

# Dr. August Konkell, Chronicles, Session 16, Conflicted Kingdom

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This is Dr. August Konkell in his teaching on the books of Chronicles. This is session number 16, Conflicted Kingdom.

The Chronicler has presented to us Solomon's kingdom as a kingdom of peace.

He is the one that represents the ideal of what God's rule is supposed to be. And so the Chronicler's presentation is to tell us that this is what God wishes and what God wants. The actual reality of things is not always what we would want the ideal to be.

In fact, it is most often not what we would want the ideal to be. As the Chronicler's readers well knew, and as we well know from reading the story of Solomon, his reign did not end in peace. It actually ended very conflicted, with the result that the kingdom divided.

The Chronicler never explicitly refers to the division of the kingdom, though clearly, all of his readers must be aware that it has taken place in order to understand his presentation of the reigns that are going to follow. But the reigns that immediately followed illustrate the conflicts that had developed. The Chronicler also uses them to show how humbling yourself and seeking God's face will preserve his mercy and will enable you to experience his mercy.

But from this point on, after Solomon, what we really have is a story of kings in conflict in one way or another. And though the Chronicler is very approving of some of these kings, virtually all of them have failures of one kind or another, and often there is great conflict. And the Chronicler does make clear that Israel, in the north, was often at war with Judah in the south, exactly the way that we have it in Kings.

So, our next section in the book of Chronicles is the time from Solomon all the way to the time of Hezekiah. This time period includes the exile of the north by the Assyrians, which the Chronicler has referred to earlier on in his work, but doesn't explicitly mention here. And then it also talks about the way in which things did degenerate in Judah, all the way until we get to the time of Ahaz, where the temple is desecrated completely.

But what we want to look at now is the first two kings that follow Solomon. The Chronicler is going to focus exclusively on the kings of Judah. Yehud, of course, was in some sense a representation of Jerusalem and a representation of the kings in Jerusalem.

So, the Chronicler is interested in Jerusalem as the place of the temple where God is to be worshipped and where his kingdom is to be represented. And so, we have here, beginning in chapter 10, the recognition of the division of the monarchy and the return of Jeroboam. Jeroboam had, as we mentioned, fled to Egypt for his own safety because he was in conflict with Solomon.

None of that is mentioned by the Chronicler, but the Chronicler does mention the fact that Jeroboam returns and that we have here the North reversing the affirmation of David. Remember that the Chronicler presented to David with all of the warriors, saying, we are yours, O David and our future is in you. Well, here, all those tribes from the North are saying the opposite.

Their experience under Solomon has come to be harsh, and they are saying, what portion do we have in David? What future do we have in David? What future do we have in Jerusalem? So, the mantra has, in that sense, been reversed. We referred earlier to the conscripted labor, and the person in charge of that conscripted labor was Hadoram. So, Rehoboam, in seeking to establish his rule as a successor of Solomon, had gone to Shechem.

That was a big central city in order to have the northern tribes affirm him. But as we know the story, they were very discontent with the levels of taxation, particularly with the fact of conscripted labor. You know, I complain a lot about taxation.

I've sometimes been told I should be grateful that I can pay taxes because it means I have some income. It also means that I probably derive some benefits from these taxes. And I realize that these things are true.

But the taxes seem disproportionate to the income, at least in my case. And I don't seem to see the benefits being used in the way that I would like to see them be used. But it's nothing like what these people were experiencing, in which you actually leave your own work and the pursuit of your own making of a living to go on directly work for the government in their particular project.

That's 100% taxation, which is not something that I've ever experienced. And of course, it might only be for a portion of the year, but that's still onerous, very onerous, even if it's three months out of 12, that's onerous. And so there was great resistance to this taxation.

And when Rehoboam decided that he was going to continue the taxation, in fact, maybe increase the taxation to what Solomon had done, there was a complete revolt. And Adoram was stoned. And, of course, there would have been war.

But here the chronicler presents us with a prophet, his name is Shemaiah. And the prophet, in giving his speech, averts the war with Israel, because he does remind

them that they are brothers. So, with the essential division of the kingdom at this point in time, Rehoboam is king only in Judah.

But as king in Judah, the chronicler has quite a bit to say about him in terms of the way he fortified the cities and the way in which he had the blessing of a large household. So, though Rehoboam, in one sense, is responsible for the division of the kingdom, as we're going to see, the chronicler holds Jeroboam more responsible for that division than he does Rehoboam. We see that especially in the reign of Rehoboam's successor, Abijah.

Here we see that there is war again, about to break out between Israel and Judah. As we know from the book of Kings, this was a kind of feature after the division of the kingdom between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, son of Nebat. But here we have the speech by the king.

This is one of the most important speeches in the book of Chronicles, chapter 13, verses 4 through 12. Because Abijah the king, really lays out the options of God's ideal and what God wants. So that this should not be reduced to political well-being, but it should come back to the promises and should come back to what God wants for his kingdom.

And so, he says that rash scoundrels prevailed over an inexperienced Rehoboam. Now, this passage has actually been read in two ways, as it is a little bit ambiguous. Who did the rash scoundrels prevail over? Did they prevail over Rehoboam or did they prevail over Jeroboam? The chronicler seems to say that what really happened here was that Rehoboam was inexperienced.

He didn't realize how he had to handle this taxation question. The result of his inexperience was this division. Jeroboam is responsible for that division because he took advantage of this situation to make himself king in the north.

So, there really was an opportunity here for reconciliation, but Jeroboam, in his own political ambitions, pursued his own power over Israel and the tribes of the north. So, what we have then is the judgment of Jeroboam. Abijah, the king of the south, is able to restore his northern borders.

And the northern borders, of course, are usually represented by Bethel, that area around Bethel, a little bit to the north and the west of Jerusalem. That formed the dividing line between the two kingdoms. Abijah restored those borders, and Jeroboam died in judgment.

And so Abijah comes to be one of those kings who, in the chronicler's estimation, is exemplary. He's exemplary in terms of the way in which he intervenes, the way in which he prevents a war between the two nations and the way in which he preserves

the reign of Judah and the territory of Judah.

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