

January 29

Scriptures: Read 2 Chronicles 11 & 12

Key Verse: "... They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance..." (2 Chronicles 12:7)

Overview

When the northern tribes stoned Hadoram (10:18; also called "Adoram" in 1 Kings 12:18), who had gone into their territory to represent Rehoboam, probably to collect taxes, it became clear that their words about separating from Judah were to be taken seriously (10:16). Rehoboam immediately prepared for battle to regain control over those territories and force the rebels to submit. If the Lord had not intervened by sending the prophet Shemaiah, there would have been a civil war. Shemaiah's message was that they not go to battle, for it was the plan of God for Israel to be divided (11:4); therefore, they were not to fight against the will of God by fighting with their brethren. Rehoboam obeyed the word of the Lord, and for the next three years, his kingdom prospered with God's blessings.

One of the main reasons for Rehoboam's kingdom being strengthened was the influx of many faithful Levites who had left Jeroboam's new kingdom and moved to Judah. They did so because of the calf worship Jeroboam had instituted as the official religion. Jeroboam had done this purposely, in order to cut any ties with the Jerusalem Temple in Judah (cf. 1 Kings 12:26-28). Not only did Levites leave, but others as well, "from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the Lord God of Israel" (11:16). In this way, the Lord was separating His faithful children (the remnant) from the larger group that had rejected Him.

Since Rehoboam had lost all the territory of the northern tribes, he put all his might into holding on to what he had. He fortified a few important cities within Judah, including Bethlehem, the hometown of his grandfather David. All the cities he fortified were to the south and the west of Jerusalem, apparently because of Egypt's war threat to Judah, which soon turned into reality.

Rehoboam began his rule successfully because he "walked in the way of David and Solomon" (11:17). For three years, the kingdom was strong, but then Rehoboam forgot his need for God. Not only did he forsake the Lord, but, as we learn from the historical account in 1 Kings, he led his people into idolatry (1 Kings 14:23, 24; 15:12). The Lord raised up Shishak, king of Egypt, to come against Jerusalem with his allies as a punishment, because "they had transgressed against the Lord" (12:2) and had forsaken Him.

Once again, God used the prophet Shemaiah to give His message. Shemaiah, boldly and without fear, confronted King Rehoboam with his sin. Because Rehoboam received the prophet's message and sincerely humbled himself before God, God gave him grace (cf. 1 Peter 5:5-6). God spared the city but allowed them to become subservient to Egypt, in order to teach them, by contrast, the benefits of serving Him. Shishak burdened Judah with paying him tribute. He tried to take all he could get, including the gold treasures that remained from Solomon's rule. God, however, had never oppressed them when He was the ruler; He never took but only gave to them generously. Indeed, it is much better to submit to God! As Jesus proclaimed, "Come to Me...and

I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart..." (Matthew 11:28-30).

How tragic that once again Rehoboam fell away from the Lord. Unlike his grandfather David, "[Rehoboam] did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord" (12:14). The Lord looks upon the hearts of mankind and knows those who have a longing for Him. Because Rehoboam did not long after God, he fell into sin and "did evil" in the sight of the Lord.

Prayer

Lord, we submit to You. Your rulership in our lives is the greatest blessing. You give us generous benefits, and Your goodness leads us to repentance. Thank You, Lord!