

1 Kings Chapter 12 Commentary

1Ki 12:1 "And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. **2** And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was yet in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt, **3** and they sent and called him), that Jeroboam and all the assembly 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. **5** And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed."

King Solomon has died, and his son Rehoboam goes to Shechem, where Israel had gathered to make him king. Jeroboam was still in Egypt, so they sent for him to come and be their spokesman. Why did they send for Rehoboam? To fulfill what God has prescribed, seen in **1Ki 11:28-31**; **28** *"And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph. 29 And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field: 30 And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: 31 And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:"*

So, Jeroboam and Israel came to Rehoboam. They tell Rehoboam that King Solomon had laid upon them grievous burdens. They requested that Rehoboam make their burdens lighter, and they would serve him. Rehoboam tells them to give him three days and then return for an answer.

This is a good reminder to us of the finished work of Jesus, in the eternal salvation of God's people, is not Jesus plus anything else. Remember what was said by Peter when the Jews were trying to add the law ordinances to the Gentiles? **Ac 15:7-11**; **7** *"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."* Go and read this whole chapter to get a better understanding of this principle.

6 *"And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people? 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 forever."*

Rehoboam asks council of the old men who had served King Solomon. They tell Rehoboam that if he does as the people have asked, they will his servants forever. Notice the advice of the old men: *"If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them,"* We point out that the king is servant to the people of the kingdom. How is he servant to the people or kingdom? He bears the responsibility for their good, their safety, and wellbeing, and should have a deep abiding love for the people and the nation.

The principle is the same today for pastors and ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is very plain from scripture that just as kings are given authority, so pastors and ministers are given authority. However, they are subject to the people and servant to them. Jesus set this example for us in his public ministry. How, you ask? Jesus had the greatest love for God's people that can be had. Jesus taught them, He fed them, He healed them and did many other wondrous works. Pastors and ministers are to first obey God, read and study the King James bible to be ready to give an answer when asked and to preach and teach when called upon, to teach the people the truth of God's word, doing everything for their good, their safety, their wellbeing, with the deep abiding love of Christ.

To keep the servanthood in perspective, if the people did not like a king, they could get rid of him and get another. Likewise, if a pastor is not fulfilling his duty, as prescribed by the New Testament, for the church he serves, he can, and should, be removed from his position.

8 "But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him. 9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke that thy father did put upon us lighter? 10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou say unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou speak 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 chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

Rehoboam is not satisfied with the answer of the old men, and he turns to his younger companions for their council. They advise Rehoboam to tell Israel that he will not lessen their burdens but shall greatly increase them. We see God providentially working in Rehoboam's life to bring to pass His decree.

There is a lesson here: we should be very careful about whose advice we accept. We should hear the advice and then weigh it by the scriptures. If it is supported by the bible, it is good advice. If the bible does not support it, it should be cast aside and disregarded.

Another lesson: if we are doing what kings were required by God; to make a copy of the commandments and read them every day; today we read and study the whole King James Bible, we will not need to look to men for advice, but we can just request of God what we should do. We are told in **1Ti 5:17 ¶ "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."**

Likewise, the church is charged with examining themselves, to see if the elder is out of the way, or they just don't like what he is preaching. If he is preaching the true Gospel, they are commanded in **1Ti 5:19 "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."** Unless the elder is preaching untruth, there should be no accusation.

12 "So, Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day. 13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, 14 and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 15 So the king hearkened not unto the people; for it was a thing brought about of Jehovah, that he might establish his word, which Jehovah spake by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 16 And 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."

Jeroboam and Israel return on the third day to hear Rehoboam's answer. Rehoboam did not take the council of the older and wiser men, who had served King Solomon. Rather, he hearkened to the council of his young friends and answered the people very roughly. This was God fulfilling his judicial judgment against King Solomon for turning to idolatry, and his promise to Rehoboam. Thus, fulfilling the word of God spoken to Rehoboam by the Ahijah the prophet, that Rehoboam would be king over ten tribes of Israel, because of King Solomon turning to idolatry.

As Jeroboam spake roughly and tried to lord it over the nation of Israel, the nation rejected his kingship and told Jeroboam they will not be under his kingship. This principle is true for church pastors. If the pastor is lording over their congregation in ungodliness, and unruliness, instead of serving them, he should be put out of his position.

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

When Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was the collector of tribute and taxes, to Israel. Israel stoned him to death. Rehoboam then flees to Jerusalem. Rehoboam now understands that he has messed up and flees to Jerusalem. The fact that Rehoboam sent the tax collector, right after the ten tribes had rejected him as king, is proof that he not a worthy leader, at least not a very smart one. The heavy burden of taxes was one of their complaints to Rehoboam.

Now, let's take this principle and apply it to church pastors. If the pastor is lording over the church, first they should come to him in love and try to reason with him and bring him back to his position and duty as prescribed by

the scriptures. This failing, they should do as the ten tribes did and reject him from his position. Remember our commandment in **Eph 4:1-7; 1 ¶ "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 ¶ With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."**

20 "And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was returned, 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. 21 And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, that were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. 22 But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 23 Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying, 24 Thus saith Jehovah, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is of me. So, they hearkened unto the word of Jehovah, and returned and went their way, according to the word of Jehovah."

When the ten tribes of Israel heard that Jeroboam was returned to Israel, they made him king over them. Rehoboam gathers Judah and Benjamin to fight against the ten tribes, with the hope of restoring them to one complete nation. However, God sends Shemiah, a man of God, to Rehoboam, Benjamin, Judah, and the rest of the people, with a message from God. God tells them to not fight for this is his will that Israel be divided, because of Solomon's turning to idolatry and forsaking God. The people believed God's message and returned to their homes.

This is a reminder to the church congregations, that they do not cast aside a pastor, who is doing God's bidding and preaching and teaching the truth of God, but submit themselves to the word of God. God knows the needs of every congregation and will send them what they need to hear, and they should be submissive to the word of God. God also knows if a congregation has turned from worshiping him and taken in the things of the world, and he will send messages through the pastor that will be a rebuke to them.

Remember, this is all happening because King Solomon turned to idolatry in his older years. The only reason that Rehoboam has the one tribe and Jerusalem is because of God's promise to King David. This is a reminder to us; what we do in our lives does affect the lives of our families and others. Remember, people learn from what they see.

25 "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and he went out from thence, and built Penuel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now will the kingdom return to the house of David: 27 if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah. 28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29 And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. 30 And this thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. 31 And he made houses of high places, and made priests from among all the people, that were not of the sons of Levi. 32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he went up unto the altar; so did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places that he had made. 33 And he went up unto the altar which he had made in Beth-el on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and went up unto the altar, to burn incense."

Jeroboam builds Shechem and dwells there. Then he builds Penuel. Jeroboam is afraid that Israel will kill him and return to Rehoboam, if they go to Jerusalem to worship God as they have been commanded. Jeroboam has forgotten the promise of God given to him in **1Ki 11:38 "And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee."** To keep the ten tribes from going to Jerusalem to worship God, he takes council from his advisors and makes two

golden calves, telling the ten tribes that these be your gods. Jeroboam then sets up a system of false worship, political religion, which the ten tribes adhere to. This was easily put into service because of Solomon's idolatry, which had prepared Israel to turn to idolatry once again.

Jeroboam does not use the Levitical priesthood, but chooses whom he will to serve as priest. We would think that the Levites would know better than to join in idolatrous worship, and they would refuse to serve as priests of idolatry. We would suspect that Jeroboam chose political allies to serve in the priest's offices he is inventing. Jeroboam even invents a feast that coincides with the feast of tabernacles to keep the people from remembering the Lord. He serves as high priest and offers sacrifices, thus combining civil and spiritual power into one office.

Jeroboam creates a feast to be held at the same time as the feast of tabernacles, to keep the ten tribes from turning back to God. False religion has done this very same thing, especially with Christmas and Easter. Many organizations, calling themselves church, have introduced many flesh pleasing things into organized religion, which keeps people away from worshipping God in Spirit and Truth.

This is a prophetic picture of organized religion in the world today. What do you mean? Jesus, when he came to earth the first time, established the New Testament Church. Men, who do not want to worship God, and acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, and Saviour of all of God's people, have done as Jeroboam and set up systems of false worship that they have devised in their own hearts.

Dear God of heaven and earth, please keep our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies, in willing subjection to thy divine will and purpose, that we may bring glory and honor to thy holy name, Amen!