

Rehoboam

Rehoboam the son of Solomon by Naamah an Ammonite princess, [1 Kings 14:21].

Rehoboam was the last king of the united monarchy of King David and the first king of the southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin.

On the death of his father Solomon, Rehoboam went first to Shechem, where the people had assembled to make him king, [2 Chronicles 10:1].

But things did **not** run smoothly.

Incited by Jeroboam, who had previously incurred the wrath of Solomon, [1 Kings 11:28-40] and who was encouraged by Shishak, the king of Egypt, to whom he had fled for safety, [1 Kings 11:28-40].

Jeroboam speaking on behalf of the people, [1 Kings 12:2-3], offered Rehoboam the sovereignty of Israel on condition he would alleviate the forced labour and excessive taxation laid upon them by Solomon in pursuing his building projects, [1 Kings 12:4], Rehoboam asked for three days to consider what had been asked, [1 Kings 12:5].

After three days deliberation Rehoboam rejected the advice of his father's counsellors and spurred on by some hot-headed contemporaries of his own generation, arrogantly told the people of his intention to load them with even more grievous burdens, and to punish them more severely than his father had done, [1 Kings 12:6-14].

Knowing Rehoboam the Creator God knew how he would reply and had already told Jeroboam through His prophet Ahijah, [1 Kings 11:29-39; 1 Kings 12:15].

This rash decision spelt the end of what was ostensibly a united kingdom, but in fact was little more than a loose confederation of tribes.

Rehoboam sent his treasurer Adoram to try to rectify the split but he was stoned, perhaps because of his association with former repressive regime of Solomon, [1 Kings 12:18].

1 Kings 12:21-24 [New King James] *“And when Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah with the tribe of Benjamin, one hundred and eighty thousand chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, that he might restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, ‘Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying, “Thus says the LORD: ‘You shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel. Let every man return to his house, for this thing is from Me.’”’ Therefore they obeyed the word of the LORD, and turned back, according to the word of the LORD.”*

Rehoboam tried to reunite the tribes by force but was persuaded by God's peophet Shemaish not to attack.

2 Chronicles 11:5-12 [New King James] *“So Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defense in Judah. And he built Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, Beth Zur, Sochoh, Adullam, Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, which are in Judah and Benjamin, fortified cities. And he fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and stores of food, oil, and wine. Also in every city he put shields and spears, and made them very strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.”*

To physically strengthen his kingdom, probably with an apprehensive eye on Egypt.

Judah was strengthened in a spiritual way by the influx of the priests and Levites who left the northern kingdom because of the true God rejecting practices found there, [2 Chronicles 11:13-17].

Rehoboam and his subjects followed the true Creator God for a short period and prospered.

Gradually the influence of his father began to change the way Rehoboam conducted his life, [2 Chronicles 11:18-23].

Also idolatrous practices began to creep into public life, [1 Kings 14:22-24] including sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals.

To punish this wickedness God allowed Shishak, king of Egypt, to ravage the land and carry off the temple and palace treasures, [1 Kings 14:25-26].

Rehoboam and his leaders repented and acknowledged the true Creator God in their miseries under the hand of Shishak, king of Egypt, [2 Chronicles 12:6].

God responded to this humble attitude but allowed their dominion by the Egyptian king to continue for a period of time so they would learn from it, [2 Chronicles 12:7-12].

The unrest and conflict between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continued all the rest of their lives, [1 Kings 14:30].

Rehoboam reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, and was buried in the city of Jerusalem, [2 Chronicles 12:13, 16].

Rehoboam's son Abijah reigned in his place after his death.

What can we learn from the life of Rehoboam?

Advice given by our friends in our own generation is not always the best, for it lacks the wisdom that comes from experience.

Outward appearances of obeying and worshipping God can be kept up even when inner attitudes are evil and hostile to our Creator God.

Are we following the example of trading real life and promise of eternal life for things that do not last; healthy bodies for momentary excitement, personal integrity for fast fading wealth, honesty for lies, God's wise guidance for our own selfish ways?

Do the decisions you need to make need a second consideration, and input from life experienced older generation as well as God's Word, the Christian Bible, in the light of Rehoboam's example?

Remember, every choice we make has real and long-lasting consequences.