

Exegetical Notes – 1 Kings 12:1-15

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1 Kings 12:1-15

Verses 1-4

¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone there to make him king. ² When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. ³ So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: ⁴ “Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.”

- Rehoboam was Solomon’s rightful heir. When Solomon died, everyone’s assumption was that Rehoboam would be Israel’s next king.
- Jeroboam, the son of Nebat (see 1 Kings 11:26-28), was still living in Egypt when he heard of Solomon’s death and Rehoboam’s ascension to the throne. When he heard the news, he returned to Israel. He became the spokesman for the people of Israel and went to Rehoboam demanding that the heavy tax burden placed on the people by Solomon be lightened. He promised that the people would serve Rehoboam as their king, if Rehoboam met this request.

Verses 5-7

⁵ Rehoboam answered, “Go away for three days and then come back to me.” So the people went away.

⁶ Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. “How would you advise me to answer these people?” he asked.

⁷ They replied, “If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants.”

- Rehoboam requested three days to consider the peoples’ request.
- During that time, he first consulted with the elders of the nation. They told him that, if he honored the peoples’ request, the people would serve him

as king. Their answer implies that Rehoboam should do as the people asked.

Verses 8-11

⁸ But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. ⁹ He asked them, “What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, ‘Lighten the yoke your father put on us’?”

¹⁰ The young men who had grown up with him replied, “These people have said to you, ‘Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter.’ Now tell them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist. ¹¹ My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’”

- Rehoboam did not like the response he received from the elders. So he consulted with those who were his friends and whom he knew would give him the answer that he wanted.
- The men that he consulted told him to reject the request of the people and to tell them that he would treat them worse than had his father, Solomon.

Verses 12-15

¹² Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, “Come back to me in three days.” ¹³ The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, ¹⁴ he followed the advice of the young men and said, “My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.” ¹⁵ So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the Lord, to fulfill the word the Lord had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite.

- When the people returned to Rehoboam in three days, he rejected the advice of the elders and gave the people the answer that his friends had counseled him to give to the people.
- This was the method that God used to take the kingdom of Israel away from Solomon because of Solomon’s failure to serve God with all his heart (see 1 Kings 11:11 and 11:29-40).

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