

Division and Decline 2 Chronicles 10 – 12

Division and Decline Introduction

- When people refuse to submit to God, the inevitable result is a complicated mess.
- For example, the church in Corinth was a continuous source of trouble for the Apostle Paul.
- Their lack of maturity led to various forms of disobedience and division.

- The same was true in the days of Rehoboam son of Solomon.
- In his day the kingdom was divided.
- Sadly, it never fully recovered.
- The decline continued until both halves of the kingdom ended in defeat and exile.

- Rehoboam, however, did finally repent.
- If there is a positive lesson in these chapters, it may simply be that repentance is always possible.

Revolt 2 Chronicles 10

- 10:7 The older men may have been familiar with Solomon's advice from Proverbs 15:1.
 - *In Africa the 'elders', as older people are affectionately called, are considered a source of wisdom and their word is listened to with attention. ... Too many conflicts between young and old ... start because young people do not want to listen to the wise advice of older people.*
 - *Nupanga Weanzana, Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui*
- In choosing whose counsel to follow, Rehoboam might not only have listened to age.
- Not everyone who is old is also wise.
- His father's counselors at least had some political or leadership experience.
- And Solomon ruled a peaceful and prosperous kingdom.

- Those his own age would have had little or no experience.
- Unfortunately, there is no quick or easy way to obtain experience or attain maturity.

- Still, we should not lay too much of the blame for the divided kingdom on Rehoboam.
- The reasons for the division are more complex than that.
- This is clear in both the books of Kings and Chronicles.
 - Solomon laid a heavy burden on the people with all his building projects.
 - Jeroboam rebelled first against Solomon, then Rehoboam and finally against the Lord, leading his tribes into idolatry.
 - Rehoboam failed to heed wise counsel.

Take Away Points:

- God's people need to remain unified, but that unity will most easily be the result of everyone being submitted to God.
- The more people drift away from him, the harder it is to maintain unity.

Retreat 2 Chronicles 11

- This chapter gives us a good example of how the Bible differs from other ancient beliefs about nations and their gods.
- Choosing the right god does not always lead to victory.
- Sometimes the God of Israel encourages a retreat.

- Rehoboam and his army were ordered to retreat from fighting against the idolatrous northern kingdom.
- The priests and Levites then retreated to the security of Judah and Jerusalem.

- Paul makes an interesting point about division in the Corinthian church. Sometimes it is inevitable.
 - See 1 Corinthians 11:17-19.
- In other words, division is preferable to unified disobedience.
- This may be why God allowed the division of the kingdom.

Take Away Points:

- Sometimes the only way even to achieve peace is to decide to stop fighting.
- Once again, God's people need to remain unified, but that unity will most easily be the result of everyone being submitted to God.
- In this case obedience was preferable to unity.
- Both were not possible.

Repentance & Renewal 2 Chronicles 12

- 12:1 Have you seen this kind of behavior in your own life?
- In times of trouble, we remain close to God, begging for his mercy. Once we are strong, we promptly forget the Lord.

- 12:7 Consider 2 Chronicles 7:14.
 - *If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

- 12:8 Recall what Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30.

- 12:12 Rehoboam's reign was not a good one overall. Nonetheless, his repentance was valuable in God's sight.
- 12:13-16 At least we can say this about Rehoboam's reign:
- It could have been a lot worse!

Take Away Point:

- Rehoboam played a major role in the division and decline of Israel and Judah.
- Still, when he repented, God received that repentance as genuine.
- As long as you are still breathing, repentance is possible.

Division and Decline Summary

- Dividing a kingdom is a messy business. There is plenty of blame to go around. Once again,
 - Solomon laid a heavy burden on the people with all his building projects.
 - Jeroboam rebelled first against Solomon, then Rehoboam, and finally against the Lord, leading his tribes into idolatry.
 - Rehoboam failed to heed wise counsel.
- Rehoboam also has to take a good deal of responsibility for the decline of godliness in Judah.
- He turned away from the Lord – and did not seek him.
- Though he personally repented he could not undo all the damage that was done.
- We read a sad summary of Rehoboam's life in 12:14.

Division and Decline Conclusions

Take Away Points:

- God's people need to remain unified, but that unity will most easily be the result of everyone being submitted to God.
- The more people drift away from him, the harder it is to maintain unity.
- Sometimes the only way to even achieve peace is to decide to stop fighting.
- Obedience and unity will not always both be possible.
- Choose obedience. Division is preferable to unified disobedience.
- As long as you are still breathing, repentance is possible.
- In the New Testament, the Corinthian church was characterized by disunity and disobedience.
- Paul encourages them to overcome their problems through repentance and a healthy dose of love.
- The best place to start may be the place Rehoboam never seemed to go.
- 12:14 And he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord.
- What if we start by setting our hearts to seek the Lord?