

THE LESSON GRADED

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the School.

For Teachers of Bible Classes

Rehoboam, past forty, was devoid of political training. He took counsel of the inexperienced and despised "the grey-beards" of the realm. Accustomed to an easy life himself, he resolved to make the life of his people hard. His name meant, "He enlarges the people;" but was he true to it?

1. *Taking time to think*, vs. 6-11. History not simply records the facts of the past, but throws light on the best course for the future. Rehoboam in temperament was not unlike Charles the Second, whose reign was the worst in British history, and of whom it was declared that he never said a foolish thing and never did a wise thing. Rehoboam did at least one wise thing when he took time to think. But he did a foolish thing when he allowed his thoughts to be guided by the inexperienced. The old men set royal service before his mind as the most effective way of ruling (see Luke 22 : 26, 27). He looked upon it as a proposal to "crawl," and preferred rather the advice of the younger men to "bluster."

It has taken the world a long time to learn that freedom, such as is guaranteed under our constitutional monarchy, gives greater stability to a realm than oppression. Test this statement: "Threats are always mistakes. A sieve of oats, not a whip, attracts the horse to the halter." If Rehoboam had wished to break the kingdom, he could have found no better wedge than this blustering promise of tyranny.

2. *Splitting a kingdom*, vs. 12-16. Rehoboam, instead of grappling to himself the affections of his people as with hooks of steel by lessening their burdens and sincerely promising to study their peace and welfare, took the very course most likely to rend the kingdom. The "rough answer" increases social and political discontent. Autocracy may not be without advantages; but it has deadly perils. The better part of the world has been at war in our day to withstand an insane

autocracy and secure a wise democracy. Rehoboam's sense of his divine right as king was "strong in exact proportion to his own worthlessness." As the world advances, royal severity will find less and less justification in the exploded idea of the "divine right of kings to govern wrong." Leaded thongs, instead of whips, only whip up rebellion, with its menacing war-cry.

For Teachers of the Senior Scholars

Who succeeded Solomon as king of Israel? What claim had he to the throne? What grievance did the Northern tribes complain of, and ask to have remedied before they would accept Rehoboam as their king? (Vs. 3, 4.) What answer did Rehoboam give? (V. 5.) Did Rehoboam act wisely in answering as he did? Was it wise for him to take time to consider the matter, to consult others? Remind the class that when a certain course of conduct is manifestly right it is always wise to settle the matter at once. Second thoughts are not always best.

1. *Rehoboam Seeking Advice*, vs. 6-11. Whom did he first consult? (Vs. 6, 7.) What advice had the old men to give? What do you think of this advice? What did Rehoboam think of it? Rehoboam did not realize that to stoop is often to conquer, to humble one's self is the way to be exalted. (See Matt. 20 : 26, 27.) To whom did he next go for counsel? (Vs. 8-11.) What advice had these boon companions of his to give? Bring out the madness and folly of this advice. These young men had lived long enough to know better but they had not come into touch with God, the only teacher capable of making a young man wise. If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God. Note that Rehoboam's great mistake was that he did not ask God about the matter. It is a wise man, whether old or young, who takes everything to God in prayer.

2. *Rehoboam's Answer*, vs. 12-15. As we listen to him we realize that the wise king had a fool of a son. Note how contemptuously he addresses the people, how completely out of sympathy he is with them, how completely he is lacking in the very thing which