

2 Chronicles 13: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Preacher: Alastair Roberts

[0 : 00] 2 Chronicles chapter 13 In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah began to reign over Judah. He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Micaiah, the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.

Now there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. Abijah went out to battle, having an army of valiant men of war, 400,000 chosen men. And Jeroboam drew up his line of battle against him with 800,000 chosen mighty warriors.

Then Abijah stood up on Mount Zemarrah, that is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, Hear me, O Jeroboam, and all Israel. Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?

Yet Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, a servant of Solomon, the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord. And certain worthless scoundrels gathered about him and defied Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.

When Rehoboam was young and irresolute and could not withstand them. And now you think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David, because you are a great multitude and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made you for gods.

[1 : 11] Have you not driven out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made priests for yourselves like the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes for ordination with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are not gods.

But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him. We have priests ministering to the Lord who are sons of Aaron, and Levites for their service. They offer to the Lord every morning and every evening burnt offerings and incense of sweet spices, set out the showbread on the table of pure gold, and care for the golden lampstand that its lamps may burn every evening.

For we keep the charge of the Lord our God, but you have forsaken him. Behold, God is with us at our head, and his priests with their battle trumpets to sound the call to battle against you, O sons of Israel.

Do not fight against the Lord, the God of your fathers, for you cannot succeed. Jeroboam had sent an ambush around to come upon them from behind. Thus his troops were in front of Judah, and the ambush was behind them.

And when Judah looked, behold, the battle was in front of and behind them. And they cried to the Lord, and the priests blew the trumpets. Then the men of Judah raised the battle shout. And when the men of Judah shouted, God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

[2 : 27] The men of Israel fled before Judah, and God gave them into their hand. Abijah and his people struck them with great force, so there fell slain of Israel 500,000 chosen men.

Thus the men of Israel were subdued at that time, and the men of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the Lord, the God of their fathers. And Abijah pursued Jeroboam and took cities from him, Bethel with its villagers, and Jeshanna with its villagers, and Ephron with its villagers.

Jeroboam did not recover his power in the days of Abijah, and the Lord struck him down, and he died. But Abijah grew mighty, and he took 14 wives and had 22 sons and 16 daughters.

The rest of the acts of Abijah, his ways and his sayings, are written in the story of the prophet Iddo. Jeroboam loses his son Abijah, but an Abijah comes to the throne in Judah, the son of and successor to Rehoboam, 18 years into the reign of Jeroboam.

There is war between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Judah seems outmatched. 800,000 Israelites come out to fight 400,000 Judahites.

[3 : 36] Abijah stands on a mountain, addressing Jeroboam and Israel. It's in the hill country of Ephraim, near Bethel, where one of the golden calves was situated. The twin peaks, suggested in

the name of the place, might remind us of Ebal and Gerizim, two mountains from which the blessing and curse of the law were pronounced.

And now Abijah, the king of Judah, declares the unfaithfulness of Israel to them. The northern kingdom has rejected David, and they've also rejected the service of the Lord. The Davidic covenant gave kingship to David's house forever, but Jeroboam had rebelled against the house of David.

While this was a judgment brought by the Lord upon the house of David, it was not a venture that would be successful in the long term, particularly as Jeroboam proved unfaithful on many other grounds.

Unlike his father Rehoboam, Abijah is the son of an Israelite mother, a Benjaminite of Gibeah, the town of Saul. Jeroboam lacks divine legitimacy, and he has rebelled against the true Davidic king, Rehoboam.

In rising up against Rehoboam, he took advantage of Rehoboam's youth and the weakness of his judgment. And now Israel continues to resist the Davidic king. And what's more, they're seeking to withstand not just the human king, but the Lord himself, who is the true king over the land.

[4 : 53] They've made false gods for themselves. They've driven out the true priests and made false priests like the nations round about. False priests to false gods. In 2 Corinthians chapter 11 verses 13 to 17, we see the situation that had arisen, where the rebellion of the northern kingdom against David and against the Lord had driven true worship down south.

And the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel presented themselves to him from all places where they lived. For the Levites left their common lands and their holdings and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons cast them out from serving as priests of the Lord.

And he appointed his own priests for the high places and for the goat idols and for the calves that he had made. And those who had set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel came after them from all the tribes of Israel to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord, the God of their fathers.

They strengthened the kingdom of Judah. And for three years they made Rehoboam the son of Solomon secure, for they walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon. The turning away from the Lord and the establishment of false worship in the north was a determined political ploy on Jeroboam's part.

Jeroboam was concerned that true worship would drive his people down south and lead to the strengthening of the southern kingdom and to the joining back together of the two kingdoms, with his dynasty suffering as a result.

[6 : 19] By contrast, Judah remains relatively committed to the Lord. They are ruled by the Davidic king in the name of the Lord. They maintain the worship of the Lord's temple led by the priests and the Levites.

And Abijah details the priests and the Levites' service, showing that they are concerned that the worship of the Lord be faithfully performed. As Judah commits itself to the Lord, the Lord leads them into battle.

This is symbolised by the priests with their battle trumpets. Jeroboam attempts an ambush, but his army is routed by Judah. He loses 500,000 men.

Jeroboam ends up losing Bethel, an extremely significant loss, along with some other towns and their surrounding villages. Bethel had been a key location where Jeroboam had sought to establish his kingdom.

And Abijah's capture of Bethel is a truly catastrophic blow to his power. And Jeroboam himself is struck down by the Lord. Jeroboam never regained power, but Abijah grew mighty.

[7 : 18] This was a decisive battle. After this, the northern kingdom was crippled for many years. Jeroboam's sons never re-established the sort of power that he enjoyed earlier on.

The victory of Abijah and the Judahites against great odds at this point is attributed to their reliance upon the Lord. The Lord acted on their behalf when they depended upon him.

A question to consider. Are there any characters elsewhere in scripture that Abijah might remind us of?