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**THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON**

**THE REVOLT OF THE NORTHERN TRIBES**

by Rev. R. O. Todd

**LESSON:** 1 Kings 11:26 to 14:31  
As we saw last week, Solomon's reign was fundamentally unsound. The chief cause for unrest was forced labour and oppressive taxation. Solomon successfully put down a popular front uprising under Jeroboam who had been called to rebel leadership by Ahijah, a prophet of God. On Solomon's death, the people led once more by Jeroboam, assembled to make certain demands upon Rehoboam, Solomon's son, on the occasion of his coronation. They demanded that the burden of taxation and forced labour be lightened. (1 Kings 12:4) Rehoboam asked for three days to consider the demands while he consulted his advisers. On the third day the people re-assembled to hear the king's answer. This is graphically given in 1 Kings 12:14, where Rehoboam declares that he will add to the burden instead of lightening it, and that where his father had chastised the people with whips, he will chastise them with scorpions. The unfortunate thing was that Rehoboam had cast aside the advice of older and wiser men who were lovers of freedom, and took the advice of young Tories who had illusions of grandeur and desires for personal aggrandisement. It is noteworthy that one prophet called for the rebellion, and another called on Rehoboam not to resist it. Both were for it.

The result was rebellion of the northern and larger part of the kingdom. The rebellion was successful and the popular front leader, Jeroboam, was crowned King of the northern kingdom. Rehoboam remained king over the tribe of Judah only. Henceforth, Hebrew history was the history of two kingdoms — the Kingdom of Israel in the north (Samaria in Jesus time) and the kingdom of Judah in the south. There was intermittent war between the two for fifty years. Instead of the united nation which in David's day was becoming a considerable international power, the Hebrews were now split into two hostile groups neither of which was able to command a large place among the nations. In the course of the future, each was doomed to fall before a foreign aggressor.

The people were blameable also for the course of events which led to the divisions of the kingdom. There had always been jealousy between the twelve tribes; particularly between the North and the South. An unwillingness to face national problems in a spirit of unity is all too frequently a characteristic of nations, except in time of war. The necessities of war helped to unify the Hebrews under Saul and David; but underneath the surface, the old animosities still lurked, waiting for a chance to come out into the open. Moreover, public discontent is a force which is not always reasonable or controllable. Grievances are magnified in the eyes of those who suffer them and a stage will be reached when violence seems the only course, and the hammer and the sickle the only tools. Nevertheless, it was Rehoboam and his government which were primarily responsible for the split. Rehoboam took the worst attitude possible in the situation. Only tact and understanding could have saved the day; and Rehoboam was a man singularly devoid of these qualities. This is the pattern of events which has often been repeated in history. Disunity and discontent will be allowed to grow among a people. For a time there is fruit on both sides, and jealousy and the sense of grievance work underground. Then comes a crisis, when it is impossible that tactful policies be followed. Instead of wisdom, some piece of extreme political folly is committed by reactionaries, and permanent injury is done to the social or political order.

In this present day of grave disunity, this lesson offers advice and warning. Think of some of the divisions which exist among men today. On the international scale, within the U.N.O., there is the gulf separating Russia from the Capitalist countries. Within all the capitalist countries there is class conflict (there is no sense in not recognizing the fact) in which capital and labour are engaged in conflict, with both sides trying to secure every advantage possible. Sectional interests divide our country; Ontario against them all; and in the case of the tension between Quebec and the rest of Canada, this is aggravated by religious considerations.

In such situations we are greatly at the mercy of our leaders. The public seldom knows all the facts involved in the various conflicts. We have to depend on prejudiced sources of information. In recent labour disputes, for instance, it has been very difficult for the average citizen to know whether the employers or the strikers have been in the right; sometimes, no doubt one side has had a just case, and sometimes justice was with the other. In such a situation we are at the mercy of leaders; and we have to hope that they will act responsibly and sensibly. A Rehoboam in public office, or in the management of an industry, or in a labour organization; a Rehoboam in Ontario or in Quebec; Rehoboam the whole nation; and he must answer to the nation and to

God for his conduct. The existence of a Rehoboam means the emergence of a Jeroboam with his hammer and sickle, and the red flag of revolt.

But leadership alone cannot bear all the responsibility. The attitudes of and conversations of the average citizen influence political events; they confirm class feeling or soften it; they make conflict inevitable or reconcile differences. The thought and words of average men create that powerful and dangerous weapon which demagogues use — popular feeling. Irresponsibility is nowhere more pernicious than among the great mass of people who make up nations. Moreover, where personal interests are at stake in public issues, there is a special responsibility to seek justice and to love unity above private goals.

It is significant that it was war against the Philistines and other enemies which brought the Hebrews into a state of unity under Saul and David. The common worship of one God did not do it; and when the kingdom split, Israel found no difficulty in setting up new national shrines to replace Jerusalem. It is a commentary on the state of our faith today that war against Germany and Japan gave us for a time, a measure of unity which a general profession of faith in Jesus Christ does not. The Church must be more serious about its work of reconciling men to each other, because they have all been reconciled to God in Christ. We seem to be viewing class conflict and international conflict as inevitable. Yet it is written that "in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, bond nor free." (Col. 3:11) Do we no longer believe that to be true? Do we believe in class war more than in the promises of God, or that the one is more inevitable than the other? Certainly class war and international conflict are inevitable so long as we continue in unbelief.



**PLAYS OWN WORK**

Harry Somers, 21-year old Canadian composer and pianist, who played his own piano sonata No. 1, "Testament of Youth" in a half-hour recital broadcast over the CBC Trans-Canada network on Friday, April 16, at 8:30

**Mrs. O. R. Flindall Speaker At Spring Thank-Offering**

Mrs. O. R. Flindall of Ballantrath was the guest speaker at the spring Thank-Offering meeting of the Mary Agnes Mission Circle of Georgetown United Church. The meeting was held at the church on Monday, April 21st, and took the form of a Mother and Daughter Banquet. Mrs. Flindall chose for her topic "Yesterday and Tomorrow," Miss Isabel Dobson thanked the speaker for her outstanding address. The room was decorated with daffodils, pussy-willows and mauve and yellow candles. Miss Frances Deane, the president, extended a welcome to the guests which was followed by a Toast to Mothers proposed by Mrs. Jack Tapp and responded to by Mrs. A. Vannatter. Mrs. A. M. Nelson read a poem "A Mother To Her Daughter" and musical numbers were given by Mrs. Howard Wrigglesworth and Mrs. James F. Evans. The evening closed with a hymn and the Misses benediction. The banquet was convened by Misses Marjorie Keutner, Winnifred Watson and Eleanor Millers.

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