

2 Chronicles 12: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Preacher: Alastair Roberts

[0 : 00] 2 Chronicles chapter 12 When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he was strong, he abandoned the law of the Lord and all Israel with him. In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the Lord, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen, and the people were without number who came with him from Egypt, Libyans, Sukhim, and Ethiopians.

And he took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem. Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and to the princes of Judah, who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, Thus says the Lord, You abandon me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak.

Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, The Lord is righteous. When the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, They have humbled themselves. I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.

Nevertheless, they shall be servants to him, that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem.

He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything. He also took away the shields of gold that Solomon had made, and king Rehoboam made in their place shields of bronze, and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house.

[1 : 34] And as often as the king went into the house of the Lord, the guard came and carried them and brought them back to the guard room. And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the Lord turned from him, so as not to make complete destruction.

Moreover, conditions were good in Judah. So king Rehoboam grew strong in Jerusalem and reigned. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there.

His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite, and he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord. Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the chronicles of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer?

There were continual wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David, and Abijah his son reigned in his place. 2 Chronicles chapter 12 covers much the same ground as 1 Kings chapter 14 verses 21-31, although the story has a more positive outcome.

As Peter Lighthouse has observed, the passage follows a there and back again, or a book-ended, or a chiasmic structure. It begins in verse 1 with Rehoboam becoming strong and forsaking the law.

[2 : 52] In verses 12-13, Rehoboam grows in strength again. In verses 2-4, Shishak invades and comes up to Jerusalem. In verses 9-11, Shishak plunders Jerusalem.

In verse 5, we have the first prophecy of Shemaiah. And in verses 7-8, we have the second prophecy of Shemaiah. In the very middle of this section, then, is Rehoboam and the leaders humbling themselves before the word of the Lord and repenting.

This functions as a turning point in the narrative. In many respects, Rehoboam did not have as bad a start as he might have done. In 2 Chronicles chapter 11 verses 13-17, we read, And the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel presented themselves to him from all places where they lived. For the Levites left their common lands and their holdings and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons cast them out from serving as priests of the Lord, and he

appointed his own priests for the high places, and for the goat idols and for the calves that he had made.

And those who had set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel came after them from all the tribes of Israel to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord, the God of their fathers. They strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they made Rehoboam the son of Solomon secure, for they walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon.

[4 : 12] Rehoboam had the benefit of the presence of the temple and its worship in his capital, and the nearer alignment of the interests of his kingdom with true worship. While the true worship of the Lord was always a political threat to Jeroboam, as the temple of the Lord was situated in his rival's territory, it was not the same for Rehoboam.

Nevertheless, Rehoboam still abandoned the way of the Lord in many respects, and when he did, Egypt came up against him. In many ways, when Egypt came up against Israel, they came in the form of a false Israel.

They came with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen, which is 12,000 times 5. On the one hand, this might remind us of the 600 chariots of Egypt in Exodus chapter 14 verse 7.

It might also remind us of the 600,000 of Israel that left Egypt when they came out at the Exodus. There is a sort of a reverse Exodus here. The Egyptians now come up like Israel once came up from Egypt.

They are surrounded by a people without number, and with a great mixed multitude. They engage in a great conquest of the land, taking the fortified cities of Judah, and coming even as far as Jerusalem, which was the climax of Israel's conquest of the land.

[5 : 22] Shemaiah the prophet brings a message to Rehoboam and the princes of Judah. He informs them that as they have abandoned the Lord, the Lord has abandoned them. Yet surprisingly, they respond appropriately to the message of the Lord, and the Lord relents from the severity of his judgment upon Rehoboam.

Rehoboam and Judah will still be judged, but now in a much more tempered manner. There is no promise that there will be any change in God's mind as a result of their repentance, but they repent nonetheless.

They acknowledged the justice of the Lord in the matter and put themselves in the hands of his mercy. They will still be judged by Shishak, but in a far less severe manner. And there is a sort of a reverse exodus here.

The Egyptians now come up like Israel once came up. They plundered the gold of Judah, as Israel once plundered their gold, but Jerusalem is ultimately spared from being destroyed by them.

As a result of Shishak's invasion, the glory of Judah is much diminished. In many ways, we see consequences of the sins of Solomon here. He made a marriage covenant with Egypt and got embroiled with Egypt in many ways.

[6 : 25] And now Egypt has come up against his people and has destroyed many of their cities and almost taken over their capital. Rehoboam is the son of an Ammonite woman.

Solomon had taken many wives from the surrounding nations. And now Rehoboam, the son of an Ammonite woman, ends up re-establishing many of the ways of the surrounding nations in Judah. Solomon had built up great armies of chariots and horsemen, and yet they failed to save him from the chariots and horsemen of Egypt.

And all the gold that he amassed and accumulated, that he used to build the shields of gold for the house of the Lord and for his own house, is now taken from him by Shishak.

Israel ends up using its gold to build golden calves. Not only is it a tragic reversal, we also discover that all of the gains that Solomon seemingly won through his failure to observe the law of the king in Deuteronomy chapter 17 ended up coming to nothing.

It all proved tragically futile. A question to consider. Rehoboam's son, like the son that Jeroboam loses, is called Abijah.

[7 : 32] Relating the son of Rehoboam to the sons of Jeroboam, what might we learn?