

A Nation Divided

Activity

Ask around and collect some advice that would apply to children. Some of these might be: "Don't laugh when your mouth is full (or when milk is in your mouth); Don't get gum too close to your hair; Put your homework in your school bag the night before school; etc." Ask the children what good advice they have heard and then discuss it. Talk about why someone might advise not putting gum too close to hair. Maybe they learned from their own mistake or from watching someone else make the mistake. Talk about how that the older people get, the more experience they have. The children in your class might have good advice for children younger than them. "In today's story we are going to learn about someone who did not listen to advice from older people. This person listened to advice from people who did not have any experience."

Story

Explain: King Solomon loved God, but Solomon did not love God with his whole heart. Some of the things he did were not what God wanted him to do. For example, God warned His people, the Israelites, to not marry people from other nations. They worshiped false gods, and God knew they would lead the Israelites away from Him, the one true God.

Solomon had hundreds of wives. Many of them were from other nations. Solomon's wives turned him away from God. Solomon was not faithful to God like his father David. He began to worship the false gods that his wives worshiped. Solomon even built shrines where his wives could worship the false gods. This made God angry. God had spoken to Solomon and warned him about false gods, but Solomon did not listen.

Look up and read 1 Kings 11:9-13. What was God's punishment for Solomon's mistakes?

Explain: Solomon put Jeroboam, a servant, in charge of all the slave labor because he was very able. Jeroboam would be the servant who would take over 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel. Read the prophet's predictions to Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11: 29-39. Solomon then wanted to kill Jeroboam, so Jeroboam fled to Egypt.

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam took charge. He expected all of the tribes to submit to his rule. However, Jeroboam returned and had an important request on behalf of the ten northern tribes. Read 1 Kings 12:1-5. What was that request?

Read 1 Kings 12:6-11. King Rehoboam sought the advice of two groups, the first of which consisted of elderly men, wise and experienced. They advised the king to serve the people well and they would willingly serve him. What, however, was the advice of the second group, made up of young, brash men?

Read 1 Kings 12:12-16. What was the result of the advice Rehoboam took?

Explain: Rehoboam attempted to assert his authority over the northern ten tribes, but only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were loyal to the house of David. They became known as the Kingdom of Judah. Jeroboam became the king of the northern tribes, which from then on was known as the Kingdom of Israel. Compare maps M6 & M7 at the back of the Spark Bible.

Discuss:

- What effect did sin have upon the kingdom?
- What impact do you think this division had on the overall kingdom? Would Israel ever be the same again?
- Why do you think God allowed His earthly kingdom to become so divided?
- Things from here on through the Old Testament will become increasingly more difficult for God's people. Why do you suppose the people of Jesus' time were looking for a king? Why were they expecting a military king?