

Royal Lessons from the Kings

By Doug Hamilton

nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, *for* they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love.³ He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.

- He wrote the Song of Solomon to illustrate the love of one of the women. One can see his deep passion for the opposite sex within the pages of that writing. HE LOVED HIS WOMEN!

He fell out of love with the Father.

- 1 Kings 11:4-9 For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*.⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.⁶ Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father *had done*.⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon.⁸ Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.⁹ Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD

It is said that Solomon wrote Proverbs at the height of his relationship with God and that Ecclesiastes was at the lowest depths of the same. In the latter he exposes futility in light of all that he attained in life. He discusses the futility of wisdom, pleasure, possessions, labor and of life in general. “*Vanity, vanity, all is vanity.*” It is rather a depressing book that must be read in the context of a man that lost his passion for the Lord. It is not until the end that he comes to the most brilliant thought of the twelve chapters. It is very likely that these are the last recorded words of Solomon that we have, therefore listen closely.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person.¹⁴ For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

Church, take heed lest ye fall. (1 Cor 10:12)

Royal Lessons from the Kings

By Doug Hamilton

The Divided Kingdom

Rehoboam: “The Divisive King”

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. ² 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 the son of Solomon took over as King of the nation. He chose the location of Shechem to address the people because it was much more central for the nation to attend.
- There was a man named Jeroboam the son of Nebat. He was a former servant of Solomon that headed up a partial group of the forced labor program. Jeroboam the son of Nebat could see the unfairness of the forced labor and protested it. *2 Chronicles 13:6 “Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his master...”*
- He even had the support of God in this rebellion against Rehoboam because of all the immorality of the house of Solomon. It was during this period of reflection that Jeroboam was approached by a prophet of God and told that ten tribes would be torn away from Solomon and given to him as a result of the idolatry that occurred.
- Apparently Solomon heard of this incident and sought to have Jeroboam killed for treason. This is why Jeroboam fled the country and into Egypt 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, ⁴ “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.” ⁵ 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.* He was forcing the people into compulsive labor for his extensive projects. It was hard and dangerous work.
- Most of the people who were forced to work came from a class that did not experience the wealth of Solomon. It appears that working on his projects for a few decades and the high taxes had taken its toll.
- The people chose Jeroboam to speak on their behalf since he had a proven record of standing up against the forced labor. This probably intimidated Rehoboam since he was in hostile territory and in front of a former enemy of his father. He needed 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?” ⁷ Then they spoke to

Royal Lessons from the Kings

By Doug Hamilton

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.”

- He spoke to the aged members of his father’s administration as what to do. We must understand that these seasoned leaders were quite experienced. 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 connected in the cabinet of Solomon.
 - Zadok: He was the primary High Priest of Solomon and a staunch supporter of Solomon from early on. With him was 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 that 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 that was at the forefront of the problem. He could give a firsthand account of how rough it was for the people and could see the writing on the wall.
- Together these experienced individuals could easily confirm the state of the nation religiously, laboriously, economically, militarily and historically. If they were advising, it carried with it centuries of experience.

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. ⁹ 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?’” ¹⁰ 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!’ ¹¹ ‘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.’”

- Reheboam’s pride was hurt because the people put him on the spot about the forced-labor. He wanted to be the tough guy; therefore he called for a meeting with the elders to see what should be done. He was hoping they would support an aggressive response, but they did not.

Royal Lessons from the Kings

By Doug Hamilton

- Instead he went to his old school buddies and friends. They were young, inexperienced and full of testosterone. They offered the aggressive advice that Rehoboam was looking for; therefore he went with them.

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.”¹³ The king answered the people harshly, for he forsook the advice of the elders which they had given him,¹⁴ 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.”¹⁵ 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.

- As mentioned in the prior chapter, God had already knew how Rehoboam would behave concerning the issue, for He sent Ahijah the prophet to Jeroboam. The people might have been surprised by Rehoboam’s foolish decision, but God most certainly was not.

1 Kings 12:16-19 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.¹⁷ But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

- Because this was a large meeting at Shechem, people were forced to camp out in tents while they waited for three days. Naturally when they did not react well as a result of Rehoboam’s divisiveness. Fed up with it, they protested by walking out on Rehoboam and headed back to their tents.
- Rehoboam did not like this and decided to send his “Secretary of Forced-labor and Revenue” to collect some taxes. This was pretty bad timing resulting in the stoning of the tax man. Rehoboam fled back to Jerusalem for his life in the chariot. the Divider began to reap what he was sowing, for the kingdom was divided.

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.²¹ 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.²² But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,²³ “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,²⁴ ‘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.

Royal Lessons from the Kings

By Doug Hamilton

- When Rehoboam made it back to Jerusalem, he assembled the troops in order to wipe out the rebels. Right before heading out, God sent Shemaiah the prophet to inform Rehoboam that it was from the LORD.
- It was from that moment in time that the nation of Israel was divided and in civil war. 2 *Chronicles 12:15 Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer, according to genealogical enrollment? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.* They were ten northern tribes against the two southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin. It was the biggest “church split” in history and worthy to examine for application.

1. He 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 (ie elderly and the wise).
- 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 point of wisdom, but also dishonors God, the Chooser of birthdates.
- Contempt toward the Experienced = Division

2. He 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 congregation.
- 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 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,³⁵ 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.

Royal Lessons from the Kings

By Doug Hamilton

- 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 in the church, start showing favoritism to some and watch where it takes you. Start putting together the click-groups and watch what occurs.
- Favoritism toward Friends = Division

3. He showed harshness toward the hurting.

- The people were hurting from the imposed labor and heavy taxes. They had experienced forty years of this and something had to give. If only Rehoboam had some compassion, he would have kept the nation together, but he did not.
- 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 25:34-40 “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’³⁵ ‘For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink?’³⁸ ‘And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?’³⁹ ‘When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’⁴⁰ “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 as a family in Christ.
- 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,¹⁶ 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 = Division