the Lord not intervened. And the point here is that unity is something that you really can't force, to fight against your brother, or your sister so that you can somehow in the end regain unity doesn't make sense. The end never justifies the means, now I'm not going to say that there's never a time that certain things need to take place so that order might be maintained. For instance when Absalom rebelled against David, things had to be set in order. But that's not what's happening here, there's been sin, there's been foolish decisions, there's been a sense of a tyrannical mentality, and God is dealing with all of that, this is from the Lord. And so I'll give him some credit here, every now and then he surprises us and does the right thing, he listened to the man of God and pulled his army back.

Now on side note here I want you to realize that the voice of one man put a halt to a civil war and certain national disaster. Can one person make a difference? You bet they can, all the more if the Lord is leading you, you sense the Lord leading you to step out and speak into a situation be obedient to that. Shemaiah was one man being obedient to God's direction for his life and he made a difference in the entire nation.

Vs5-12

It's interesting to me that he does all kinds of things on a practical level to strengthen his borders on the southwest side, but he does nothing on a spiritual level to seek the Lord regarding it. What does the bible say? "*Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.*" Ps 127:1

And Rehoboam's about to learn that lesson the hard way. He doesn't really strengthen his borders on the north to set up for potential problems with Israel. He focuses on the southwest fearing potential invasion from Egypt, and his fear was well placed. Remember where Jeroboam has been all these yrs? Egypt, no doubt the Pharaoh was aware of the change in leadership with regard to Solomon's death (and nations were always most vulnerable and subject to attack during that time of transition in leadership, someone new and inexperienced on the throne) plus now that the nation has been torn, he's been weakened radically. If he was in a vulnerable position before, he's really in a vulnerable position now. So he no doubt is hoping for the best, but he's preparing for the worst.

Vs13-17

You see another short lived glimmer of hope. But if you remember right I told you that as to where the books of the kings deal with both the northern and southern kingdoms, the Chronicles deals almost exclusively with the southern kingdom of Judah (David's line). And as to where Judah produced a few good kings over the years, Israel didn't have even one who sought the Lord. Jeroboam had an incredible opportunity handed to him and he blew it. He was afraid that the people traveling to Jerusalem to worship might cause them to be won over again to the tribe of Judah so he set up some idols in a couple of different places and told the people to worship them in their tribute to God as opposed to going to Jerusalem. He encouraged them to enter into idolatry. So what we're seeing here is that the priests, and those who really wanted to serve and seek the Lord, counted the cost and gave up everything to move to Judah and Jerusalem so that they could worship the Lord in the manner that the Lord had prescribed in His word. (And as you might imagine that left very few truly godly people in Israel.)

But there are a couple of things with that.

#1 When the people saw the way the Levites responded, they took courage and followed their example. The point being that people are watch you as a believer, as someone who wants to serve the Lord and has set your heart to seek the Lord. Lead your life in such a way as to be an example that people can follow. The bible says, "*...be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*" 1 Timothy 4:12

#2 From the other angle if you see someone who's leading their life in a manner that's worthy of following their example, do it. It's ok to take to heart the things that other godly people are doing that causes them to have a healthy love relationship with Jesus and incorporate those same things into *your* walk and relationship with the Lord. So #1 Be a good example, and #2 Follow after other good examples.

And you might note there in Verse 17 the secret of the strength of any nation is those people in that nation who have set their heart to seek the Lord God. The influence of those who were godly in that nation added strength to that nation as they walked in the way of the Lord for 3 yrs. As they walked with the Lord they were strong, things went well, the Lord is our strength, our fortress, our strong tower and shield. Unfortunately, it didn't last longer than that because of Rehoboam's general bent toward ungodliness, and so we read here.

Vs18-23

He kinda took after his dad in the "many wives and concubines" area. Not nearly as extensive but over the top and outside the parameters of God's Word nonetheless. And when it says he dealt "wisely" it's with reference to a political level in keeping his sons distant from each other and investing authority and provisions into each of them so as to keep them from forming some sort of uprising against him or each other.

## Ch 12

Vs1

Now we've spoken about this recently on a Sunday morning so I won't dive too deeply into it now but this is that general principle that we so often see that as long as times are tough or uncertain I'll seek the Lord. But when things are going good, I'm feeling good about myself and established in my strength I don't need the Lord any more and so I drift. And this is the story of Rehoboam's life, he seemed to seek the Lord when his days got desperate enough, outside of that he served himself. So after 3 yrs of blessing, sensing that he was strong (forgetting that it was the Lord who'd strengthened him) he forsook the law of the Lord. Rather than growing more dependant upon the Lord he grew *independent* of the Lord, and as goes the king so goes the nation. The people followed him, never underestimate the influence of leadership, which is another reason that higher form of accountability is placed upon leaders. He forsook the law of the Lord, and the people followed him, he led the nation away from God.

Vs2-4

There may have been all kinds of reason politically that Shishak attacked them when he did. The Chronicler cuts through all of that and says in essence, "Rehoboam forsook the Lord, so the Lord removed His hedge from him and the Pharaoh of Egypt came flooding in." God used him in a disciplinary way against Judah, now how good are all those fortifications doing? Shishak just came in and took those cities and there was nothing Rehoboam could do to stop him. Unless the Lord guards the city the watchman stays awake in vain. They walked in the law of the Lord for 3 years, the 4<sup>th</sup> year he rebelled, and the 5<sup>th</sup> year the invasion came. God gave him a span of time to repent and he didn't so now God is dealing with him in a disciplinary manner.

Vs5-8

So this same Shemaiah comes to Rehoboam and the leaders of the nation and says, “You insisted on forsaking the Lord, and now you’re forsaken by God.” So once again in a moment of positive progression the leaders of the nation humbled themselves, and there’s always something healthy about leaders (anyone really but especially leaders) humbling themselves before the Lord and crying in repentance unto the Lord. And that’s what they did, they cried out, “The Lord is righteous.” Which is to say, “We’re not, and we deserve what’s coming to us.” And with that God responded, God honors the humble of heart. Disobedience brings about discipline, repentance brings about restoration.

Now there are still some ramifications to endure, when they forsook the Lord in reality they offered themselves to another master. Now God is going to allow them to understand what that’s like, serving someone else instead of Him. Because it’s always to man’s benefit to serve the Lord, and to his detriment to serve anyone or anything else.

Vs9-12

So in just 5 yrs Rehoboam has taken the kingdom from being at it’s Zenith, the largest territorially and materially, (though up and down spiritually) and has plummeted it down to ruling only 2 tribes and going from a place where silver was despised to using polished brass and only bringing it out on special occasions when the king came around. Couple of things, brass in the scripture is a symbol of judgment, and certainly we can see God’s hand of judgment in all this. But also brass can be made to look like gold in appearance, but it’s a cheap imitation, a façade. And that’s typical of Rehoboam’s kingdom and a lot of Christian lives I think as well. The façade of gold, everything looks good on the surface, but in reality it’s but a cheap imitation, things aren’t good at all, but we like people to think things are just like they’ve always been when in reality we’ve left our 1<sup>st</sup> love. Outwardly appearing spiritual, inwardly deprived and devoid of an ongoing walk and relationship with the Lord.

But anytime someone comes around we get out the shield and put on the front. God would have us humble ourselves, repent and return to Him, that He might begin to bless us once again drawing near to us as we draw near to Him.

Vs13-16

So we have the sad legacy of Rehoboam left behind, “He did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord.” Oh he sought the Lord at times when things got tough, but it was a convenience thing, he was wishy washy, unstable, he didn’t root himself in the Lord and purpose in his heart to follow after the Lord. We might say that he had a grip God’s word, God’s ways, but God’s Word and God’s ways never had a grip on him, he utilized them as a convenience not a loving commitment. We’re to purpose in our heart to seek the Lord, that’s what this word “prepare” speaks of. If I’m *preparing* a Thanksgiving dinner that means I’m actively pursuing it and am busy about it, if I don’t prepare then I do nothing. Same thing here he didn’t prepare his heart, he didn’t pursue the Lord in his heart, and as a result he succumbed to evil and his legacy is sad and tragic.

Don't be one who turns to the Lord when things get tough, but then you kinda go your own way when things are good, follow after the Lord with *all* your heart, *all* your soul, and with *all* your strength, *all* of your days. Then you'll hear those words we all long to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant, you've been faithful over a few things I'll make you ruler over many, enter in to the joy of your Lord."

Prayer Points:

Father may we stay faithful to You all of our days. Teach us what it means to prepare our heart to seek You, to prioritize You, and to follow after You, depending upon You in the tough times and depending upon You even more when things are going well. I pray if there's anyone here who may be holding up a shield of brass, having left that 1<sup>st</sup> love relationship with You that tonight You would renew and restore that relationship into proper order. Help us to walk in wisdom, for Your glory, and Your name's sake.