

Aim of lesson

To learn from Rehoboam and Jeroboam that we can have the kingdom within our grasp and yet lose it because we care more about looking good before others.

Bible background

1 Kings 11:26-43; 12.

Outline of lesson

Rehoboam

Read with the class, or outline the story of 1 Kings 12:1-20. Use the first part of the workbook to discuss the pressures on this new king Rehoboam. He had grown up in great affluence. His father's reign had begun well, but later Solomon had become involved in idolatry. The trust in God which had characterised David's life and reign had gradually been replaced by trust in political alliance and the worship of idols.

The class could suggest why Rehoboam chose the advice of the young men of his own age. Did he want to look impressive in front of his friends? Did he want to show his father's advisers that he could make decisions for himself? He showed some of his father's wisdom in asking for time to consider the question, and in seeking advice, but unlike the beginning of his father's reign there is no suggestion that he sought God's advice or considered the real needs of his people. Rehoboam's decision to reject the request of the people to lighten their burden may have been made in order to 'look tough'. The language he uses implies that he had a vision of himself as a strong king; possibly even as a brutal king. He wanted the people to fear him because of his power. Rehoboam had forgotten that real strength comes from God. He started learning that lesson when he faced defeat. In 1 Kings 12:21-24 we see that he began to obey God rather than fight for what he wanted. After this his kingdom was strengthened by priests, Levites, and faithful men who moved from the North to the Southern kingdom of Judah; see 2 Chronicles 11:13-17.

Jeroboam

Look with the class at 1 Kings 11:26-40. Jeroboam was a very promising young man with a bright future, see v28. In verses 29-39 the prophet Ahijah gives him a promise of being king of the ten tribes of Israel. God offers him a dynasty as enduring as the one promised to David. It is conditional upon Jeroboam's keeping God's law. Sadly, when Jeroboam had the kingdom, he thought it would strengthen his position if the people did not go to the south to worship God, so he built idols to divert them away from the worship at the temple in Jerusalem. He too had forgotten that the kingdom was given him by God, and it was the keeping of God's law that would make him and his kingdom strong. The sin of Jeroboam, becomes a standard for the sin of all the kings who follow him, e.g. 1 Kings 15:34.

The cloak

The class can use the illustration of the pieces of Ahijah's cloak to note which of the tribes went with Jeroboam and which stayed with Rehoboam. If you want them to look up the information, they could use 1 Kings 12:23 and Numbers 34:13-29 to find the names of the twelve who inherited the land.

Digging deeper

Six Old Testament books

This is an overview of the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.

Relevance to our lives

The section in the workbook on the difference between real strength and looking tough can be used to introduce discussion on the ways people try to 'look tough' today, and the real strength of obeying God. The example of Jesus, who was meek and submissive before his accusers at his trial and yet was really in control and achieved so much, shows the real strength that comes from God, of patience and meekness.

Prayer

The class could write a prayer that Rehoboam might have said after returning to Jerusalem.

Other suggestions for activities

- The class could write and act out television interviews with Rehoboam, Jeroboam and/or Ahijah.
- The class could dramatise the meeting between Ahijah and Jeroboam. They could include a later scene of Ahijah with his family talking over what had happened/ The dramatic prophecy given by the prophet from Judah in 1 Kings 13:1-10 could be included and/or Ahijah's prophecy against Jeroboam in 1 Kings 14:1-20.
- The class could discuss 'taking advice'. Do older people usually give good advice? Why ask for two lots of advice? Are we guilty sometimes of just wanting someone to agree with us? Do people give good advice if they are self-interested? Who did David ask first for advice?