

2 Chronicles Chapter 13

Verses 1-22

In the succession of Judah's kings, the reign of Abijah/Abijam is next (ca. 913 – 911 B.C.; compare 1 Kings 15:1-8).

The disobedient nature of Abijah's reign is mentioned in (1 Kings 15:3), as is his faithless treaty with Syria (2 Chron. 16:3).

The writer chooses to focus on this incident when "Abijah" called on the LORD, but (1 Kings 15:3), sums up his life by saying, "his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God".

This positive focus is probably in order to emphasize the covenant God made with David and encourage those returning from the exile.

2 Chronicles 13:1 "Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah."

Reading this literally, it will appear that Rehoboam had completed a full seventeen years.

The history of Abijah's reign is here related far more fully than in Kings (marginal reference), especially as regards with his war with Jeroboam.

(See the note on 1 Kings 14:31).

It appears, from this, that Rehoboam and Jeroboam began to reign the same year.

They had both finished their 17 years of reign, when Rehoboam died and his son Abijah took his place.

2 Chronicles 13:2 "He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also [was] Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam."

(See 1 Kings 15:2).

"His mother's name also was Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah":

See 2 Chron. 11:20; 1 Kings 15:2.

"And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam":

And in this chapter, is an account of a battle fought between them, which is not recorded in the book of Kings.

Abijah is the same as Abijam and Abia.

This Michaiah is the same as Maachah.

During this 3 year period it seemed there was war between Jeroboam and Abijah.

This was not like the skirmishes they had earlier.

It was the desire of Abijah to force the ten tribes back under the control of the house of Judah.

2 Chronicles 13:3 And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, [even] four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, [being] mighty men of valor.

See notes on (1 Kings 15:1-8).

These numbers are large, but not surprising, given the immense number of capable men who could fight, as counted in David's census (compare 1 Chron. 21:5).

Both armies were set for civil war.

It would appear that 800,000 men would destroy 400,000, but that does not take God into account.

Abijah's 400,000 actually killed 500,000 of Jeroboam's men.

2 Chronicles 13:4 "And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which [is] in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel;"

“Mount Zemaraim”:

The exact location is unknown, but it is likely near Beth-el (Joshua 18:22), inside Israel's territory.

This seemed to be a mountain area over the battlefield.

This had to be an area where his voice would carry.

He was speaking to Jeroboam, but also to all of the men of the ten tribes as well.

2 Chronicles 13:5 "Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, [even] to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?"

“Covenant of salt” means a binding agreement faithfully upheld by the covenantal parties (compare Num. 18:19).

God's answering faithfulness to the Davidic covenant is hereby asserted.

"Salt":

Is associated elsewhere with the Mosaic Covenant sacrifices (Lev. 2:13), the Priestly Covenant (Num. 18:19), and the New Covenant symbolic sacrifices in the millennial kingdom (Ezek. 43:24).

The preservative quality of salt represents the fidelity or loyalty intended in keeping the covenant.

Here it would refer to God's irrevocable pledge and intended loyalty in fulfilling the Davidic Covenant and God's desire for the loyalty of David's lineage to Him if the people are to enjoy the blessings of the covenant.

This kingdom over Israel was given to David and his descendants on a conditional basis.

They must remain faithful to God.

The people had broken covenant with God.

The "covenant of salt" was to show its preserving factor.

It was a sign that this covenant would not go bad.

2 Chronicles 13:6 "Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord."

For the story of Jeroboam, read (1 Kings 11:26-40 and 2 Chron. Chapter 10).

He was the first king of the northern kingdom called Israel.

This is just saying that Jeroboam had no right to rule over the Israelites.

He was not of the family of David.

Verses 7-9

Jeroboam built the "golden calves" which became symbols of his wickedness (1 Kings 16:26; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29; 13:2), and allowed anyone to serve as a priest to "them that are no gods".

God had reserved the role of the priest for those of the tribe of Levi, sons of Aaron (See Exodus 28:1).

Violating this holy calling was an offense to God.

2 Chronicles 13:7 "And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them."

“Young”:

He was 41 (compare 2 Chron. 12:13).

For the “children of Belial” (see the note on Judges 19:22).

Rehoboam was 41 years old, when he began to reign.

He was not a youngster.

This seems so strange that he continues to be spoken of as a child.

Perhaps he was one of those men who never grew up.

We do know that Rehoboam was a weak person.

He was very unsure of himself.

2 Chronicles 13:8 "And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye [be] a great multitude, and [there are] with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods."

“Kingdom of the LORD”:

Abijah reminds all that the Davidic Covenant is God’s expressed will concerning who would rule on His behalf in the earthly kingdom.

Thus, Judah is God’s nation, since the king is in the line of David.

“Golden calves”:

Compare (1 Kings 12:25-33; 2 Chron. 11:15).

Israel was full of idols and false priests, having driven out all the Levitical priests and, with them, the true worship of God.

Jeroboam had done a terrible thing in making the two golden calves to symbolize God.

Jeroboam did this to cause the people to have a point of contact, so they would not feel they had to come back to the temple in Jerusalem to worship.

They were actually mixing their worship of Jehovah with paganism.

Jeroboam thought that his army which was twice as large as the army of Judah, would easily destroy Judah.

He had overlooked the power of God.

Abijah told the army of Jeroboam that Judah was the kingdom of the LORD.

2 Chronicles 13:9 "Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of [other] lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, [the same] may be a priest of [them that are] no gods."

Because they would not sacrifice to his idols, and that they might not instruct the people in the pure worship of God.

And that he and his people might be free from the payment of tithes, firstfruits, etc.

And their cities fall into his hands.

"And have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands?"

After the manner of the Gentiles, without any regard to any particular tribe, which God had appointed those to be taken from.

"So that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams":

Which were five more than what were required by the law of Moses for the consecration of a priest (Exodus 29:1).

The same:

"May be a priest of them that are no gods":

By nature, only nominal and fictitious deities, as the calves were, which had no divinity in them (see 1 Kings 13:31).

There is a question of whether they cast the priests out, or whether the priests left because they refused to add the golden calves to the worship services.

They had not remained with the Levitical tribe for priests.

They chose men who wanted to be a priest and anointed them.

Some of the things they did were Scriptural, but most of the things they did were pagan practices.

Verses 10-12

Abijah confessed a national commitment to pure worship and thus confidence in God's favor in battle.

2 Chronicles 13:10 "But as for us, the LORD [is] our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the LORD, [are] the sons of Aaron, and the Levites [wait] upon [their] business:"

The Word of the LORD, as the Targum.

We know and acknowledge no other.

Not the calves at Dan and Bethel, nor any other idols, only the one living and true God.

"And we have not forsaken him":

His laws, statutes, ordinances, and worship.

For though Abijah was not a religious man, yet it seems the form of religion was kept up, and temple service was observed, in his days.

"And the priests, which minister unto the LORD":

By offering sacrifices, and burning incense.

"Are the sons of Aaron":

And they only.

"And the Levites wait upon their business":

Some in singing songs of praise, vocally and instrumentally.

Others in keeping the doors of the temple and the treasures of the house of God.

And others in assisting the priests at the altar.

These priests of Levi who were descended from Aaron, were the chosen of God for this purpose.

The purpose of the priests was to keep the people worshipping God in an acceptable manner.

The priest had great power over the people.

He would even speak to a king of the errors in his reign, if God had him to.

He was the spiritual guide for the nation.

God had prepared the office of priest to keep His people following Him, and not worshipping false gods.

2 Chronicles 13:11 "And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the showbread also [set they in order] upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him."

That is, the priests.

The one they did on the altar of burnt offering, and the other on the altar of incense.

And both every day, morning and evening.

"The showbread also set they in order upon the pure table":

The showbread table, every sabbath day, when they took the old bread off, which had stood there a week.

"And the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening":

These were lighted every evening, and dressed every morning.

And though there were ten tables and ten candlesticks in Solomon's temple, yet only one of each was used at a time.

And therefore from hence it is not to be concluded that all the rest were taken away by Shishak.

"For we keep the charge of the LORD our God":

Observe all the rites and ceremonies, laws, and ordinances enjoined by him.

The Targum is, "the charge of the Word of the LORD our God:"

"But ye have forsaken him":

His fear or worship, as the same paraphrase.

The High Priest represented the people to God, and represented God to the people.

The burning of the incense twice a day symbolized the prayers of the saints which rose to heaven.

The "showbread" symbolized the presence of the Lord Jesus, who is the Bread of Life.

When the temple was there and the priests did as God had charged them to do, Judah was blessed.

It was when they became unfaithful to God, that the blessings of God were taken away.

2 Chronicles 13:12 "And, behold, God himself [is] with us for [our] captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper."

To go before our armies, and fight our battles for us.

"And his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you":

Which was one use of the trumpets, that the people might be remembered by the LORD, and saved from their enemies (Num. 10:9).

So that this circumstance was against Jeroboam and his army, and for Abijah and his.

"O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers":

For fighting against his people, that retained the pure worship of him, was fighting against him.

"For you shall not prosper":

He seems to be assured of victory.

This was a tremendous closing statement by Abijah.

Those who are not with God, are against Him.

If Jeroboam had built the golden calves, he was not with God.

God puts great importance to His people obeying Him.

To have priests that are not of the Levitical tribe, would be in total disobedience to God.

Abijah is trying to tell them, if they were against Judah, they were against God.

2 Chronicles 13:13 "But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment [was] behind them."

While Abijah was making his oration, he detached a party from his army.

Which got about, and lay in ambush, behind the army of Abijah.

"So they were before Judah":

Jeroboam and the greater part of his army.

"And the ambushment was behind them":

Which Jeroboam had sent thither.

This did not affect Jeroboam at all.

He totally disregarded what was said.

While Abijah was speaking, the troops of Jeroboam ambushed him from behind and from in front.

Verses 14-18

Despite being greatly outnumbered, the "children of Judah prevailed".

God intervened, not because He favored Judah over Israel (compare 25:17-28), but because they trusted in Him.

2 Chronicles 13:14 "And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle [was] before and behind: and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets."

On hearing a noise behind them.

"Behold, the battle was before and behind":

Men were set in battle array, and the battle was begun, and an attack made upon them both ways.

"And they cried unto the LORD":

For help against their enemies, and to deliver them out of their hands.

"And the priests sounded with the trumpets":

To inspire them with cheerfulness, and to suggest to them that God was with them and they need not be afraid.

God is our very present help in trouble, and He was their help as well.

The blowing of the trumpet was for war, but it was the sound of victory also.

The people would come to the trumpet blown.

God heard their prayers.

2 Chronicles 13:15 "Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah."

"God smote Jeroboam and all Israel":

At the time of certain defeat, with 400,000 troops behind and the same number in front, Judah was saved by divine intervention.

What God did is unknown, but the army of Israel began to flee (verse 16), and the soldiers of Judah massacred 500,000 of them in an unimaginable blood bath (verse 17).

This was a shout of triumph.

Notice, God smote Jeroboam and his troops.

2 Chronicles 13:16 "And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand."

Were in such a fright and consternation, that they could not stand their ground, or engage at all.

But took to flight immediately.

"And God delivered them into their hand":

To be taken and slain by them.

The power of God was with Judah, and these of Israel knew it and fled for their lives.

2 Chronicles 13:17 "And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men."

Before the battle, Jeroboam outnumbered Abijah two to one (13:3).

After the fray, in which the LORD intervened on behalf of Judah, Abijah outnumbered Jeroboam 4 to 3.

The men that fell of the ten tribes of Israel that day were more than the entire army of Judah.

This left no doubt that God was fighting for Judah.

2 Chronicles 13:18 "Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers."

Humbled and weakened, but not reduced to the government of the house of David.

"And the children of Judah prevailed":

Or grew strong.

"Because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers":

Trusted in him, and not in an arm of flesh.

The Targum is, "in the Word of the LORD God of their fathers."

Judah had put their trust in God, and not in their own strength.

Their victory was in God.

2 Chronicles 13:19 "And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him, Beth-el with the towns thereof, and Jeshanah with the towns thereof, and Ephraim with the towns thereof."

As he and his army fled.

"And took cities from him":

The following ones.

"Beth-el with the towns thereof":

The villages adjoining to it.

Here one of the calves was set up, which either Jeroboam took care to remove before this place fell into the hands of Abijah.

Or Abijah let it remain, and did not destroy it.

"And Jeshanah with the towns thereof":

Which Reland thinks is the same that is called by Jerom, Jethaba.

"And Ephraim with the towns thereof":

A city so called, thought to be the same that is mentioned in the passage (see notes on John 11:54).

It is here called, in the Targum, Ephron.

So Jerom calls it, and says it was Sichem.

These are cities that had belonged to Judah, which had been taken in the time of Rehoboam.

Now, God had restored them to Judah.

Beth-el had been one of the two places where Jeroboam had set up the golden calf to be worshipped.

The taking of Beth-el was not only a defeat for Jeroboam, but for the false god too.

2 Chronicles 13:20 "Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: and the LORD struck him, and he died."

So as to bring an army into the field against him, and fight him.

"And the LORD struck him":

By some Jewish writers, this is interpreted of Abijah.

And the reason of his being stricken, they say, was because he did not destroy the calf when he took Bethel.

But it is best to understand it of Jeroboam, since Abijah is afterwards said to wax mighty.

"And he died":

Not immediately, for he lived two years after Abijah (1 Kings 14:20).

But continued under a lingering disease he was smitten with, and which issued in his death.

Again God acted, in a manner not described, to end the life of this wicked ruler (ca. 910 B.C.).

He was a very sinful king who caused Israel to sin with the golden calves.

Jeroboam reigned 22 years.

He was very evil, and the LORD killed him.

2 Chronicles 13:21 "But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters."

In his kingdom, increasing in riches and numbers, power and authority, and in his family.

"And married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters":

Not after the above battle, nor since he began to reign.

For he reigned but three years; but he, no doubt, married wives and had children before he came to the throne, as he might have others after.

Abijah followed in Solomon's and his father's footsteps, and married many wives.

In the latter days of his reign, he drifted away from the law of God.

2 Chronicles 13:22 "And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings, [are] written in the story of the prophet Iddo."

See the note on (1 Chron. 29:29).

The term "acts" (Hebrew midrash) here refers to an interpretive study of an earlier work (compare 24:27).

It was later used by Jewish scholars to designate a collection of expository comments on the Old Testament Scriptures gathered together from the first century B.C. to the third century A.D.

We have heard a great deal about these historical records that were kept, which were not part of the Bible.

2 Chronicles Chapter 13 Questions

1. When did Abijah begin to reign?
2. Who was his mother?
3. What are two other names for him?
4. What was the desire of Abijah?
5. How many men of war did Abijah have?
6. How many men did Jeroboam have?
7. Why did Abijah stand on this point of the mountain to speak?
8. Who did he say, God gave all of Israel to, to rule over?

9. What did the "salt covenant" mean?
10. Who did he say, Jeroboam had rebelled against?
11. What did he call the men, that were with Jeroboam?
12. How old was Rehoboam, when he began to reign?
13. What had Jeroboam made for them, to symbolize God to them?
14. Why were there no Levitical priests in the ten tribes of Israel?
15. What kind of religion were they practicing?
16. Who had chosen the descendants of Aaron to be the priests?
17. What was the real purpose of a priest?
18. What were some of the things the priests did, mentioned in verse 11?
19. What did the "shewbread" symbolize?
20. Who did Abijah say was with them?
21. Who did he tell them they were really fighting against?
22. What did Jeroboam do, while Abijah was talking?
23. What did Judah do, when they realized they were ambushed?
24. What did the priests do, that frightened the troops of Jeroboam?
25. How many men fell of Jeroboam?
26. What cities did Abijah take from Jeroboam?
27. How long did Jeroboam reign?
28. How many wives and children did Abijah have?
29. Where is there more written about this?
30. What kind of records would they be called?