

THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD®

CHILDREN'S BIBLE LESSONS



A Kingdom Divided



LEVEL 5
LESSON 6

A Kingdom Divided

As we learned in Lesson 5, King Solomon allowed his many foreign wives and concubines, and their pagan practices, to turn his heart away from God. Notice what God told him: “Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes...I will surely tear the

kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for



the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen” (I Kings 11:11-13).

The time had come for God to fulfill His promise.

Rehoboam Takes the Throne

Solomon died after reigning 40 years. Although the Bible indicates that he returned to worshipping God before he died, God’s judgment for his idolatry was still in effect. After Solomon’s death, his son Rehoboam became king of Israel. He was crowned at a ceremony in the city of Shechem, in the territory given to Manasseh.

Solomon had made the people in Israel pay very high taxes. After his death, the Israelites hoped that Rehoboam would lower taxes. Men from the 10 northern tribes of Israel asked Jeroboam, the son of one of Solomon’s servants, to act as a spokesman for them and ask the king to reduce taxes. As we saw in the last lesson, God had promised to give 10 tribes of Israel to Jeroboam, though He did not say exactly how this would happen.

Jeroboam said to Rehoboam, “Your father Solomon taxed us very heavily. If you reduce our taxes, we will serve you” (I Kings 12:4).

Wise Counsel Ignored

Rehoboam told Jeroboam and the assembled Israelites to return in three days for his decision. He thought about the peoples’ plea. He wanted to know what the other men around him thought, so he called for them and asked for their counsel. This was

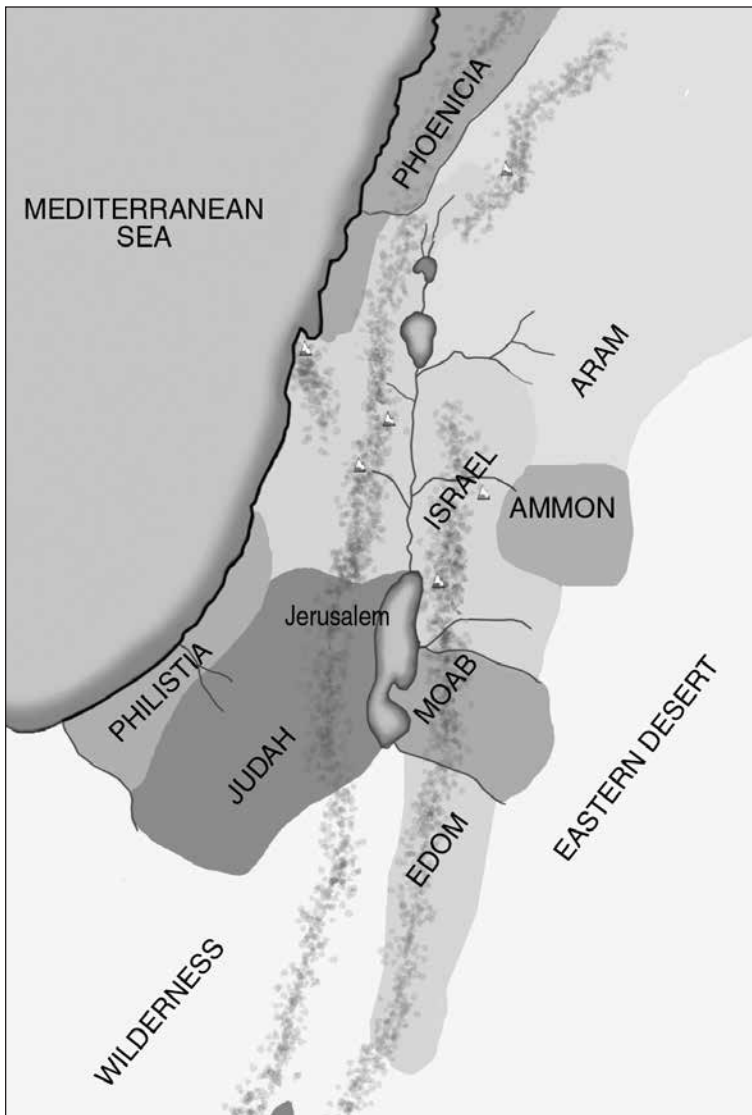
a good idea, since the Bible tells us that we should seek counsel from others when we have to make an important decision. Turn to Proverbs 20:18 and fill in the blanks: “_____ are established by _____; by _____ counsel wage war.” This means that, when we are planning to accomplish something, we should ask advice from those who are experienced.

At first, Rehoboam sought counsel from older men who held responsibilities in the palace and who had counseled his father Solomon. They told him that if he would be a servant to the Israelites—if he would try to do what was best for them—the people would loyally serve him throughout his reign.

However, Rehoboam was not pleased with this advice. He asked some of the young men whom he had known since he was a child. Their answer was quite different: “Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you shall make it lighter on us’—thus shall you say to them...‘whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges’” (I Kings 12:10-11)!

After three days, Rehoboam met Jeroboam and the other representatives of Israel. He had made up his mind. The new king had chosen the counsel of the young men. He told the people that he would *raise* their taxes!

He rejected the wise counsel of the older men. He and the young men did not under-



message to the king by killing Adoram! Rehoboam was afraid that he might be killed too, so he fled from Shechem to Jerusalem. He intended to send an army into northern Israel to force the people into obedience. But God sent a prophet named Shemaiah, who told him not to do this—he said that God was using this disagreement to fulfill His will, tearing the 10 tribes from Rehoboam as a result of Solomon’s sins. Rehoboam did not dare to go against this command and called off the planned invasion.

Israel Splits

Rehoboam was left with only Judah and a portion of the neighboring tribes of Levi and Benjamin remaining under his rule. Combined, they were then known as *Judah* or the *House of Judah*. God’s Word had come to pass, but He did not entirely take rulership away from David’s family. He had

stand that leadership brings a responsibility to serve people (Luke 22:25-27). They did not believe in living the way of give! Rehoboam was more concerned with increasing his own wealth than with helping the people of Israel.

When they heard this, the people were very upset. The 10 northern tribes rebelled, telling the king that they would not submit to him anymore. The people returned to their lands in the north.

Rehoboam sent a tax collector named Adoram to speak with the representatives of these tribes—but the people sent a clear

still bound Himself to the promise that David would not lack an heir on the throne.

The 10 tribes asked Jeroboam to rule over them as king. This new separate nation became known as the *House of Israel* or simply *Israel*.

This was the first of several north-south splits that would occur among the descendants of Israel throughout history.

Rehoboam’s Wicked Reign

Rehoboam ruled over his kingdom from Jerusalem. However, he did not follow in

the footsteps of his grandfather David. He trusted in military strength for protection, rather than in God. Also, he did not set the example of obeying God's Law, so the people committed the same sins as the heathen nations around them—even the kind of wrong actions that led God to destroy wicked cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah.

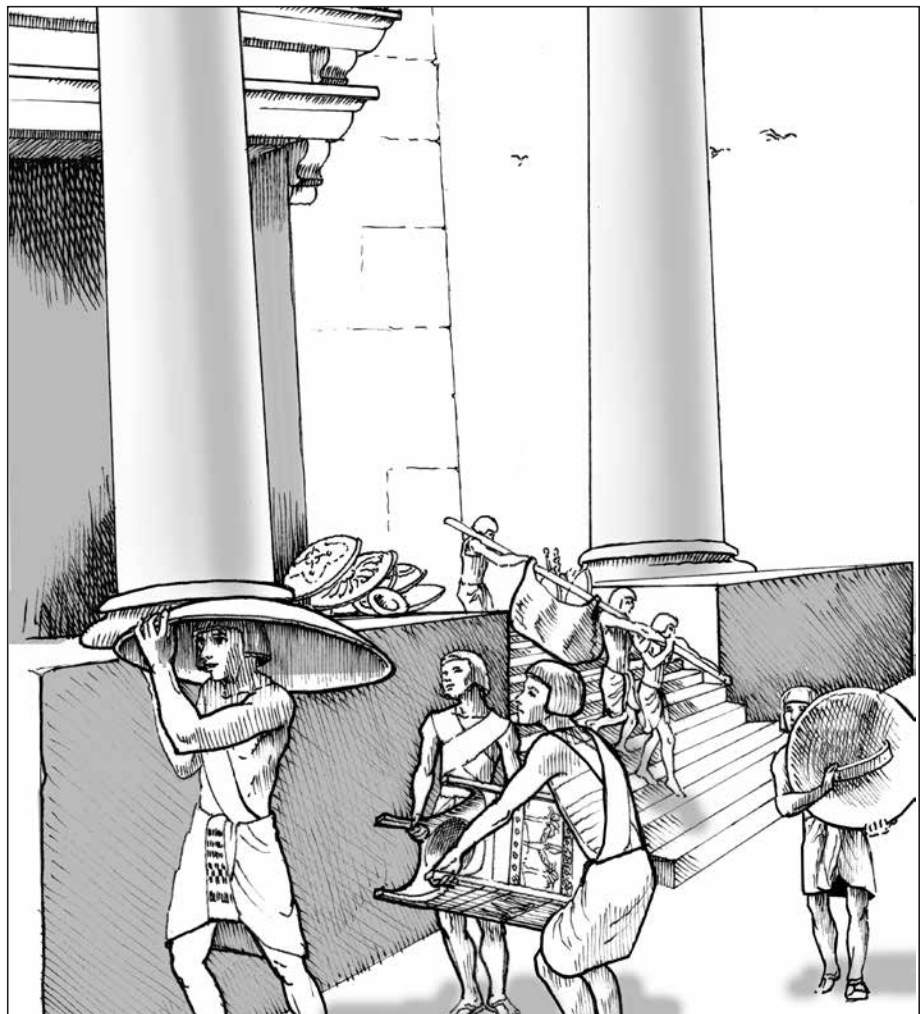
Because of the unrighteous ways of the king and his subjects, God withdrew much of His blessing and protection from Judah. They no longer enjoyed the peace they had experienced for much of Solomon's time on the throne. The nation was plagued by war—even with their separated brothers in Israel.

Egypt, led by King Shishak, invaded Judah during Rehoboam's fifth year as king. Shishak led a very large army that included a number of allies—the Lubim, the Sukkiim and the Ethiopians (II Chronicles 12:3). Shishak's army overran the cities that Rehoboam had fortified on the outskirts of Judah. Without God's help, these physical efforts at protecting the nation were not enough. The advancing soldiers marched to the borders of the capital city of Jerusalem.

Why did God allow this? Turn to II Chronicles 12:5: "Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah, who

were gathered together in Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, 'Thus says the LORD: "You have _____ Me, and therefore I also have _____ you in the _____ of Shishak."'"

The leaders of Judah were scared. They feared for their lives and thought that the kingdom was about to come to an end. In this situation, they humbled themselves and acknowledged God's supremacy. God saw this and had mercy on them. He judged that, rather than allowing the whole kingdom to be destroyed, Judah would become subject to Shishak and serve him. This would teach Judah a hard lesson about their choice not to serve God. Shishak stripped Judah of all of



its treasures, including the riches of the temple and the royal palace, even to the point that items of gold had to be replaced with brass.

Following in Rehoboam's Footsteps

Rehoboam was allowed to rule for a total of 17 years. During that time, he never turned his heart to serve God. He died in Jerusalem and was succeeded by his son Abijam.

Abijam did not learn from the mistakes of his father, but continued in the same sins. However, since God had promised David that his dynasty would continue, Abijam was allowed to rule for three years.

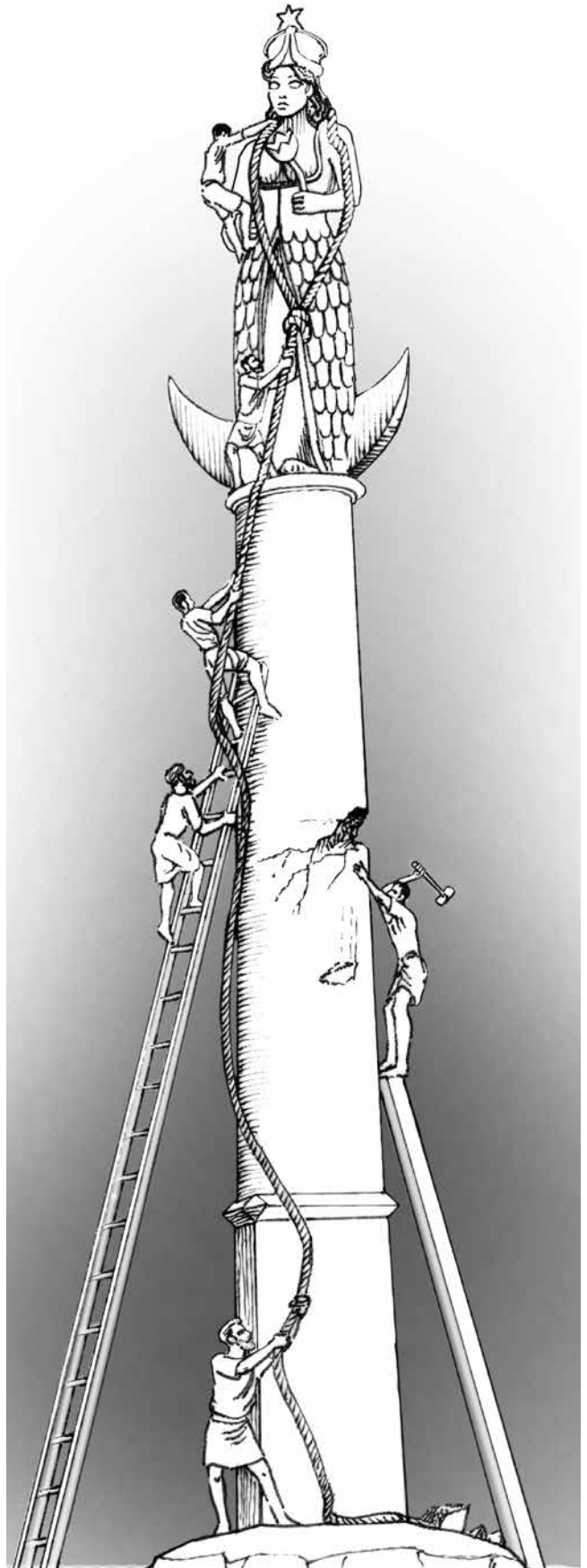
During his reign, there was a great battle between Israel and Judah. Judah had half the troops that Israel had—400,000 versus 800,000! However, God allowed Judah to win this battle, and Israel suffered 500,000 deaths. This occurred because, as bad as Judah was under Abijam's rule, Israel and Jeroboam were even worse!

After his short reign, Abijam died and was replaced by his son Asa as king of Judah.

Asa—a Righteous Start

Asa had learned from the poor examples of his father and grandfather. He set his heart to serve the true God, realizing that this is the only way to success.

Asa removed all the idols from the land that Rehoboam and Abijam had allowed, and set out to end the worship of any false god in Judah. He removed his own grandmother from his royal court, since she wor-



shipped idols, and he destroyed her pagan place of worship. Asa instructed Judah to follow after God and to obey His laws. He set a good example, which many of the people followed. As a result, God blessed them with protection and prosperity.

In time, Zerah, the captain of the Ethiopian army, decided to rise up against Judah. His standing army of one million men far outnumbered the soldiers of Judah. Asa knew that the odds were against him and his nation—however, he looked beyond the physical things that he saw. He knew that God could deliver them. He prayed earnestly and confidently to God, asking Him for help.

Read how God answered Asa’s prayer in II Chronicles 14:12-15. “So the LORD _____ the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians _____. And Asa and the people who were with him pursued them to Gerar. So the Ethiopians were _____, and they could not _____, for they were _____ before the LORD and His army. And they carried away very much _____.”

This miraculous victory contains an important lesson: When things look very hard—even impossible—if we trust God, He can and will deliver us, bless us and fight our battles for us!

Asa Quickly Forgets to Trust God

After this wonderful start, Asa began to forget that God is the great Giver. After three years as king, he became afraid of an invasion by a wicked new king of Israel—Baasha. This king’s army had

crossed the northern border of Judah and transformed the town of Ramah into an armed camp and supply station.

Instead of seeking God’s deliverance as he had before, Asa forged a military alliance with the nation of Syria. Then, in a terrible insult to God, he took treasures from the holy temple and sent them as gifts to Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria! Syria had been allied with Israel, but these gifts convinced Ben-Hadad to switch his loyalty to Judah.

God was very unhappy with Asa. He sent His prophet Hanani with a message for the king: “Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied upon the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars” (II Chronicles 16:7-9).

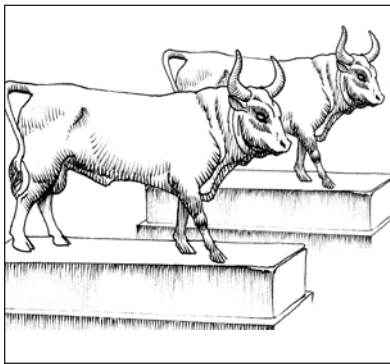
However, instead of heeding the words of the prophet and changing his ways, Asa threw Hanani into prison. After this, Asa continued to drift farther from God. When he was old, his feet became severely diseased. However, instead of asking God for healing, he trusted only in physicians. They were not able to help him, and he died after ruling Judah for 41 years.

Israel Under Jeroboam

Now that we have reviewed the reigns of some of the early kings of Judah, we next consider the house of Israel under the rule of King Jeroboam. Remember that God had promised He would give the 10 northern tribes to him. However, Jeroboam did not serve the Eternal.

Jeroboam was afraid that those in Israel would return to Rehoboam if they went to Jerusalem to keep the Holy Days. He moved to prevent this through misguided actions. He removed the Levites from their God-ordained positions in the priesthood, and appointed men to this office according to his own wishes, rather than God's. He then created and installed counterfeit Holy Days that took place in the eighth month, rather than the seventh month as God commands.

Finally, he instituted new places of false worship in Dan (southern Israel) and Bethel



(in the north), with golden idols in the shape of calves (I Kings 12:26-29). He and his false priests led Israel into idolatry. He did all

of this in order to hold on to his power over the nation—power that God had given to him!

God was very angry about this. Once again, He sent a prophet to warn a king. This messenger from God prophesied that a



child named Josiah would one day be king, and would cleanse Israel of the abominations that Jeroboam had introduced.

What miracle did God perform as a sign that this would come to pass? Read I Kings 13:3 and write the answer here: _____

Like Asa, Jeroboam was not thankful for this warning, but rather became angry with the prophet. He pointed at him and ordered his guards to seize him; but as he did, his hand stiffened and withered—he could not even bring his arm back down to his side!

This struck fear into Jeroboam and his royal court. He begged the prophet to pray for him, and God mercifully healed his arm. However, this did not move Jeroboam, as he continued to disobey God and to lead Israel further away from true worship.

Shortly after this event, Jeroboam's son grew very sick. He sent his wife, in disguise, to talk to the prophet Ahijah. But God let Ahijah know her identity. He gave her a very unpleasant message. He told her that Jeroboam would have nothing but trouble since he had been ungrateful for all that God had given him, and had behaved so wickedly as king. His son would die, and his family would eventually have no heir to continue on the throne of the house of

Israel.

When she returned home, Ahijah's word came to pass—the son died. Later, after 22 years of ruling, Jeroboam died after a battle with Judah.

A Series of Unwise Kings in Israel

Another son of Jeroboam, Nadab, followed as king of Israel. He continued in the idolatry of his father. This would be the last of Jeroboam's descendants to rule. During



a siege against a Philistine city, Nadab was murdered by a man named Baasha, who appointed himself king and then killed all of Jeroboam's other sons.

This murderer only led Israel further into sin. The prophet Jehu warned him that God would make his house as Jeroboam's: without an heir. Baasha was allowed to reign for 24 years before dying. His son Elah followed him, continuing in his idolatrous ways. History then repeated itself, as Zimri, a servant, killed Elah. Zimri then took the throne and had Elah's family executed. As God had prophesied, Baasha's family dynasty ended quickly!

Zimri reigned for only one week! The people of Israel were angry with his treachery, and they chose Omri, the commander





of Israel’s army, to be king. When Omri and his army approached, Zimri chose to burn the palace rather than surrender. He perished in the fire (I Kings 16:18).

Lessons from Israel and Judah

There are very important lessons to learn from the kings that we have studied.

One of these lessons is that idolatry is a very serious sin. God does not take it lightly. To put anything or anyone before the Creator cuts us off from all His blessings and from the purpose for life: to grow, overcome and work toward being born into the God Family. This sin leads to many other sins, all of which cause pain, unhappiness, frustration and finally death. God gives us a choice of how we will live—either the way that leads to success, or the way that leads to failure. Which one does He hope that we choose? Write out Deuteronomy 30:19 below for the answer:

Another lesson that we must learn is to always trust God. King Asa of Judah started

with this approach, but soon began to trust in himself and in physical things instead. Notice what David wrote in Psalm 118:8, “It is _____ to _____ in the _____ than to put _____ in _____.”

Finally, an important principle: No one, not even powerful people such as kings, are above the Law of God. His commandments are like the law of gravity—there are automatic penalties for breaking them, and automatic blessings for keeping them. If we keep them, they will keep us; if we break them, they will break us! All human beings will eventually learn to keep God’s commandments, or they will not be a part of His Kingdom. Turn to I Corinthians 6:9-10 and write out what things will prevent a person from entering the Kingdom of God:

You, as a young person in God’s Church, are learning to be a leader in the world to come. You are in training to become a ruler and example to others. You can learn from the leaders in the Bible—both the good and the bad.

In our next lesson, we will learn more lessons from the history of Israel and Judah, and continue to follow the rulers of these nations as they choose between life and death, blessing and cursing.

BIBLE MEMORY: Proverbs 15:22; 20:18; 24:6

ACTIVITY: PUT THE KINGS IN ORDER

ISRAEL (before the split)

1) _____

2) _____

HOUSE OF JUDAH

3) _____

4) _____

5) Asa _____

HOUSE OF ISRAEL

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

11) _____

LIST OF KINGS:

___ Baasha

___ David

___ Nadab

___ Zimri

___ Rehoboam

___ Omri

___ Abijam

___ Solomon

✓ Asa

___ Jeroboam

___ Elah