



In our eighth week in Chronicles at Magdalen Road church, we were particularly thinking about the idea of wisdom and the importance of the voices that we listen to and are shaped by.

We noted the wisdom in our age is an interesting thing:

- Lots of people know lots about lots of things (mostly because of the Internet) but we're not actually a generation that is particularly wise.
- As well as that, the Internet changes the way that we process and chips away at our capacity for concentration.
- Often we are not great at engaging with ideas that we don't like and so feel threatened by disagreement which means we can struggle to learn and become wise through discussion and challenge
- There is also a priority placed upon youth and vitality rather than age and experience.

King Solomon has passed the Kingly baton onto his son, Rehoboam, and to put it bluntly he makes a bad start to his reign.

In structural terms in Chronicles this is beginning of the final third of the book. Chapters 1 to 9 of 1 Chronicles were the genealogies. 1 Chronicles 10 to 2 Chronicles 9 dealt with the United Kingdom, now from 2 Chronicles 10 to the end we see the kingdom beginning to disintegrate and unravel...

The kingdom has divided into the north and south with 10 tribes in the north being ruled by Jeroboam (one of Solomons officials) and two tribes in the South (Judah and Benjamin) ruled by Rehoboam, Solomon's son, the main character in this chapter. Rehoboam, although a bad king, is painted more as naive or foolish - rather than wicked and evil (see 13v7 for eg)

The account begins with his coronation ceremony as the whole people gather together to crown their new king. However with David the nation had gathered at his own capital in Hebron, and for Solomon the nation had gathered in the state capital of Jerusalem. For Rehoboam though he has had to go to Shechem (which was a sacred city in the north where Abraham made sacrifices to God). It's almost as if he proactively has to go to them, almost to woo them and so perhaps we should sense that the relationship from the beginning was going to be rocky?!

The problem at the heart of this chapter is that the people of the land had been harshly taxed by Solomon presumably to pay for his many magnificent building projects (including the temple). And

they now want a lowering in taxes. Indeed on the face of it they were totally justified as the king did not have a right to exploit his people (- remember Deuteronomy 17). The king is not allowed to leverage his position, acquire much, and so become proud or greedy.

Rehoboam's initial response to their request seems to be quite sensible - rather than making a snap decision he puts the brakes on and will listen to his advisors and consultants. His initial call is to speak to the elders who have some experience and have been around a bit (v6 to 7) However it quickly becomes problematic as he rejects their advice and consults the young men instead (v8-11) who advise on a harsh treatment of the people.

We noted at this point that the Chronicler wants us to learn some good lessons here. It seems like Rehoboam doesn't hear advice he likes and so actively finds people who will advise him in the way that he wants. There is a danger in our current culture of simply spending time in echo chambers and so paying attention to people who say what we want them to say to justify a pre-existing stance. Better would be to gather a broad council of reference.

We also noted the Biblical theme of the folly of youth and the need for us to spend time with and learn from those who are older than us. We compared this to the passage in Titus 2 (v2-7 etc) as Paul encourages Titus to engage in intergenerational discipleship. Which challenged younger folk to genuinely seek out wisdom from older generations and all the folk to make it a priority to invest in the younger generations.

We also noted that there are lessons here regarding wise leadership as Rehoboam harshly and severely rules over Gods people. We noted that Jesus might call this "lording it over people as the Gentiles do". Rather, Christian leadership has a Jesus shape about it and he is much more about serving and loving rather than using your power to serve people.

A final reflection on Rehoboams reign from 2 Chronicles 12v14 perhaps gives us the final insight. Simply speaking 'he did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord'. His foundational trajectory or direction was not towards the Lord. Rehoboam listened to the wrong voices.

We finished up by saying that sometimes as we read the Scriptures, although we can be fed we're still left very hungry and needing to be satisfied. With an account like Rehoboam we can't fail to long for a wise king or a kind king who truly satisfies. Through the ugliness of Rehoboam we see the beauty of Jesus.

+ Jesus came as the king who was truly wise. As a child (Luke 2v40), a teen (Luke 2v52) and a man (Matthew 13v54) indeed one in whom Paul would say 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col 2v3). Go to him for wisdom!

+ Jesus came as the king who was truly kind. We thought about this a few weeks ago on our day away but Jesus came to us to offer us rest. He says

"come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest, take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" Matt 11.

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Here are a few questions to start your group off

- What voices do you listen to in your life? Which ones are good and which ones are bad?
- how does the Internet affect our understanding of wisdom?
- Would you say that you are wise? Why or why not?
- What does Rehoboam teach us about Wisdom? Where do we go for wisdom?
- How can we better encourage intergenerational discipleship at church? See Titus 2...
- How does Rehoboam show us our need for Jesus? How does he fulfil both wisdom and kindness?
- What does it mean to be a Christian leader? How does this differ from how the world often sees leadership?