

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

2Chronicles 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.

It was during the 18th year of king Jeroboam in the Northern Kingdom of Israel that Abijah became king in Judah, the Southern Kingdom. Abijah reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother was Michaiah, daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. We don't really know anything about his mother's family, but her father's name means "flame of God." Maybe that provides a clue as to why Abijah will prove to stand so bold before Jeroboam claiming God as His captain (v12).

There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.

2Chronicles 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 valour.

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

2Chronicles 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?

2Chronicles 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.

2Chronicles 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.

Abijah went out to face Jeroboam in battle with an army of 400,000 chosen warriors. Jeroboam's forces numbered twice as many with 800,000 chosen warriors.

Abijah stood on top of mount Zemaraim in the mountains of Ephraim and spoke to Jeroboam and his army. He declared the truth that the LORD God of Israel had given the kingdom to David and his sons forever with an unbreakable covenant promise.

2 Samuel 7:8 "Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David....thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

The IVP Old Testament Commentary adds this insight: "In the hot climate of the ancient Near East, salt was necessary for the health of humans and animals, and was the principal food preservative (texts from ancient Mari describe its trade value). When treaties or alliances were made, salt was employed to symbolize that the terms would be preserved for a long time."

Abijah stated the obvious by saying that Jeroboam, who had served Solomon, had rebelled against his king. He had successfully gathered a following of wicked men who strengthened themselves against Rehoboam and refused to accept him as their king.

2Chronicles 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.

2Chronicles 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.

Abijah went on to basically question their thinking that they could continue to withstand the LORD just because they were great in number and had with them the golden calves that Jeroboam had made them for their gods. He pointed out that they had cast out the true priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made priests of their own choosing like the other heathen nations. All one had to do to become a priest of their false gods was to come to be consecrated with a young bull and seven rams.

We know that it was God's will that Jeroboam caused a split in the kingdom. It may be, however, that Abijah did not know this.

1 Kings 12:22–24 “But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me.”

2Chronicles 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:

2Chronicles 13:11 And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread 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.

2Chronicles 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.

Abijah went on to boldly declare YHWH as “our” God and that they still served Him. Their priests were in accordance with God's law; they were sons of Aaron that were assisted in ministry by the rest of the Levites. They continued to burn sacrifices before the LORD every morning and evening. They offered the sweet incense and maintained the showbread on the “pure” table as commanded.

They also kept the golden candlestick burning. They continued to serve the LORD in His temple in accordance with His will; whereas the Northern Kingdom had forsaken serving God according to His will.

Abijah then proudly declared that God was with them as their captain and His priests ready to sound the trumpets in alarm against them. He confidently declared that if the people of Israel chose to fight against the LORD God of their fathers, they would not be successful.

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

2Chronicles 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.

2Chronicles 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.

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

2Chronicles 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.

2Chronicles 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.

Jeroboam paid no heed to the words of Abijah. In fact, as he was speaking, he prepared an ambush to the rear of the forces of Judah. When Judah realized they were surrounded, they called out to the LORD; and the priests sounded their trumpets. The warriors of Judah shouted, and God gave them the victory over Jeroboam and his forces as they turned to flee. The forces of Judah killed 500,000 fighting men of Israel. Because Abijah and his men relied upon the LORD God of their fathers, the kingdom of Israel was humbled before Judah at that time.

I really liked this application from Meyer quoted by Guzik: “The point to remember is that our enemies may shut us in on all sides, preventing reinforcements from north, south, east, and west; but no earthly power can ever shut off God from above us. . . . The way upwards is always kept clear; the ladder which links the beleaguered soul with God and heaven can never be blocked, except by transgression and sin.”

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

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

As Abijah and his forces pursued Jeroboam and his forces, they took over the cities of Bethel, Jeshanah and Ephraim along with their suburbs. Jeroboam never

recovered his strength in the days of Abijah, and the LORD struck him in some way that brought about his death. We know from the record of Kings that his death occurred after Abijah's.

1 Kings 15:9 "And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah."

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

2Chronicles 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.

Abijah became stronger during the rest of his three-year reign. He had 14 wives that gave him 22 sons and 16 daughters.

Though the Chronicler writes about Abijah in a more positive light, the record in Kings provides a bit more insight.

*1 Kings 15:1–3 "Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat reigned Abijam over Judah....And **he walked in all the sins of his father**, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father."*

The historian notes that more could be read about Abijah, his ways and sayings, in the story or record of the prophet Iddo.