

Life Lesson 76  
*Rehoboam and Jeroboam*  
Text: I Kings 12 & 13

Introduction

Saul was the first king, David was the best king, and Solomon was the wisest king. You would think that the wise king who also had wealth and fame would have raised a wise son. But at the end of Solomon's life, he made many mistakes and did wrong things that had long-lasting consequences. One mistake was to burden his people with heavy taxes and made them labor to build his treasure cities. He didn't do a good job raising his family either, and his son Rehoboam wasn't wise at all, as we will see in our story today.

The Story

It was coronation day, and everyone came to see Rehoboam crowned as king over God's people. Everyone wondered if Rehoboam would be a good king, or a selfish one like Solomon had been at the last.

"Your father put a heavy yoke on us," the people said to Rehoboam. "If you will lighten our yoke, so that we don't have to work so hard for you or pay such heavy taxes, then we will serve you."

"Let me think about it," Rehoboam answered. "Come back in three days and I will tell you how I will run my kingdom."

Rehoboam wasn't sure what he should do. He asked his father's friends for advice.

"If you will be a servant to your people, and will care for them and speak kindly to them, they will serve you forever," they answered wisely.

Jesus said almost the same thing to his disciples one day when they were arguing over who would be the greatest.

“Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant,” Jesus told them. “Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:27, 28)

Those wise friends knew that to be a good leader, you must be a good servant.

Rehoboam wasn't wise enough to recognize wise advice. He went to his young friends and asked them the same question.

“You have to show those people who's the boss,” they told Rehoboam. “If you aren't tough with them, they won't respect you and you'll never be able to make them serve you.”

That's just the way most people think today. They think that to get ahead you must be tough and push everyone else out of your way. They don't realize that God's way is to serve others and His way is the only way that works.

Rehoboam, I'm sad to say, followed the wrong advice. He decided that he should be rough and mean to the people so that they would be afraid not to obey him.

Three days later the people gathered around him, hoping to hear some encouraging words.

“My father gave you a heavy yoke,” he told the listening crowd. “But I will make it heavier. He whipped you with whips, but I will whip you with scorpions.”

The people were angry and disgusted.

“Why should we follow you? They said. “We'll pick a new king.”

Most of the Israelites decided to follow a man named Jeroboam. Only the tribe of Judah kept Rehoboam as their king.

The land of Israel was divided, because a foolish king didn't realize that service comes before honor.

Rehoboam wasn't a very good king, but Jeroboam was even worse. He built idols and declared a great feast and sacrifice was to be made to them.

He was standing by the altar when a man of God came up and began to prophesy.

“One day a new king will be born,” the man cried out. “His name will be Josiah. He will burn the wicked false priests who serve these idols on this very altar. As a sign that this will happen, this altar shall be broken in two and the ashes shall be poured out on the ground.”

Jeroboam wasn't at all happy to hear this.

“Catch that man!” he shouted, pointing his finger at the prophet.

The men must have rushed to do as he commanded, but Jeroboam stopped in horror. His hand, the one he had stretched out to point at the prophet, was withered up and he couldn't move it.

At that moment the altar broke into pieces right before his eyes and the ashes poured out on the ground just as the prophet had foretold. What a frightening thing to happen! Yet, Jeroboam didn't seem to learn much from this lesson God sent to him. After God had healed his hand he went right on worshiping idols and encouraging his people to turn from the true God.

Meanwhile, in the land of Judah, Rehoboam was not doing any better ruling the tribe of Judah. He allowed idol worship, too. The people did the very same abominable things that the nations who had lived in the land before them had done. God punished those other nations and He punished the land of Judah.

Shishak, the king of Egypt, came and attacked the land. He took away most of the treasures from the temple and from the house of the king. Both Rehoboam and Jeroboam had many wars with surrounding nations and they fought all the time with each other.

### The Life Lesson

What can we learn from these two kings? It's plain to see from their lives that sin and selfishness result in sorrow and suffering. How much better it is to surrender to the Lord and to be a server!

## Review Questions

Who became king after Solomon?

*His son, Rehoboam*

What did the people tell Rehoboam on the day he became king?

*"If you aren't as harsh with us as your father and will lessen our taxes, we will serve you."*

What advice did Solomon's older friends give to Rehoboam?

*To tell the people he would be good to them and serve them.*

What did Rehoboam's young friends advise?

*To be firm and let them know who is boss.*

Which advice did Rehoboam take?

*The advice of his young friends.*

What did the people say when Rehoboam said he would be mean to them?

*They chose another king.*

How many tribes still followed Rehoboam?

*Just one -- Judah.*

Who did the other tribes follow?

*Jeroboam*

Was Jeroboam a godly king?

*No, he built an altar to idols.*

What did the prophet say about the altar?

*A king named Josiah would come and would burn the priests on the altar of Baal.*

What did the prophet say would happen to prove this would come true?

*He said the altar would split and the ashes would pour out.*

What happened to King Jeroboam's arm when he stretched it out toward the prophet?

*It withered up.*





