

Setting

Locate the following places on the Bible map:

- Shechem
- Penuel
- Dan
- Jerusalem
- Bethel

Key Terms & People

The “**house of David**” (12:19, 20, 26) refers to the kingdom (or royal line) of David to which both Solomon and Rehoboam belong.

Jeroboam. A servant of Solomon who becomes the first king of the Northern Kingdom.

Rehoboam. The son of Solomon and the king of the Southern Kingdom.

Story Moments

Rehoboam Seeks Wisdom

12:1–2. After Solomon’s death, Rehoboam travels from Jerusalem to Shechem to become king. How does Jeroboam respond when he hears about Rehoboam’s coronation?

12:3–5. What do Jeroboam and the assembly of Israel ask of Rehoboam? What do they promise to do if he leads the nation this way?

What is Rehoboam’s response to this request from the people?

12:6–7. Who is the first group Rehoboam consults? What question does he present to them? What is their advice to him?

12:8–11. What is Rehoboam’s attitude toward the advice of the elders? Where does he look for advice next? What does this next group tell him?

12:12–14. How does King Rehoboam answer the people who had gathered to hear him? Whose advice does he follow?

Note: The word “roughly” is the Hebrew word “qāšē.” This word describes a condescending speech from a superior to an inferior, such as when Joseph speaks “roughly” to his brothers (Genesis 42:30).

12:15. His decision not to listen to the people is from the sovereign hand of God. Why does God move him to make this decision?

Israel Reacts to Rehoboam’s Decision

12:16. How do the people respond to Rehoboam’s decision?



12:17–20. When Rehoboam sends a government official named Adoram to speak with Israel, how do they respond? How does Rehoboam respond to this act of rebellion? Who do the people make to be king over “all Israel”?

Note: From this point on, the books of 1 & 2 Kings refer to the southern two tribes as “Judah” and the northern ten tribes as “Israel.”

12:21–24. What does Rehoboam do once he arrives in Jerusalem? What command does God give through Shemaiah? How do the people of Judah respond to this command?

Jeroboam’s False Worship

12:25–27. Jeroboam, the newly crowned king of the Northern Kingdom, decides to rule from Shechem. What does Jeroboam fear?

12:28–29. Why does Jeroboam provide two worship shrines at the extreme south (Bethel) and extreme north (Dan) of the country? What image does he make to put in these shrines?

What does he declare when he sets up the image?

Note: The golden calves (or bulls) were an image depicting the Lord God himself (Yahweh). In the ancient world, a bull was a common symbol of strength and prosperity (and still is today—have you ever heard of a “bull market”?). It was often used as a symbol for a nation’s god.

12:30–33. How does Jeroboam determine the month and day of his feast? Is this righteous or unrighteous behavior? Look back at 11:38 and the conditional promise the Lord gave Jeroboam. Is Jeroboam keeping his end of the bargain?

Ask Yourself

Why is it hard for people with authority to serve those under them? What character flaw do you

think led Rehoboam to disregard this wisdom for the foolishness of the young men? See Job 12:12.

In the areas God has placed under my authority, do I serve others as Jesus instructs (Luke 22:24–27), or do I use my authority to serve myself?

How does 1 Kings 12:15 (“for the turn of events was from the LORD, that He might fulfill His word”) encourage us to trust God even when our human leadership makes bad decisions?

Jeroboam made alternate (and more convenient) places of worship for the nation of Israel out of fear that if the people went to Jerusalem to worship, their hearts would be drawn back to unity with Judah. How does this demonstrate both the power of proper worship and the danger of improper worship?

Cross References

Job 12:12

Wisdom *is* with aged men, And with length of days, understanding.

Luke 22:24–27

²⁴ Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. ²⁵ And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ ²⁶ But not so *among* you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. ²⁷ For who *is* greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? *Is* it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.

Proverbs 21:1–2

¹ The king’s heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *Like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

² Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.

Proverbs 13:1

A wise son *heeds* his father’s instruction, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

Proverbs 9:8

Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; Rebuke a wise *man*, and he will love you.

Genesis 42:30

“The man *who is* lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.”