

REHOBAM

THE DIVISION DECISION

1 KINGS 12 + 2 CHRON. 10-11:4

BADVICE

BAD ADVICE:

Protect unity at all costs

LESSON LEARNED:

In turbulent seasons, sensitivity to peoples' situations and needs is critical.

FREEDOM FOUND:

Jesus offers hope to the weak, burdened, and broken.

1. Rehoboam's father was King Solomon. According to the rules God set out in Deuteronomy 17:14-20, the book of Kings shows Solomon being a less than godly king, even though he would have been considered successful in the world's eyes (see 1 Kings 10). How have we allowed our American culture that values wealth and power to influence our understanding of the Bible?
2. Much of the background to 1 Kings 12 involves a group feeling disadvantaged through unequal treatment. The complaint appears to be based on the taxation that Solomon put in place in 1 Kings 4:1-19 (the leaders named are over tax districts). The problem is that the northern tribes had to pay taxes and Judah, the southern tribe (Solomon's tribe), did not. 1 Kings 9:15-23 makes it clear that no Israelite was ever forced into labor under Solomon and 1 Kings 4:20-25, the taxation chapter, also states that the nation thrived. In other words, the picture we get is of shaky tribal unity. Putting that into today's world we note that legislation often involves making classifications that either advantage or disadvantage one group but not another. Millionaires are denied aid that is given to other low-income families, for example. This reality reveals that government is not obligated to treat all persons the same (the Equal Protection Clause) but obligated to treat people the same if they are "similarly circumstanced." With all these realities as background, what practical advice would you give to Rehoboam that would have helped him lead in this turbulent season better than he did? How can leaders bridge 'circumstantial divisions' today?
3. Rehoboam was blindsided by his blind spot. Have you ever been blindsided? Is blindsiding ever appropriate?
4. Psychologists talk about SDS—Surprise Divorce Syndrome—which more often affects men than women. SDS is triggered when a person is blindsided by a request for a divorce. The person doing the blindsiding cites the warnings they gave (the naggings, the expressed frustration, the request to go to counselling) all of which were ignored. Right or wrong, the lesson we learn is that it is never wise to ignore the signs. What can we do to ensure that we are never blindsided by our blind spot?
5. It's #badvice to seek affirmation rather than information. In 1 Kings 12:5-11, Rehoboam ignores old and wise counselors in favor of young and foolish ones. How do we determine who we listen to? How can we avoid only listening to those who tell us what we want to hear? In what ways are we seeing people seeking affirmation not information in this turbulent season in American life?
6. "God makes division decisions." Read Luke 12:49-53. What do these verses mean How could these verses be abused and misused? How should they be used wisely? For what reasons would God make division decisions today?
7. Read Matthew 11:28-30 with 1 Kings 12 in view. How can we, as ambassadors for Christ, carry the burden for others in Jesus's name?