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THE WISEST KING MISLED

– AUGUST 8. – 1 KINGS 12:1-24. –

ISRAEL'S WISEST KING BECAME MOST FOOLISH –
DISSATISFACTION

AMONGST THE PEOPLE – JERUSALEM FAVORED AT
THE EXPENSE OF THE NATION – KING SOLOMON'S SON
AND SUCCESSOR – THE REVOLT OF THE TEN TRIBES –
THE KINGDOMS REUNITED AFTER THE BABYLONIAN
CAPTIVITY.

**"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before
a fall." – Proverbs 16:18.**

GREAT as King Solomon was, the latter part of his reign was less wonderful and less creditable than the first half. Although no rebellion took place during his time, nevertheless dissatisfaction was felt. The king rested upon the marvels of the early part of his reign, became more and more interested in foreign affairs, and multiplied the number of his wives and of his troubles. The wealth of the nation, represented in the great public improvements, was really public wealth, in which all the people were interested; but the subsequent greater attention to personal aggrandizement and to favoritism of the court was not in the interest of the people as a whole, but merely favorable to certain favored classes.

Although no rebellion was made against King Solomon, nor even protests, so far as the records show, nevertheless the people concluded that they would have a change in the kingdom during the reign of Solomon's [R5723 : page 206] successor, his son Rehoboam. This dissatisfaction was mainly with the ten tribes. The two tribes, in whose territory was the capital city, were satisfied with the great improvements which had come to them.

King Solomon's capital city had been favored out of all proportion to the remainder of the country, in its public improvements. Israelites of all the other tribes had shared in a general conscription of labor at a comparatively small compensation; and they felt that justice had not been rendered them.

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED

For these reasons, the coming of King Rehoboam to the throne was the signal for a protest and for a demand that the king guarantee the people against oppression – a demand very similar to that of the British public in connection with the Magna Charta. The demand of the Israelites was made at the time of the king's coronation – a time when all the tribes were supposed to participate in acknowledging their loyalty to the king. Then came the representatives of the ten tribes, with Jeroboam as a leader, saying, "Thy father Solomon made our yoke grievous; now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father and the heavy yoke which he put upon us lighter, and we will serve thee."

The young king bade them depart for three days and then come again. When he conferred with the old men of the kingdom, asking what he should do, they replied, "If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and will serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then will they be thy servants forever." But this advice was not fully satisfactory to young King Rehoboam; so he inquired of his personal friends, younger men of his acquaintance. These gave opposite advice, saying, "Thus shalt thou speak unto this people: My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins; and now, whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father has chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" – whips with metal pieces at the end of the lash.

The thought of the younger men and of King Rehoboam, who agreed with them, was that if the king would yield, it would be

merely the starting of rebellious demands which eventually would be unendurable. Their thought, therefore, was that the people should be intimidated, threatened. But the ten tribes under the leadership of Jeroboam were not intimidated. They withdrew, refusing to participate in the anointing of Rehoboam as their king. Only the representatives of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, remained loyal to the king.

Thus the kingdom of Israel was divided. Thereafter the ten tribes maintained the title Kingdom of Israel, and the two tribes were called the Kingdom of Judah, for over five hundred years – until the time of the return from Babylonian captivity of so many of all Israel as had respect to the Divine promises.

Since the captivity, the name Israel has stood for the entire twelve tribes, as at first, being so used by Jesus and the Apostles; and the name Jews was similarly used for all in covenant relationship with God. The great majority never returned, but continued to live in the various provinces of Babylon throughout the world. Some of them, rejecting circumcision and dropping faith in God, were disowned of God and thus became like the remainder of the Gentile world. But others of them, remaining loyal to the Lord, and going up to Jerusalem annually to the feast, as directed by the Lord's Word, continued to be known as members of "the twelve tribes scattered abroad." Many of these were brought into contact with the Truth in the days of the Apostles.

"PRIDE GOETH BEFORE DESTRUCTION"

Lessons from the past are valuable today. Pride has been a general guide for the world which has accomplished much harm. The wealthy and those in power have ever feared the poor, so that nearly all the blessings of life which the latter have obtained have come to them only through strictest demands and threats, and little voluntarily. We are not wise enough to say that the worldly-wise

have always erred in judgment in this matter. It is true that the poor and less favored are inclined to make unreasonable demands; but who can say that greater confidence in them on the part of the wealthy would not have worked general benefit? Who can say that the world might not have been further advanced had more confidence in the masses been displayed, and a greater willingness to give them even-handed justice and a larger share in the fruits of life?

The answer of King Rehoboam to the ten tribes reminds us of the present attitude of many of the learned and wealthy toward the masses. They seem to think that others will gain their cause for them; and that a recognition of the rights of the people, after the manner of the Golden Rule, would be showing the white feather, and lead on to disastrous demands wholly unendurable.

JUSTICE THE GOLDEN RULE

All will agree that the wise men advised King Rehoboam properly, to the effect that a ruler should be the servant of his people; and that if he so does faithfully, his kingdom would be enduring and his people would be blessed. Their advice amounted to an admonition that the king should observe the Golden Rule – that he should do to his people and for them as he would that they should do to him, were their conditions reversed. The Golden Rule, laid down by the great Head of Christianity, is despised and rejected as impracticable; but we hold that it has not been given a trial. Those who have had the power have always feared to trust the Golden Rule in their dealings with the people. Political parties, clamoring for something like the Golden Rule, have time and again climbed into power, only to refuse to use the rule after gaining the opportunity, contending that the conditions made it impossible.

Soon, however, the Golden Rule will have a world-wide test, and will demonstrate that it is the only rule by which human

happiness can be permanently secured. This is the promise of the Bible, which tells us that Messiah's Kingdom will give the world compulsory education along the lines of the Golden Rule for a thousand years. The Lord, through the Prophets, the Apostles and Jesus Himself, testifies to the success of the Golden Rule – that it will bring in everlasting righteousness, peace, joy, blessing; and that God's favor will be upon those who thus conform to His Law, giving them ultimately deliverance from sin, sickness, pain, death, and bringing the whole world of mankind to glorious human perfection, utterly destroying those who will refuse to be governed by the Golden Rule.

The result will be the glorious condition which God at the first proposed to Father Adam, but which he neglected and forfeited by disobedience. The death penalty upon Adam and his race, which has brought all our sicknesses, travails and death, has been offset by the Redeemer's sacrifice of Himself, the Just for the unjust; and the glorious Kingdom arrangements already referred to are to be the result.

