

# God's Nation Divides



**Scripture Reference:**

[1 Kings 11:41-12:24](#)

## **Suggested Theme:**

Wisdom comes from God. Listen to advice from wise and godly people such as parents, elders and teachers.

**Memory Verse:** "Listen to advice and accept correction. Then in the end you will be wise." [Proverbs 19:20, ICB](#)

## **Story Overview:**

Rehoboam was officially appointed the new king when his father, Solomon, died. When Rehoboam became king, Jeroboam gathered the people together and asked Rehoboam to be easier on the people and not make them work as hard as Solomon had done. The court elders advised Rehoboam that the people would love and follow him if he did this. Rehoboam ignored this good advice and listened to his young friends' bad advice instead. They told him to make the people work harder and to treat them more like slaves. Because of this, the people rebelled, and the kingdom was divided into two parts. Rehoboam was king of the smaller part- called Judah. Jeroboam became king of the larger part- called Israel.

## **Background Study:**

Solomon had asked God for wisdom to rule well, and he did rule well for a long time. He built a beautiful temple for the Lord. He wrote wise proverbs to teach young men the right way to live. He made his country even stronger than it had been in David's time. As he grew older, Solomon grew careless about obeying God. He married foreign women and let them bring their idols into Israel. He became too proud of his beautiful cities and huge army. He made taxes too heavy for the common people. He also drafted them to work for him and serve in the army. (Read [1 Kings chapter 11](#)).

Jeroboam was a popular leader in the tribe of Ephraim. He served Solomon well until Ahijah, a prophet, said he would someday rule part of the kingdom. Solomon thought only a traitor could think of taking part in the kingdom, so he wanted to punish Jeroboam for treason. Jeroboam saved his own life by running away to Egypt ([1 Kings 11:26-43](#)).

When Solomon died after ruling for forty years, Jeroboam came back from Egypt. Again, he was a popular leader as they gathered to crown Solomon's son Rehoboam as their king. Jeroboam and other leaders representing all of Israel went to Rehoboam and asked him to lower their taxes and not demand so much work and military service from them. They promised to be loyal subjects of the new king if he would do that.

The business of government was new to Rehoboam, and the request may have surprised him. He wanted time to think it over. Any ruler has to have help in the government. The men who had helped Solomon knew more about the needs of the people and about what should happen when Rehoboam gave his answer. Rehoboam wisely asked them for advice.

The old men advised Rehoboam to cut taxes and not draft so many people. If he did that, the people would be glad to have him as their king and would obey him as long as they lived.

Rehoboam turned to the young men who had grown up with him in the luxury of the king's court. They knew little about the serious business of government and cared little about the common people. They were playboys rather than statesmen. The young men advised Rehoboam to let the people know he was the boss by raising taxes, demanding more work, and punishing people more severely if they displeased him. Unwisely, Rehoboam took the foolish young men's advice, tearing the country apart. The Lord had known in advance that Rehoboam would make a foolish decision.

Most of the people of Israel would not have a king who promised to treat them so cruelly. Jeroboam became king of the rebel tribes. These tribes became their own country, and they called themselves "Israel." Jeroboam knew that he needed to keep the people away from Jerusalem, or they might go back to Rehoboam's "side", so he established the town of Bethel as a place of worship instead of Jerusalem ([1 Kings 12:25-13:34](#)). This whole area was known as Samaria. Even hundreds of years later, in the New Testament times, the people of Samaria were not considered "true" Jews.

The tribe of Judah kept Rehoboam as its king. This was Rehoboam's own tribe. The capital city of Jerusalem was in the territory of Judah. The tribe of Benjamin seems to have remained loyal to Judah ([1 Kings 11:21](#)). These tribes became their own country, and they were called "Judah." Rehoboam was 41 years old when he became king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for 17 years. He did not follow God ([2 Chronicles 12:13-14](#)).

Nothing is more sad than the thought of division among God's people. The next years were bad ones. Many turned away from the Lord and began to worship the gods of the people in the surrounding countries.

[Background Information on the Divided Kingdom.](#)

## Way to Introduce the Story:

Ask around and collect some advice that would apply to children. These might include: "Don't laugh when your mouth is full (or when milk is in your mouth); Don't get gum too close to your hair; Put your homework in your school bag the night before school; etc." Ask the children what good advice they have heard and then discuss it. Talk about why someone might advise not putting gum too close to hair. Maybe they learned from their own mistake or watching someone else make it. Talk about how the older people get, the more experience they have. The children you teach might have good advice for children younger than them. "In today's story, we will learn about someone who did not listen to advice from older people. This person listened to advice from people who did not have any experience."

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## The Story:

King Solomon was a wise and good king for many years. All of the 12 tribes of Israel followed him and were part of his kingdom. Solomon built a beautiful temple for the Lord and also a huge palace. But Solomon did not always choose to do right. Solomon wanted to make more and more beautiful buildings. He made people work very hard even when they did not want to. He also made them pay high taxes. Solomon also had many wives, and they did not worship God. Solomon had altars built so that his wives could worship their false gods.

Jeroboam was one of Solomon's workers. A prophet of the Lord came to Jeroboam and said, "Solomon has disobeyed the Lord. Solomon will be the king until he dies, but after that, the 12 tribes of the kingdom will be divided into two parts. Solomon's son will rule two tribes, and you will rule ten.

After King Solomon died, everyone expected his son, Rehoboam, to be the new king. All of the people gathered in the town of Shechem to crown Rehoboam.

Jeroboam came before the king. Jeroboam and the people said, "Your father, Solomon, was very strict with us. He made us work long and hard for him and pay many taxes, too. If you will be easier on us, we will serve you well."

Rehoboam said, "I need three days to think about this." The people went away. First, Rehoboam went to the older men who had a great deal of wisdom and experience. Rehoboam asked, "What do you think I should say to these people? Should I lower taxes and give them less work? Should I do what they've asked?"

The older men said, "Yes! If you treat the people kindly, they will be your loyal servants." These older men had been advisers to King Solomon. They knew the people were unhappy when they had to work so hard, and they wanted Rehoboam to be a good king.

But this was not what Rehoboam wanted to do, so he went to the young men who were his own servants. These men had no experience, and they didn't ask for God's wisdom. They said, "Tell the people you will give them even more work and higher taxes than your father did. That will show them how tough you are and that you are much stronger than your father."

Three days later, when Rehoboam met with the people of Israel again, he followed the young men's foolish advice and said, "I am going to be even stricter than my father was – more work and higher taxes." Rehoboam thought acting tough would make the people respect and serve him, but this was not God's way of thinking or acting.

The people were very angry. Many of them did not want to follow a king who was going to be mean. Ten tribes decided to make their own country and have Jeroboam as king. They named their country Israel. They decided that they would never come to Jerusalem and the temple again. They would make their own place to worship.

Two of the tribes stayed with King Rehoboam. These were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. They decided their country's new name would be "Judah." They used sometimes to be called Israel, too, but now they would never use that name again.

God knew all along that Rehoboam would make a bad choice. Everything happened just like the prophet of God had said that it would. The kingdom of God's people is divided into two parts! Rehoboam was not a good king, and he did not follow God. Jeroboam was not a good king either. It was very sad because many people stopped worshipping God and began to worship the false gods of the countries around them.

King Rehoboam must have wished that he had listened to good advice.

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## **Ways to Tell the Story:**

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasize in this lesson.

## **Review and Reflection Questions:**

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

### **Review:**

1. Who was Solomon's son who was crowned king? (Rehoboam)
2. What advice did the older men give Rehoboam? (Don't make the people work too hard or pay such high taxes; then they will be happy to serve you)

3. What advice did the younger men give Rehoboam? (Make the people work harder and pay more taxes, and the people will have to serve you)
4. Whose advice did Rehoboam listen to, the older men or the younger men?
5. What happened after Rehoboam listened to the younger men's advice and treated the people harshly? (The tribes rebelled, and the kingdom of Israel split into two different kingdoms)
6. The kingdom of Israel was divided into two different kingdoms and had two different names. What were the two names of the nations? (Judah and Israel)
7. Which tribes of Israel rebelled and created a new kingdom? (Every tribe but the tribe of Judah and Benjamin)
8. Who became king of Judah? (Rehoboam)
9. Who became king of Israel? (Jeroboam)

### **Reflection:**

1. What part of this story is most interesting to you?
2. If you were King Rehoboam, would you have listened to the older men's advice or the younger men's advice?
3. How do you think the older men felt when King Rehoboam did not listen to their advice?
4. How do you think the people felt when King Rehoboam said he would be an even harsher king than his father, Solomon?
5. Imagine you live in Israel, and King Rehoboam says he will be a harsh king, making you work more and pay more taxes. Would you stay and serve King Rehoboam (Kingdom of Judah) or join Jeroboam and his new kingdom (Kingdom of Israel)?
6. King Rehoboam was wise to ask for advice on how to treat the people. Who do you talk to when you need advice? What do you need advice for?
7. What makes someone wise?
8. Whose advice should you listen to? Whose advice should you not listen to?
9. God can help us become wise, and He gives us wise people in our lives to talk to. Is there a wise person you want to thank God for? What do you want to ask God for His wisdom about? (Suggestion: pray together)

### **Prayer:**

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

### **Song Suggestions:**

- [Booster Song](#)
- [Read Your Bible, Pray Everyday Song](#)
- [Books of the Old Testament Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

### **Activities and Crafts:**

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

### **Activities:**

- Discuss the attributes of a good advisor (wise, experienced, practical, knowledgeable, etc.)

- Start this term by dividing a bulletin board or poster into two parts. One side will be for Judah and the other for Israel. As you tell the stories each week, pin up or write names and words that describe each kingdom. This week, you might write “Rehoboam, Jerusalem, temple, Solomon’s son, bad advice, Judah, Benjamin” under Judah. “Jeroboam, Bethel, rebel, Samaria” could go under Israel. Keep adding to this every week.
- To help young children understand the concept of “dividing,” try dividing groups of various items (blocks, crayons, pizza) between the children.
- Use a Bible atlas or maps in the back of Bibles to see how the kingdom was divided. Older children should learn to find Palestine on a world map and point out Jerusalem and the Jordan River on a map of the country.



Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable

reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

### Crafts:

- Make a poster of [Proverbs 19:20](#) and use paint to decorate it.



Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).

- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

### Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Lesson plan and ideas \(Ministry to children\)](#)

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