



Second Chronicles - Chapter Twelve

III 2 Chronicles 10:1-36:23 - The Kingdom of Judah Down to the Exile (continues)

III.a 2 Chronicles 10:1-12:16 - Rehoboam (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Twelve

Because Rehoboam was considered himself strong he turned away from the Lord and so God sent King Shishak of Egypt against him. Rehoboam was told that it was the Lord's doing and so he repented. Therefore, God did not allow Shishak to destroy Jerusalem but instead made Judah his vassal state. Shishak took all the valuable items from the temple and the palace including the gold shields Solomon had made. Rehoboam replaced them with bronze imitations.

Rehoboam was not a good king for the seventeen years that he reigned. When he died his son Abijah succeeded him.

III.a.v 2 Chronicles 12:1-12 - Egypt Attacks Judah

Because Rehoboam did not walk according to God's ways, the Lord brought the Egyptians against him but he did not allow Judah to fall; instead, he punished them by making them a vassal to King Shishak. The tribute Rehoboam paid was all the valuable items from the temple and the palace, in particular the gold shields that Solomon had made.

¹ When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he grew strong, he abandoned the law of the Lord, he and all Israel with him.

2 Chronicles 12:1

When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he grew strong, he abandoned the law of the Lord, he and all Israel with him. After a faithful beginning,

Rehoboam seems to have descended into pride and a reliance on his own strength instead of dependence on God. That he and his people abandoned the law of the Lord is equated with abandoning God himself (v.5): there is no effective relationship with God without obedience to his revealed will. The NT makes the same point positively when Jesus equates love for him with obedience to his commandments: <<*They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them*>> (John 14:21).

Rehoboam abandoned the law of the Lord when he was strong and secure. He trusted in God so long as he felt he needed him; but he grew independent of God instead of more dependent on him. The worst part about Rehoboam's sin was that it led the entire kingdom into sin with him.

² In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the Lord, King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem ³ with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand cavalry. A countless army came with him from Egypt – Libyans, Sukkiim, and Ethiopians. ⁴ He took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 12:2-4

In the fifth year of King Rehoboam. This was 925 BC. This was not so far from the time of David and Solomon, years of strength and security in Israel. No foreign enemy ever did as much against God's people during the time of David and Solomon as happened during this occasion during the reign of Rehoboam.

Because they had been unfaithful to the Lord, King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. Unfaithful, Hebrew *ma'al*, is a key term for the Chronicler. The Egyptian invasion follows hard on the heels of national apostasy and is explicitly identified by the writer as God's punishment for sin; but not every instance of distress or suffering in Chronicles is understood this way, for example 2 Chronicles 20:1-12 and 32:1, where Judah suffers foreign invasion after its kings have acted faithfully.

The word unfaithful, also translated as transgressed, is an important term here. To be unfaithful to God is one of Chronicles' key terms and it never occurs in the Books of Samuel and Kings; its regular occurrence shows Israel's constant estrangement from God. It involves denying God the worship due to him, usually on a national scale, and is the primary reason given in Chronicles for the exile. The Chronicler sees this as the archetypal sin of Israel that punctuates its history from beginning to end. The terrible consequences of *ma'al* include the loss of the Promised Land and the pain of exile; nevertheless, the Chronicler will show that these penalties can be reversed by heartfelt repentance and faithful obedience. Such a response is expressed

above all in true worship according to the Law of Moses. The election of David, whose ancestry is given next, is concerned primarily with the establishment of such worship in Israel.

King Shishak of Egypt has often been identified with the Pharaoh Sheshonq I (945-924 BC), founder of the Twenty-second Dynasty in Egypt, whose army apparently passed through Judah on its way to fight in northern Israel. His campaign through Judah and Israel is commemorated in inscriptions on the temple at Karnak. If Shishak is Sheshonq, one must imagine that he did not attack Jerusalem on his way north precisely because Rehoboam bought him off with the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house (v.9). Solomon had left great wealth to his son Rehoboam, both in the temple and in the palace. After only five years, that wealth was largely gone.

One might give any number of geopolitical explanations as to why the Egyptians attacked the kingdom of Judah at this time. The Chronicler understood that it was really the hand of the Lord in motion because of their disobedience.

With twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand cavalry. This was a sizeable army and, although Israel also possessed cavalry and chariots, they were not as skilled in their use as were other nations like the Egyptians who had used them for many generations.

Sukkiim were soldiers also probably of Libyan origin, mentioned in Egyptian records of the 13th and 12th Centuries BC.

He took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem. These were the cities that Rehoboam had strengthened in 2 Chronicles 11:6-11. This was a serious threat to the entire southern kingdom. It might very well perish in just two generations since David.

⁵ Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and to the officers of Judah, who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, 'Thus says the Lord: You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak.'

2 Chronicles 12:5

Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam. This was the same prophet that had discouraged Rehoboam from attacking the ten tribes of Israel when they rejected his leadership and formed the northern kingdom of Israel; refer to 2 Chronicles 11:1-4. He had the opportunity to speak to all the officers of Judah because they were gathered at Jerusalem on account of Shishak's invasion.

You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak. This was a correction that matched the offence. If Judah insisted on forsaking God, they

would find themselves forsaken in the day of their need: <<***But if you will not obey the Lord your God by diligently observing all his commandments and decrees, which I am commanding you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you***>> (Deuteronomy 28:15). The great danger of telling God, “Leave me alone” is that someday he may answer that prayer. The message should always be clear in the mind of God’s people: <<***And you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with single mind and willing heart; for the Lord searches every mind, and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will abandon you for ever***>> (1 Chronicles 28:9), and: <<***He went out to meet Asa and said to him, ‘Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you, while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you’***>> (2 Chronicles 15:2).

⁶ Then the officers of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, ‘The Lord is in the right.’ ⁷ When the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying: ‘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. ⁸ Nevertheless they shall be his servants, so that they may know the difference between serving me and serving the kingdoms of other lands.’

2 Chronicles 12:6-8

Then the officers of Israel and the king humbled themselves. This national repentance was initiated by the leaders of the kingdom. Historically, great moves of God’s Spirit are seen when leaders are zealous about repentance and humility because: <<***if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land***>> (2 Chronicles 7:14). The partial deliverance that Judah experienced was intended to teach its people a fuller devotion to God. For the Chronicler’s own generation, it would have called to mind their own circumstances: subject to the Persian kings, yet free to worship God in his temple: <<***But now for a brief moment favour has been shown by the Lord our God, who has left us a remnant, and given us a stake in his holy place, in order that he may brighten our eyes and grant us a little sustenance in our slavery. For we are slaves; yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to give us new life to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judæa and Jerusalem***>> (Ezra 9:8-9).

The Lord is in the right. This was the summary of their confession of sin. To recognise that the Lord is righteous, the actual meaning of the phrase here, is also to recognise that people are not: <<*O Lord, God of Israel, you are just, but we have escaped as a remnant, as is now the case. Here we are before you in our guilt, though no one can face you because of this*>> (Ezra 9:15), and: <<*So the Lord kept watch over this calamity until he brought it upon us. Indeed, the Lord our God is right in all that he has done; for we have disobeyed his voice*>> (Daniel 9:14). To say this meant they understood that they deserved their present misfortune at the hands of Shishak.

I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance. Despite the faithlessness of his people, God remains gracious and merciful: <<*Yet he, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; often he restrained his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath*>> (Psalm 78:38).

Nevertheless they shall be his servants, so that they may know the difference between serving me and serving the kingdoms of other lands. When Judah forsook the law of the Lord, it was as if they offered themselves as servants to another master. God will allow them to experience some of the consequences of serving another master.

⁹ So King Shishak 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 everything. He also took away the shields of gold that Solomon had made; ¹⁰ but King Rehoboam made in place of them shields of bronze, and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house. ¹¹ Whenever the king went into the house of the Lord, the guard would come along bearing them, and would then bring them back to the guardroom.

2 Chronicles 12:9-11

He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house; he took everything. Solomon left great wealth to his son Rehoboam, both in the temple and in the palace. The treasures of the temple and palace were surrendered as tribute to avert an attack on the city.

He also took away the shields of gold that Solomon had made. First Kings 10:16-17 mentions these five hundred shields, two hundred large and three hundred small. These shields made beautiful displays in the House of the Forest of Lebanon or for ceremonial purposes, but they were of no use in battle. Gold was too heavy and too soft to be used as a metal for effective war shields. This was an example of the emphasis of image over substance that began in the days of Solomon and worsened in the days of Rehoboam.

King Rehoboam made in place of them shields of bronze. The replacement of gold with bronze is a perfect picture of the decline under the days of Rehoboam. The dynasty of David went from gold to bronze in five years. They wished to emphasise how far Rehoboam had fallen in a mere few years. He had inherited an empire; five years later, master of a small state, he could protect his capital itself only by denuding his palace of its treasures. Solomon's court had despised silver; his son's court had to be content with bronze!

David once lamented over his predecessor Saul and his friend Jonathan: <<*Your glory, O Israel, lies slain upon your high places! How the mighty have fallen!*>> (2 Samuel 1:19). Now the same could be said of his own dynasty.

And committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house. In the days of Solomon, the gold shields hung on display in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. Under Rehoboam, the replacement bronze shields were kept in a protected guardroom until they were specifically needed for state occasions.

This is the first of a series of notices in 2 Chronicles about the loss of treasure from the temple and the palace with others following in 2 Chronicles 16:2, 25:24, 36:7, and 36:13; the culmination of which will come in 2 Chronicles 36:19.

A monumental relief on the Bubastite Portal of the main temple of Amon at Karnak near Luxor in Egypt catalogues, town by town, Shishak's military incursion into Israel and Judah. The Karnak relief provides striking verification of the biblical account. Shishak or Sheshonq I had founded the Egyptian (Libyan) Dynasty XXII (945-924 BC) and his raid into Palestine in 925 BC is well attested on the Amon temple reliefs at Thebes, i.e. Karnak. From the one hundred and fifty place names recorded there, his aim seems to have been to reassert Egyptian control over the main trade routes throughout Palestine and the Negeb.

¹² Because he humbled himself the wrath of the Lord turned from him, so as not to destroy them completely; moreover, conditions were good in Judah.

2 Chronicles 12:12

Because he humbled himself the wrath of the Lord turned from him. This is the key point concerning Rehoboam's reign that the Chronicler wishes to make for his readers. This great humbling of Rehoboam came after he had humbled himself as described in v.6. It shows that God knew there was more humbling to do even after Rehoboam did it himself. Even so, this was God's favour and mercy to him because

both Rehoboam and Judah deserved far worse. By the measure of justice alone God had the right to destroy them completely.

If God could show favour to a man such as Rehoboam, who typified the attitude which resulted in Judah's eventual collapse, there was always hope for those who humbled themselves before God. Indeed, the interest in the people was surely a direct encouragement to the Chronicler's contemporaries to seek God for themselves. Many in sin humble themselves before God hoping that he will not humble them further. Nevertheless, God knows just how much humbling someone needs and if more is necessary, God will certainly bring it.

Moreover, conditions were good in Judah. The idea is either that despite their corruption there was still a remnant of good in Judah and for that reason God held back judgement; or, that despite the terrible loss to the Egyptians there was still a remnant of prosperity in Judah.

III.a.vi 2 Chronicles 12:13-16 - Death of Rehoboam

Rehoboam was not a good king and reigned in his own pride rather than the strength of the Lord. After seventeen years as king he died and his son Abijah succeeded him.

¹³ So King Rehoboam established himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned for 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. ¹⁴ He did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord.

2 Chronicles 12:13-14

So King Rehoboam established himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Out of God's mercy, he survived the threat from Shishak and reigned until his natural death.

His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. Rehoboam was the product of one of Solomon's foreign wives who were in part responsible for his downfall from grace. Because Solomon had failed to heed the commands of God and had married foreign women, he had produced a son who would not have his heart focused of following the will of the Lord.

He did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord. This was the root of the problem with Rehoboam. He had even less of a relationship with God than his father Solomon had had. At times he did seek the Lord, but never with a prepared heart. The writer's overall estimate of Rehoboam is negative: whereas 1 Kings 14:22 blames the people for doing evil, the Chronicler makes this charge against Rehoboam and adds that he did not set his heart to seek the Lord; refer to

2 Chronicles 11:16 for the example of the Levites and others who came from the northern tribal area so that they could follow the Lord.

Charles Spurgeon comments, “You see how readily Rehoboam went, first towards God, then towards idols, and then back again, towards God; he was always ready to shift and change, he wrought no great reforms in the land; we do not read that, he held a great Passover, as Hezekiah did, or that the high places were taken away; but, as soon as Shishak was gone, he felt perfectly content. There was not anything real and permanent in his religion; it did not hold him. He held it sometimes, but it never held him.”

¹⁵ Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the records of the prophet Shemaiah and of the seer Iddo, recorded by genealogy? There were continual wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. ¹⁶ Rehoboam slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David; and his son Abijah succeeded him.

2 Chronicles 12:15-16

These verses generally follow 1 Kings 14:29-31 but specify that historical records from Shemaiah and Iddo contributed to the Chronicler’s sources; refer to the comment made on 1 Kings 14:19. The Chronicler’s use of such sources accounts for much of the material in his work that is additional to 1-2 Kings.

Rehoboam slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David. The Chronicler seems to give more attention to the life of Rehoboam than the writer of First Kings. This may be because Rehoboam is somewhat of a pattern and an encouragement to the returning exiles to whom the Chronicler first wrote.

The Chronicler’s overall view of Rehoboam has quite a different feel from Kings. While accepting Rehoboam’s very real failings as a leader, Chronicles is keen to demonstrate the value of repentance and the extent of God’s mercy.

As the first king of Judah, Rehoboam is an example of God’s dealings with David’s whole dynasty. Therefore, the following themes are seen in Chronicles’ description of Rehoboam:

- Obedience to the prophetic word; refer to 2 Chronicles 11:1-4.
- Strengthening the kingdom through building work; refer to 2 Chronicles 11:5-12.
- Activities of priests, Levites, and those who seek God; refer to 2 Chronicles 11:13-17.
- An expanding royal family; refer to 2 Chronicles 11:18-21.
- Humble repentance; refer to vv.5-12 above.