

LESSON THREE

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

Text: I Kings 12:1-24 & II Chronicles 10.

A. **KING REHOBOAM:**

His son, Rehoboam, succeeded Solomon. Rehoboam's mother was the Ammonite princess, Naamah (I Kings 14:21).

Rehoboam was illiterate and domineering. The historian, Josephus, called him a proud and foolish man. Like his father, he had luxurious habits. He had 18 wives, 60 concubines, 28 sons and 60 daughters. He was 41 years of age when he became King and reigned for 17 years.

B. **KING JEROBOAM:**

Jeroboam was the first king of the Northern Kingdom. His father was Nebat, an Ephraimite.

He was a capable man. He had been employed by Solomon and was in charge of the workmen building the Millo.

Ahijah, the prophet who tore his new garment into twelve parts and gave Jeroboam ten, met him. He explained that these ten parts represented the ten tribes over which he would rule. Solomon heard of this and sought to kill Jeroboam who fled to Egypt. Pharaoh gave him protection.

After Solomon's death, he married an Egyptian princess and returned to Israel to become king over the northern ten tribes.

C. **REVOLT UNDER REHOBOAM: (II Chronicles 10).**

Very soon after the death of Solomon came a revolution which divided the nation.

Rehoboam must have been somewhat aware of the dissatisfaction of the northern tribes. Normally, they would all have assembled at Jerusalem for the inaugural ceremonies. Because of the unrest, Shechem was selected because it was centrally located.

Jeroboam also attended the meeting having returned from Egypt. The tribes which Jeroboam was leader, requested relief from the heavy load of taxation they had endured under Solomon. Rehoboam requested three days to consider their request. He consulted the older men who had experienced the heavy load under Solomon. These men advised Rehoboam to be kind and ease the burden. They assured him that he would win the true loyalty of everyone.

Rehoboam then turned to the young men who apparently desired a continuation of the lavish court. They advised him to say, *"My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins."* The young men's advice was taken and Rehoboam told Israel when they assembled on the third day, *"My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions"* (II Chronicles 10:11).

The cry went forth, "*Every man to your tents, O Israel.*" When Rehoboam saw what had happened, he sent his chief tax collector, Adoram, to them. This man was stoned to death and Rehoboam retreated to Jerusalem. He assembled an army of 180,000 men, but God forbade him to fight. He then began to fortify a number of cities and reigned over the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

D. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO KINGDOMS:

The tribes of Judah and Ephraim had been jealous of each other since the days of Egypt. Judah was the largest and had been favored with being in the lead position. Ephraim had descended from Joseph and Joshua had been of this tribe. The rivalry of these two tribes showed up at various times. It was revealed at the crowning of David and at Absalom's rebellion.

The division was only an outbreak of an old condition. If Rehoboam had been wise, he would have taken care not to make matters any worse.

The Northern Kingdom with its ten tribes was more powerful than the Southern Kingdom—however, the latter was stronger spiritually.

E. THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL:

The Kingdom of Israel continued for about 250 years. It was overthrown by the Assyrians under Shalmaneser in 721 BC.

The capital of the Northern Kingdom was first at Shechem and then at Samaria.

Nineteen kings reigned, representing nine ruling families. Eight kings were either assassinated or committed suicide. All of these kings, from Jeroboam to Hoshea, were idolaters.

The prophets to Israel were Jonah, Amos, Hosea and Micah.

In recent years, they have been spoken of as "The Ten Lost Tribes." James knew their identity for he addressed his epistle to them (James 1:1).

F. TWO GOLDEN CALVES:

Jeroboam was a religious apostate. He feared that if the people returned to Jerusalem to worship, they would favor a reunion of the two kingdoms. To guard against this, he established new worship centers in Dan and Bethel. He erected gold images of calves at each place. He built temples to house the images and founded a non-Levitical priesthood. He substituted the Feast of the Tabernacles with an annual pagan festival. Frequently, his apostasy is linked with his name. "*Who did sin, and made Israel to sin.*" Jeroboam opened the door for Baal worship. The nation never did get completely delivered from the idolatry introduced by Jeroboam. On one occasion, an anonymous prophet rebuked him, but he was only angry and did not repent.

G. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH:

The Kingdom of Judah continued for almost 400 years under 20 kings from Rehoboam to Zedekiah. Many of these kings were pious. During this time, there were three revivals during the reigns of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. The prophets that were sent to the Kingdom of Judah were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Zephaniah, Micah, Nahum and Habakkuk.

