

## December 4

**Scriptures:** Read 1 Kings 12

**Key Verse:** “So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn of affairs was from the Lord, that He might fulfill His word...” (1 Kings 12:15)

### Overview

After the death of Solomon, the Lord directed the events which would fulfill His words spoken through the prophet Ahijah (11:11-13, 31-38). Upon hearing the report of Solomon’s death and being summoned by the people of the northern tribes, Jeroboam returned from exile in Egypt, where he had fled when Solomon suspected him of treason (11:40). It appears that he tried to stir up dissension in Israel because of Solomon’s policy of forced labour or “human taxation” (cf. 5:13-14), and he attempted to gain the support of the people. He probably continued the plans of his conspiracy while in Egypt.

At the time of Rehoboam’s coronation, Jeroboam shrewdly led the people to request that taxes be lowered. Their complaint may not have been justified, because it appears that during the reign of Solomon everyone had been content. The older advisors of Solomon probably detected Jeroboam’s scheme and wisely advised Rehoboam to grant them their request and thus ease the situation. Rehoboam’s younger advisors were not youths; they were his contemporaries, and we know that he was forty-one years old when he began to reign (14:21). They, however, unlike the older men, were lacking experience in diplomacy and believed the way to rule was with a hard hand and a big stick.

Unlike his father, Rehoboam was unwise in dealing with the people. He listened to the wrong advisors, which was probably what Jeroboam expected. This was all in the providence of God. The outcome was open rebellion by the northern tribes against Rehoboam. When he sent Adoram to collect their taxes, he added fuel to the fire (12:18; 4:6). They took out their anger on Adoram and stoned him.

Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin continued to support the house of David. The territory of Benjamin was so close to Judah that they almost became absorbed into the larger tribe and came to be considered as part of Judah. All the other tribes to the north called upon Jeroboam and made him their king. Thus the land was divided, just as the Lord had spoken as a divine judgment of Solomon’s sins and the idolatry he had allowed in the land. The Israelites of Judah now made up the Southern Kingdom which was known as “Judah”. All the other Israelite tribes made up the Northern Kingdom, known as “Israel”.

Rehoboam then made preparations to attack Israel. Since he still had the strength and wealth of Solomon, he could probably overcome them easily. However God warned the Israelites through the prophet Shemaiah not to fight their brethren, saying, “this thing is from Me” (12:24). The Judahites respected God’s word and obeyed Him in order to prevent civil war. Rehoboam probably wanted otherwise, but he did not have the support of the people to fight.

Jeroboam was careful to protect his new kingdom from any alliances with Judah so that the kingdom would remain in his hands. He craftily gave Israel their own idolatrous religion of calf

worship (like the Egyptians). He set up new religious centres, a new priesthood, and new pagan religious feasts. He did this to break any ties with Judah, because the Temple and worship of God was associated with the family of David. His sinful actions, however, would never keep the kingdom in his hands. God had told him the only way in which he would have an “enduring house” would be by serving Him (11:38).

### **Prayer**

Your acts, Lord, are totally righteous. Your plan is perfect. We submit to You as our King. Thank You for the blessings of Your Kingdom, Your laws, and Your provision. Truly, King Jesus, You are much greater than Solomon.