

## **Judah During the Divided Kingdom (2 Chronicles 10:1 – 28:7)**

**by Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.**

### **Overview of the Divided Kingdom; The Reign of Rehoboam, part 1 (2 Chronicles 10:1-19)**

#### *Overview of the Divided Kingdom*

As the Chronicler entered the Divided Kingdom he left behind the reigns of his ideal kings. Although a number of kings during this period accomplished some remarkably positive achievements, this material is much more balanced between positive and negative events. Instead of providing the post-exilic community with extended models of faithful living, the kings of the Divided Kingdom offered contrasting scenarios of obedience and disobedience which led to divine blessing and judgment.

#### *Comparison of 10:1-28:27 with 1 Kgs 12:1 - 2 Kgs 17:41*

Detailed comparisons of each portion of the Divided Kingdom in Chronicles and Kings appear under the discussion of each reign. At this point it is important simply to note that the greatest difference between the two records is that Chronicles omits all materials dealing exclusively with northern Israel. Events in the North appear only as they touched on life in Judah. As a result, this material nearly exclusively focuses on conditions within Judah during the Divided Kingdom. This orientation reflected the Chronicler's keen interest in Jerusalem and Judah as the center of the post-exilic restoration. From his point of view, his readers needed to concentrate their attention on events in the South so that they could learn how to further the restoration of the Kingdom in their day.

#### *Structure of 10:1-28:27*

The structure of this portion of the history is not immediately apparent. It is evident that divisions between times of blessing and judgment shape much of the material. Yet, it is possible to identify three groupings of Judahite reigns in which particular themes come to the foreground (see figure 25).

The features which characterize each portion of the Divided Kingdom will be discussed at the beginning of each section. It should be noted, however, that the motifs of each segment are much more complex than this outline suggests. The Chronicler wove countless topics throughout this material. Nevertheless, the themes of increasing blessing (10:1-21:3), northern

corruption (21:4-24:27), and half-hearted obedience leading to judgment (25:1-28:27) tie these materials together into these three groupings.

Judgments and Increasing Blessings in Judah (10:1-21:3)

Rehoboam (10:1-12:16)

Abijah (13:1-14:1 )

Asa (14:2-16:14 )

Jehoshaphat (17:1-21:3 )

Northern Corruption in Judah (21:4-24:27)

Jehoram (21:4-21:20)

Ahaziah (22:1-9)

Athaliah (22:10-23:21)

Joash (24:1-27)

Half-Hearted Obedience in Judah (25:1-28:27)

Amaziah (25:1-28)

Uzziah (26:1-23)

Jotham (27:1-9)

Ahaz (28:1-27)

*Outline of 2 Chr 10:1-28:27 (figure 25)*

*Judgments and Increasing Blessings in Judah (10:1-21:3)*

The first phase of the Divided Kingdom includes the reigns of Rehoboam (10:1-12:16) Abijah (13:1-14:1), Asa (14:2-16:14 ), and Jehoshaphat (17:1-21:3). These chapters present a variety of situations in which God responded to his people in judgment and blessing. Several motifs run through these reigns and distinguish them from the rest of the history.

First, every reign has at least one episode concerning Judah's involvement with northern Israel. In each case Judah remains distinct from her northern neighbor. Rehoboam suffered the rebellion of the northern tribes and nearly went to war against them (10:1-11:4). Abijah distinguished Judah from Israel in a speech before battle and subsequently defeated Israel (13:1-20). Asa failed to trust God in the face of Northern aggression, but nevertheless remained separate from them (16:1-10). Although Jehoshaphat joined in alliance with Ahab (18:1-19:3) and Ahaziah (20:35-37), he was sharply distinguished from the North (17:4; 19:1-3).

The focus on separation of Judah from Israel differs from the second phase when Judah is deeply corrupted by the northern queen Athaliah (21:4-24:27). It also differs with

the third phase when Judah gradually falls into the state of becoming like the Northern kingdom (25:1-28:27).

Second, each record includes at least one battle narrative. Episodes of warfare are not in themselves unusual, but these battles all have a common element. In at least one battle in each reign, Judahites called out to God in the face of powerful foes and God responded positively to their prayers. Rehoboam was delivered from total defeat at the hands of a superior Egyptian army (12:6). Abijah received victory over northern Israel despite their greater numbers (13:14). God gave Asa a similar victory over the Cushites (14:8-15). Jehoshaphat had two battles in which he called for and received help from God against great foes (18:31; 20:5-12). These parallels tie the first four reigns of the divided period together in distinction from the material that follows.

Third, reactions to announcements of God's word also determined the outcome of blessings and judgment in each reign. Rehoboam reacted appropriately two times to the prophet Shemiah (11:2-4; 12:5-8). Abijah announced God's word before battle, but Israel ignored him to their defeat (13:4-12). Asa was blessed for obeying the prophetic word (15:1-8), but he was cursed for rejecting the same word later in life (16:7-9). Jehoshaphat interacted positively with two prophets (18:1-19:3); he also received God's word from a Levite (20:14-19) which led to a great victory from God.

Fourth, a crescendo of blessings occurs in these materials as well. As one indication of this dimension of the record, the Chronicler noted how many soldiers were in Judah's army during each reign. The blessing of God is evident in that the number of soldiers increased steadily from Rehoboam to Jehoshaphat. Rehoboam had 180,000 soldiers (11:1); Abijah's army numbered 400,000 (13:3); Asa had 580,000 (14:8); Jehoshaphat mustered 1,160,000 men (17:14-19), the greatest army during the Divided Kingdom. Similar statistics do not appear again until Amaziah (25:5) and Uzziah (26:11-15). This feature unites this early portion of the Divided Kingdom as a time of increasing blessing alongside of appropriate judgments.

#### *The Reign of Rehoboam (10:1-12:16)*

The Chronicler's presentation of Rehoboam's reign (931-913 B.C.) introduced his readers to themes that will appear time and again in this period of the divided monarchy. He shaped his record to present Rehoboam as a king who failed twice, but received blessings from God on both occasions because of his appropriate response to the prophetic word.

*Comparison of 10:1-12:16 with 1 Kings 12:1-14:31*

The following comparison indicates large scale similarities and differences between Chronicles and Kings (see figure 26). Detailed comparisons follow at the beginning of each section.

<b>2 Chr</b>		<b>1 Kgs</b>
10:1-19	Rehoboam's Loss of Northern Support (closely parallel)	12:1-20
11:1-4	Rehoboam's Refrain from Attack (closely parallel)	12:21-24
-----	Jeroboam's Enterprises (omitted)	12:25-33
11:5-12	Rehoboam's Fortifications (added)	-----
11:13-17	Rehoboam's Support (added)	-----
11:18-23	Rehoboam's Progeny (added)	-----
-----	Jeroboam's Altar (omitted)	13:1-34
-----	Jeroboam's House (omitted)	14:1-20
12:1-12	Rehoboam's Battle with Shishak (expanded)	14:25-28
12:13-14	Rehoboam's Reign Summarized (abbreviated)	14:21-24
12:15-16	Closure of Reign (closely parallel)	14:29-31

*Comparison of 2 Chr 10:1-12:16 with 1 Kgs 12:1-14:31 (figure 26)*

The Chronicler's account of Rehoboam's reign relates to Kings in several ways. First, in his usual fashion the Chronicler focused exclusively on the southern kingdom of Rehoboam by omitting several sections that dealt with Jeroboam (2 Kgs 12:25-33; 13:1-24; 14:1-20). Second, the Chronicler's account adds several elements not found in Kings. These additions primarily include several blessings Rehoboam received (11:5-12, 13-17, 18-23). Third, various portions derived from Kings are closely parallel (10:1-19; 11:1-4; 12:15-16), expanded (12:1-12), and abbreviated (12:13-14).

Rehoboam's Early Sin, Prophetic Encounter, and Blessing (10:1-11:22)

Rehoboam's Sin and Israel's Rebellion (10:1-19)

Rehoboam's Foolish Treatment of the North (10:1-17)

All Israel Gathers to Make Rehoboam King (10:1)

Rehoboam and Northern Israel Discuss Terms (10:2-5)

Rehoboam Chooses a Foolish Response (10:6-11)

Rehoboam and Northern Israelites Discuss Terms (10:12-16a)

Northern Israelites Return Home (10:16b-17)

Rehoboam's Failure to Subjugate Northern Israel (10:18)

Rehoboam Sends Representative (10:18a)

Rehoboam's Representative is Killed (10:18b)

Rehoboam Flees to Jerusalem (10:18c)

Authorial Comment (10:19)

Rehoboam's Compliance and Blessing (11:1-23)

Rehoboam's Compliance with the Prophetic Word (11:1-4)

Rehoboam Prepares for Battle (11:1)

Rehoboam Receives a Prophetic Word (11:2-4a)

Rehoboam Turns Back from Battle (11:4b)

Rehoboam's Blessings for Compliance (11:5-23)

Rehoboam's Successful Fortifications (11:5-12)

Rehoboam's Support from Faithful Northerners (11:13-17)

Rehoboam's Support from Priests and Levites (11:13-15)

Rehoboam's Support from Other Northerners (11:16)

Rehoboam's Resulting Benefits (11:17)

Rehoboam's Enlarged Family (11:18-23)

Rehoboam's Later Sin, Prophetic Encounter, and Blessing (12:1-12)

Rehoboam's Strength Leading to Apostasy (12:1)

Shishak's Attack against Judah and Jerusalem (12:2-4)

Rehoboam's Response to the Prophetic Warning (12:5-8)

Shishak's Limited Victory over Jerusalem (12:9)

Rehoboam's Resulting Weakness (12:10-11)

Authorial Comment (12:12)

Closure of Rehoboam's Reign (12:13-16)

*Outline of 2 Chr 10:1-12:16 (figure 27)*

### *Structure of 10:1-12:16*

The Chronicler shaped his account of Rehoboam into two parallel sequences followed by the closure of the king's reign (see figure 27).

The disproportionate sizes of the two parts of Rehoboam's reign obscure their thematic parallels. As this outline suggests, however, both parts reflect each other in three ways. 1) They begin with Rehoboam committing sin. He foolishly followed the advice of his peers and threatened the northern tribes (10:1-19); he forsook God's law (12:1). 2) Both sections record Rehoboam's submission to the prophetic word. He did not attack the North (11:1-4); he humbled himself in repentance (12:5-8). 3) Both passages report blessings Rehoboam received as a result of his response to the prophet. An assortment of positive developments took place (11:5-23) and Rehoboam was spared from utter destruction (12:9-12). These similarities create a literary resonance within Rehoboam's reign which draws attention to the dangers of rebellion against God and value of submitting to the prophetic word.

### *Rehoboam's Early Sin, Prophetic Encounter, and Blessing (10:1-11:22)*

The reign of Rehoboam begins with an account of northern Israel's rebellion against Judah. The Chronicler arranged this portion of his record so that it focused on sin, submission to a prophet, and divine blessing.

### *Comparison of 10:1-11:22 with 1 Kgs 12:1-24*

This passage closely parallels 1 Kgs 12:1-24, but a number of significant variations appear. First, in two places the Chronicler diverged from Kings to employ his standard phrase **all Israel** (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*). Chronicles shifts from "the whole assembly of Israel" (1 Kgs 12:3 // 2 Chr 10:3) and "Israel" (1 Kgs 12:16d // 2 Chr 10:16d) to **all Israel**.

Second, in 10:7 the Chronicler softened the demands of the northern Israelites. 1 Kgs 12:7 reads, "If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them..." 1 Chr 10:7 reads, "**If you will be kind to these people and please them...**" This change made it clear that the requirements of the northern tribes were not unreasonable.

Third, a few Hebrew texts of 10:14 read as the NIV ("My father made your yoke heavy.") which conforms to 1 Kgs 12:14. Other Hebrew texts of 10:14 shift to "I have made your yoke heavy" (see NAS margin). The latter reading is probably original to the Chronicler and indicates his attempt to shift blame for the division away from Solomon to Rehoboam (see *Introduction: Translation and Transmission*).

Fourth, the Chronicler omitted the reference to Jeroboam's kingship (10:19 // 1 Kgs 12:20). This omission conforms to the focus on Judah in this portion of the history.

Fifth, the most significant difference between Chronicles and Kings is the Chronicler's addition of 11:5-23. These reports of divine blessing close this section on a positive note and shape the account into a parallel for the latter half of Rehoboam's reign.

### *Structure of 10:1-11:22*

The first segment of Rehoboam's reign divides into two main parts consisting of several narratives and a series of reports (see figure 27). The text first describes the rebellion of northern Israel against Rehoboam (10:1-19). It then depicts Rehoboam's compliance with the prophetic word and his resulting blessings (11:1-23).

### *Rehoboam's Sin and Israel's Rebellion (10:1-19)*

Rehoboam's reign begins with an account of the division of the nation. In his attempt to present Solomon as a model for his readers, the Chronicler omitted the prophetic rebuke against Solomon which laid much blame for the division of the nation on Solomon (see 1 Kgs 11:9-13). As a result, in the Chronicler's history the responsibility for national division fell squarely on Rehoboam's shoulders.

### *Structure of 10:1-19*

The record of Rehoboam's sin against the North closely parallels the account of 1 Kgs 12:1-19. It divides into two episodes followed by an authorial comment (see figure 27). Geographical orientations frame this material. It begins with Rehoboam leaving Jerusalem for Shechem (10:1) and ends with him returning to Jerusalem (10:18c). Within this framework two episodes appear. The first and longer episode concerns the king's foolish decision to oppress the northern tribes (10:1-17); the second and shorter episode reports Rehoboam's failure to suppress the rebellion of the northern tribes (10:18a-c). The section then closes with an authorial comment (10:19).

*Rehoboam's Foolish Treatment of the North (10:1-17)*

The reign of Rehoboam does not begin in the usual manner. Instead of opening with general characteristics of the king's reign as he often did, the Chronicler moved directly to Rehoboam's first sinful act. At the time of his coronation, Rehoboam foolishly mistreated the northern tribes.

*Structure of 10:1-17*

The account of Rehoboam's mistreatment of the North forms a five step symmetrical narrative (see figure 27). It begins with the Israelites coming to Shechem (10:1) and ends with them leaving for their homes (10:16b-17). Rehoboam and the northerners negotiate the terms of their relationship (10:2-5; 10:12-16a). These steps balance each other because both contain speeches by the king (10:5,14) and representatives of the tribes (10:3-4, 16). Moreover, the repetition of the reference to **three days** (10:5, 12 [twice]) also points to the symmetry between these portions of the story. Finally, the turning point of the episode focuses on Rehoboam's decision to respond harshly to the proposal of the northerners (10:6-11). This step itself divides into two movements: consultation with elders (10:6-7), and consultation with young men (10:8-9).

*All Israel Gathers to Make Rehoboam King (10:1)*

Rehoboam traveled to **Shechem** in the territory of Manasseh to obtain the support of the northern tribes. **All Israel had gone there** to make him king (10:1). In this passage **all Israel** refers to representatives of the northern tribes (see 10:3,16). Shechem is well-known as a place of many important events in biblical history (see Gen 12:6-7; 33:18-20; 37:12-14; Josh 21:21; 24:32; Judg 9:1-57). Its central location served as a reasonable meeting place for all the parties involved. Even so, the fact that the northern tribes did not come to Jerusalem to offer their support implied from the outset that relations between these tribes and David's house were already strained.

*Rehoboam and Northern Israel Discuss Terms (10:2-5)*

The text offers some background information for these events. **Jeroboam** had fled from Solomon to **Egypt** (10:2). The Chronicler omitted the fuller record of this event in an effort to present Solomon as a model (see 1 Kgs 11:1-40). Yet, here he acknowledged that Jeroboam had fled from Solomon, and later joined **all Israel** to negotiate with Rehoboam (10:2).

As noted above, the Chronicler mollified Jeroboam's proposal. The account of Kings calls

Rehoboam to be a "servant" of the tribes (1 Kgs 12:7). The Chronicler, however, clarified that Jeroboam's intention was merely to ask Rehoboam to **lighten the harsh labor** because Solomon had already inflicted a **heavy yoke** on northern Israel (10:4). No Israelites were actually conscripted as slaves (see 2:17). In all likelihood the complaint focused on heavy taxation and the requirement that men from these tribes serve as supervisors of the forced labor. In all events, the northern tribes only asked for good treatment and vowed, "**We will serve you**" (10:4).

The Chronicler softened the demands of the North in order to encourage his post-exilic readers toward an irenic outlook toward northern Israel. As they sought to re-establish the kingdom of God, it was necessary to heal the breach between the North and South stemming from Rehoboam's actions. One aspect of this healing was to acknowledge many legitimate efforts put forth by the North in the days of Rehoboam (see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*).

Apparently, Rehoboam needed time to consider this difficult decision. The economic repercussions of changing labor policies would be complex, but he also needed the support of these tribes. As a result, Rehoboam asked Jeroboam and Israel to **come back ... in three days** (10:5).

#### *Rehoboam Chooses a Foolish Response (10:6-11)*

The middle portion of this narrative summarizes Rehoboam's deliberations during the three day period. This material divides into two scenes: Rehoboam's consultation with **the elders** (10:6-7) and his meeting with **the young men** (10:8-11).

Rehoboam turned first to his older advisors (10:6-7). The text honors these men as experienced and wise. They **served his father Solomon**, the wisest king of Israel (10:6). The king asked for their direction and they responded soberly. They advised that Rehoboam should **be kind to these people and please them** (10:7). If he did, he would be assured of the North's abiding loyalty.

Unfortunately, the king did not heed the advice of the older men, but turned to **the young men** (10:8). These advisors were his peers who **had grown up with him** (10:8). By this time, Rehoboam was forty one years old (see 12:13). It is likely therefore, that the term **young men** had pejorative connotations, suggesting sarcastically that Rehoboam's peers thought and acted with youthful folly.

Rehoboam's friends encouraged a harsh response. They arrogantly advised Rehoboam to do more than simply reject the offer. They suggested that he say, "**My little finger is thicker than my father's waist**" (10:10). Beyond this, Rehoboam was to add that Solomon may have **scourged ... with whips**, but he would **scourge ... with scorpions** (10:11). In effect, the

young men counseled the king to threaten even greater hardships.

*Rehoboam and Northern Israelites Discuss Terms (10:12-16a)*

As instructed earlier, **Jeroboam and all the people** met again with the king **three days later** (10:12). The description of the scene begins abruptly with Rehoboam's response. As noted above, there is some question whether the original reading of Chronicles was "I have made your yoke heavy" or "**my father made your yoke heavy**" (10:14; see *Introduction: Translation and Transmission*). The former may be correct because it shifts attention away from Solomon's culpability. Even so, the Chronicler did not deny Solomon's oppressive actions (see 10:4). Whatever the case, the text recalls again that Rehoboam followed the foolishness of **the young men** (10:13) and it repeats some of the words they encouraged (10:14). These repetitions were designed to highlight the folly of Rehoboam's actions.

As if to explain why Rehoboam would do such a foolish thing, the text comments that **this turn of events was from God** (10:15). Although this comment appears in Kings (// 1 Kgs 12:15), it fit well with the Chronicler's theological outlooks. He often explained that divine providence was behind remarkable events (see *Introduction: 11) Divine Blessing and Judgment*). Rehoboam's actions precipitated the succession of the northern tribes **to fulfill the word of the Lord ... through Ahijah the Shilonite** (10:15). The Chronicler had previously omitted this prophecy because it reflected negatively on Solomon (see 1 Kgs 11:26-40). Nevertheless, his maintenance of the reference indicates that he expected his readers to know the prophecy. Rehoboam had foolishly driven the Northerners to rebellion, but this event was still under the sovereign control of the God of Israel.

In response to Rehoboam's words, **all Israel** (i.e. the representatives of the northern tribes) refused to submit to the king (10:16). Their words form a striking contrast to the earlier support offered to David (see 1 Chr 12:18; also 1 Sam 25:10; 2 Sam 20:1). The antithetical sentiments are evident in the following comparison with 1 Chr 12:18 (see figure 28).

<b>1 Chr 12:18</b>	<b>2 Chr 10:18</b>
We are yours, O David!	What share do we have in David,
We are with you, O son of Jesse!	What part in Jesse's son?
Success, success to you,	To your tents, O Israel!
and success to those who help you,	Look after your own house, O David!
for you God will help you.	

*Comparison of 1 Chr 12:18 and 2 Chr 10:18 (figure 28)*

In 1 Chr 12:18 Benjamites affirmed that they belong to David's kingdom; here the northern tribes rejected that relationship. The former passage wished good for David and those who helped him; the latter called Israelites to mobilize for conflict. The former hoped for divine help for David; the latter condemned David's house to its own devices. As such, Rehoboam experienced a reversal of David's blessing. David received support from all the tribes, but Rehoboam lost the unified support of the nation.

#### *Northern Israelites Return Home (10:16b-17)*

The end of this episode mentions that the Northerners returned home from Shechem. The Chronicler shifted from "Israel" (1 Kgs 12:17) to **all Israel** to indicate the great loss to Rehoboam (10:16b). The ideal of the United Kingdom had vanished. In an aside, the passage notes that only those Northerners **who were living in the towns of Judah** remained under Rehoboam's authority (10:17; see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*). The harm to the kingdom was enormous. Only a minority of displaced Northerners remained loyal.

#### *Rehoboam's Failed Attempt to Oppress Northern Israel (10:18-19)*

The Chronicler continued following the record of Kings (// 1 Kgs 12:18-19) to show that Rehoboam's kingdom deteriorated even further. This episode divides into three simple steps (see figure 27). The king sends his representative to the North (10:18a); the representative is assassinated (10:18b); Rehoboam flees to Jerusalem in fear (10:18c).

#### *Rehoboam Sends Representative (10:18a)*

Despite the rebellion that had taken place, the king began to carry through with his plan to oppress the North even more than Solomon. He sent **Adoniram who was in charge of the forced labor** (10:18a).

#### *Rehoboam's Representative is Killed (10:18b)*

When Adoniram arrived to enforce Rehoboam's plan, the northern Israelites **stoned him to death** (10:18b). The ease with which Adoniram was killed suggests that Rehoboam had entirely misread the situation. Apparently, he thought his royal authority would be recognized in the end. Not surprisingly, however, Adoniram was treated as a criminal and executed (see Lev 20:2,27; 24:14,16,23; Nu 15:35; Dt 13:10; 17:5).

*Rehoboam Flees to Jerusalem (10:18c)*

With rebellion now in full swing, Rehoboam feared for his own safety and barely escaped with his life. He ran from Shechem for the safety of Jerusalem. The portrait of Rehoboam at this point is an ironic reversal of his earlier arrogant assertions. Before he felt invincible; here he ran for his life.

*Authorial Comment (10:19)*

A brief authorial comment closes these two episodes. As a result of what happened during this time **Israel has been in rebellion ... to this day** (10:19). In this passage, it is likely that the Chronicler adopted this phrase from 1 Kgs 12:19 as a reference to his own day. (For a discussion of the expression **to this day** see 1 Chr 4:41.) Distrust and animosity between Judah and the northern tribes was a major concern for the Chronicler. In this note, the Chronicler placed responsibility for centuries of conflict between the North and South at the feet of Rehoboam (see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*).

The Chronicler's somber recollection of these events stands in sharp contrast with his repeated national celebrations during the reigns of David and Solomon (see *Introduction: 27) Disappointment and Celebration*). His history had now entered a new phase when Israel was far from ideal. Yet, in many ways Rehoboam's reign resembled the realities Israel faced in the post-exilic period. The tribes were divided; the throne of David was stripped of its glory. The next section of Rehoboam's reign illustrated the proper way to respond to this kind of situation.