

76 The kingdom is divided

Scripture: 1 Kings 12-14

Memory Verse: Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Aim: To teach that the Lord's warning that human kings would only bring slavery and oppression came true, and this points a need for a king who will follow God's ways. And that King is Jesus!

After telling Solomon that the kingdom would be taken from him, God raised up a number of enemies that opposed Solomon. Some were from other nations, but one was one of Solomon's own officials; his name was Jeroboam.

One day, Jeroboam was visited by the prophet Ahijah. He said to Jeroboam, "The God of Israel, says: 'I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon, and I will give ten of the tribes to you! For Solomon not followed my ways and done what is pleasing in my sight. If you listen to what I tell you and follow my ways and do whatever I consider to be right, and if you obey my decrees and commands, as my servant David did, then I will always be with you. Because of Solomon's sin I will punish the descendants of David—**though not forever.**'"

After hearing this, Jeroboam left to stay in Egypt to wait for his chance. Not long after that, Solomon's reign came to an end, and he was succeeded by his son Rehoboam.

However, Rehoboam was a very foolish leader. When Rehoboam became king, the whole assembly of Israel went to speak with him. "Your father was a hard master," they said. "Lighten the harsh labor demands and heavy taxes that your father imposed on us. Then we will be your loyal subjects."

Then King Rehoboam discussed the matter with the older men who had counseled his father, and also asked the younger men that he had grown up with. The older counselors replied, "If you are willing to be a servant to these people today and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your loyal subjects."

The young men told him, "This is what you should tell those complainers: 'My father laid heavy burdens on you, but I'm going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!'"

Rehoboam chose to follow the advice of his young friends, and as a result, the people of Israel refused to be ruled by him. Instead, they called an assembly and made Jeroboam king over the ten Northern tribes of Israel, just as the prophet had foretold. So only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to Rehoboam. From this point on, Israel became a divided nation. **And because neither Rehoboam nor Jeroboam were willing to follow Gods ways, both leaders ended up leading all of Israel and Judah away from God and into idolatry and worship of false gods.**

God had warned the people of Israel that their desire to be ruled by human kings wouldn't end well, and He was proven right. Even through all of this, God did not completely abandon the nation of Israel. For He had made a promise to that Abraham's descendants would become blessed in a way that would bless the whole world, and He intended to keep that promise. In the mean time, the kings and people of Israel had much to learn about their need for a true King.