

# "God's Love Story Sermon Outlines"

by Doug Hamilton

## Section 17: "Avoiding Division in God's Love Story" (1 Kings 12-22)

As repeatedly mentioned in the series, the primary common theme of the Bible is God's love. He loves us with an undying love which was demonstrated through His dying Son. As a church, He expects us to communally embrace this love as we strive toward heaven. Whenever major division exists among the people of God the propensity is to forget the love of God and focus on the hate of the world. Our ugly side always comes out when there is division as we will see from our lesson.

### Rehoboam: The Master of Division

We are first introduced to Rehoboam following the death of his father Solomon. *1 Kings 11:43 And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David, and his son Rehoboam reigned in his place.* He was born in 975 BC and took over the kingship at age forty-one.

1 Kings 12:1-2 Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. <sup>2</sup> Now when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard *of it*, he was living in Egypt (for he was yet in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon).

- Rehoboam became king of the nation following the death of Solomon his father. He chose the location of Shechem to address the nation because it was more central for the people to attend. In presence of this address was a man named Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.
- Jeroboam was a former servant of Solomon whom headed up the forced labor program. *2 Chronicles 13:6 "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his master..."* because he directly saw the oppression of the people through Solomon's policies. A prophet named Ahijah told him that the kingdom would divided because of the immorality of Solomon and ten tribes of the twelve would fall under Jeroboam's leadership. Apparently Solomon heard about this incident and sought to have Jeroboam killed for treason. He fled into Egypt for refuge until after the death of Solomon.

1 Kg 12:3-5 Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, <sup>4</sup> "Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you." <sup>5</sup> Then he said to them, "Depart for three days, then return to me." So the people departed.

- We are told in *1 Kings 4:7* that "*Solomon had twelve deputies over all Israel, who provided for the king and his household; each man had to provide for a month in the year.*" Solomon forced the people into compulsive labor for his extensive projects. It was hard, dangerous and grievous work which demoralized the populace. To matters worse, most of the citizens had come from the lower class and did not experience the boom of wealth under Solomon. Decades of this practice and high taxes had taken its toll on the Solomonic splendor.
- The people chose Jeroboam to speak on their behalf. He had a proven record of standing up against the abuses of forced labor and earning the respect of the people. His request was simply to lower the abuse of the work levy. Being in hostile territory, before an

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anxious people and in front of his father's former "enemy", Rehoboam was intimidated. He requested a few days to talk to his advisors.

1 Kg 12:6-7 King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you counsel *me* to answer this people?"<sup>7</sup> Then they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

- According to 1 Kings 4:1-6, Solomon has quite a cabinet of experts to manage a country.
  - Azariah, the son of Zadok: He was the son of a priest named Zadok. He would have been well educated and well-connected
  - Zadok: He was the primary High Priest of Solomon and a staunch supporter of Solomon from early on. With him came decades of experience.
  - Elihoreph and Ahijah: They were brothers and personal secretaries to the king. Their father was a loyal follower of David.
  - Jehoshaphat: He was a royal chronicler that kept the detailed records of events. He would have known the history of the life of Solomon with some of the greatest detail.
  - Benaiah: He was a son of a priest and a great warrior. He worked for both David and Solomon.
  - Zabud: He was a close personal friend of the King Solomon. He had a perspective that only a friend could know.
  - Azariah, the son of Nathan: He was a royal governor and army officer whom brought great experience to the table.
  - Ahishar: He had great administrative experience in running the household of Solomon. We must remember that this was a huge task that required a great deal of planning.
  - Adoniram: He headed up the forced labor project which was at the forefront of the problem. He could give a firsthand account of how rough it was for the people and would have seen the writing on the wall.
- Together these experienced individuals could easily confirm the state of the nation religiously, laboriously, economically, militarily and historically. Rehoboam had full access to centuries of experience. Their Advice: Lower the work tariff and win the people's support and respect.

1 Kg 12:8-11 But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him.<sup>9</sup> So he said to them, "What counsel do you give that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?'"<sup>10</sup> The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!' But you shall speak to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins!<sup>11</sup> 'Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.' "

- Rehoboam's pride was hurt because Jeroboam and the people had put him on the spot. He wanted to be the new tough guy. The advice of the elders did not line up with his prideful

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ambitions. Instead he went to his old school buddies and royal friends. They were young, inexperienced and full of testosterone, offering the aggressive advice that tickled the ears of Rehoboam.

1 Kg 12:12-15 Then Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, "Return to me on the third day."<sup>13</sup> The king answered the people harshly, for he forsook the advice of the elders which they had given him,<sup>14</sup> and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."<sup>15</sup> So the king did not listen to the people; for it was a turn *of events* from the LORD, that He might establish His word, which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

- God already knew how Rehoboam would behave based on the prediction through Ahijah. God knew the heart of Rehoboam, knew of his pride and anger issues. The people might have been surprised by Rehoboam's foolish decision, but God most certainly was not.

1 Kings 12:16-18 When all Israel *saw* that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, "What portion do we have in David? *We have* no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!" So Israel departed to their tents.<sup>17</sup> But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.<sup>18</sup> Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

- Because it was a large meeting at Shechem, the people were forced to camp out in tents while waiting for three days. Naturally they did not react well to Rehoboam's divisive decision. Fed up with it, they protested by walking out and headed back to their tents.
- Rehoboam's pride was bruised again, so he decided to send his "Secretary of Forced-labor and Revenue" for a collection of taxes. It could not have been worse timing. When Secretary Adoram showed up to collect, they immediately stoned him. Rehoboam, fearing for his life, hopped in the chariot and fled back to Jerusalem.
- Just like God predicted, like the elders anticipated and the populace declared, division resulted. Rehoboam reaped what he had sowed. Verse 19 "*So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.*"

1 Kings 12:20-24 It came about when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.<sup>21</sup> Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.<sup>22</sup> But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,<sup>23</sup> "Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin and to the rest of the people, saying,<sup>24</sup> 'Thus says the LORD, "You must not go up and fight against your relatives the sons of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing has come from Me.'" So they listened to the word of the LORD, and returned and went *their way* according to the word of the LORD.

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- Jeroboam was anointed king by his people. Rehoboam safely made it back to Jerusalem and assembled the troops to destroy those “ignorant rebels”. Just as the 180,000 troops were heading out, God sent the prophet Shemaiah to warn Rehoboam that this event was from the LORD. He was not to seek to destroy them.
- It was from that moment in time that the nation of Israel was divided and in civil war. 2 *Chronicles 12:15* “...And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.” There were ten northern tribes in constant conflict against Judah and Benjamin.

God’s Love Story is inclusive to His people working together for the common good. He wants us to live in harmony and in respect to one another. Israel was one nation under God, but for the remainder of their days there would be nothing but division and war. It was the biggest “church split” in history, making it worthy to examine and glean for application. How did this happen and how can it be avoided in our own lives today? How can we make sure that we are not robbed of God’s Love Story through division?

### 1. Rehoboam showed contempt toward the experienced.

- One of the primary indicators of a degenerating society is how they treat the more experienced members of the culture (i.e. elderly and experienced).
  - Job 12:12 “Wisdom is with aged men, *With* long life is understanding.
  - Leviticus 19:32 ‘You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.
  - Proverbs 23:22 Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old.
  - Isaiah 47:6 “I was angry with My people, I profaned My heritage And gave them into your hand. You did not show mercy to them, On the aged you made your yoke very heavy.
- When we fail to yield to those that have greater experience among us, it not only eliminates a potential wisdom in difficult times, but also dishonors God. God chose the time of our birth, the period for which we would accumulate wisdom and experience. We live in a society where the aged are viewed with contempt and disdain. We must shed the mindset that “the elderly should be seen and not heard.” Forsaking the experienced runs contrary to God’s story of love.

### 2. Rehoboam showed favoritism toward his friends.

- Rehoboam showed preference to a group of people not based on what was right, but that they were friends. This is called favoritism and can be a great divider of the people of God.
- One of the early problems that faced the church in Jerusalem was over partiality. *Acts 6:1* *Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.* If not dealt with it would have destroyed the love of the church.
- Peter showed partiality toward the Jews in the presence of the (Acts 11:19; Gal 2:11) and had to be rebuked by Paul. If this had not been done, then it could have resulted in a split of the church. It is of interest that in the previous chapter that Peter

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confirmed that God is not respecter of persons. *Acts 10:34-35* Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

- James 2:1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with respect of persons.
- Colossians 3:25 For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.
- If you want to be a great divider of God's Love Story, simply start showing favoritism to certain people and see where it leads. Start putting together the click-groups and watch what occurs. Favoritism is contrary to God's love theme.

### 3. Rehoboam showed harshness toward the hurting.

- The people were hurting from the imposed labor and heavy taxes. They had experienced forty years of this oppression and something had to give. If only Rehoboam had some compassion, he would have kept the nation together. When we as a church show harshness to the hurting among us, watch out for the division.
  - Matthew 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
  - Proverbs 11:17 The merciful man does himself good, But the cruel man does himself harm.
  - Matthew 25:37-40 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink?' <sup>38</sup> 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?' <sup>39</sup> 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' <sup>40</sup> "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.'
- If you cannot unite on reaching out to a brother or sister in need, there is no way that we can be united in God's Love Story.
  - 1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
  - James 2:15-16 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?
- If you want to be a divider in the church family, simply show a lack of compassion for the hurting and it will be true. Harshness toward the hurting always assaults God's story of love.

### In Conclusion:

God wants us united as we experience His love story. Treating the experienced with reverence is LOVE. Treating everyone without partiality is LOVE. Treating the suffering with mercy is LOVE. If we fail to do so the results will be devastating. Strive in these areas and let us see where God takes us.