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Clabon Bogan Jr. – Interim Pastor



Sunday Church School

July 4, 2021

“Abijah Challenges King Jeroboam”-- II Chron. 13:3-18

Golden Text: II Chron. 13:10

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II Chron. 13:3-18

³ Abijah [ab-ee-yaw] set the battle in order with an army of valiant warriors, four hundred thousand choice men. Jeroboam also drew up in battle formation against him with eight hundred thousand choice men, mighty men of valor.

⁴ Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which *is* in the mountains of Ephraim, and said, "Hear me, Jeroboam and all Israel:

⁵ Should you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt?

⁶ Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord.

⁷ Then worthless rogues gathered to him, and strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and inexperienced and could not withstand them.

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⁸And now you think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD, which is in the hand of the sons of David; and you *are* a great multitude, and with you are the gold calves which Jeroboam made for you as gods.

⁹Have you not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests, like the peoples of *other* lands, so that whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams may be a priest of *things that are* not gods?

¹⁰But as for us, the LORD *is* our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the priests who minister to the LORD *are* the sons of Aaron, and the Levites *attend to their* duties.

¹¹And they burn to the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense; *they also set* the showbread *in order on* the pure gold table, and the lampstand of gold with its lamps to burn every evening; for we keep the command of the LORD our God, but you have forsaken Him.

¹²Now look, God Himself is with us as *our* head, and His priests with sounding trumpets to sound the alarm against you. O children of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you shall not prosper!"

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¹³But Jeroboam caused an ambush to go around behind them; so they were in front of Judah, and the ambush *was* behind them.

¹⁴And when Judah looked around, to their surprise the battle line *was* at both front and rear; and they cried out to the LORD, and the priests sounded the trumpets.

¹⁵Then the men of Judah gave a shout; and as the men of Judah shouted, it happened that God struck Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

¹⁶And the children of Israel fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hand.

¹⁷Then Abijah and his people struck them with a great slaughter; so five hundred thousand choice men of Israel fell slain.

¹⁸Thus the children of Israel were subdued at that time; and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the LORD God of their fathers.

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TODAY’S AIM

Facts: to warn that Christians often find themselves in the minority when standing for the Lord.

Principle: to assure that since God is omnipresent and omnipotent, we are always in a safe place when we stand with Him.

Application: to stress that it is vital that we trust the Lord to stand with us when we stand against the evil in our world.

Have you ever tried to take a stand for God only to realize you were outnumbered or seemingly impotent to the conflict?

Standing up for righteousness is sure to leave you unpopular with many of your peers.

Many places, including universities, corporate offices, government agencies, and ordinary work sites, abound with people who do not believe in Christ and are hostile to people who do.

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The important thing to remember is that if you stand with the Lord, He will stand with you.

II Chron. 13 records history in the split Kingdom of Israel while Jeroboam was the king of the North, Abijah was king of the South (Judah)

While the kings of the North were for the most part apostates, several kings in Judah were men of God who sought to bring the people back to the Lord.

Nevertheless, the infection of sin had already gotten into both kingdoms and it was only a matter of time before they would collapse.

LESSON OUTLINE:

I. A SHAMEFUL HISTORY RECOUNTED —II Chr. 13:3-9

II. AN EARNEST WARNING GIVEN —II Chr. 13:10-12

III. A TREACHEROUS AMBUSH THWARTED —II Chr. 13:13-18

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I. A SHAMEFUL HISTORY RECOUNTED —II Chr. 13:3-9

- The reign of Abijah was very brief. Both in I Kings 15:2 and in II Chron. 13:2 it is said to have lasted *three years*
 - *This time expression must be understood according to this canon laid down by the Rabbis, that the commencement of a year in the reign of a king is to be reckoned as a full year.*
- Thus, as Abijah ascended the throne in the eighteenth (I Kings 15:1), and Asa in the twentieth (V 9) year of Jeroboam’s reign, it follows that the former actually reigned only somewhat over two years.
- Two things are specially noticed concerning Abijah: (1) his relation towards Jehovah (I Kings 15:3–5 [Abijam] “*he walked in all the sins of his father Rehoboam,*” and “his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God and (2) his relation to the kingdom of Jeroboam (II Chron. 13:2–20) – for he was more vigorous in his military opposition to the North who had lost the protection of Egypt.

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- Abijah was the grandson of Solomon who was the last king of the unified nation and the son of Rehoboam; from whom ten northern tribes succeeded from the Nation
- The chronicler notes Abijah went into battle with a force of 400,000 seasoned warriors; while Jeroboam drew up against him with 800,000 men.
- Abijah took a position on Mount Zemaraim, an elevated spot from which he could be heard by all the men of the opposing army.
- He began with an appeal: “Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel” (V 4).
- There may not have been much chance of avoiding war through negotiating, but Abijah was going to give it his best shot.
- The king of Judah opened with an appeal to truth and to the two sides’ shared history.
- By way of a question, he reminded his opponents of the divine underpinnings of the Davidic monarchy.
- God had given the throne to David and promised an eternal kingdom for his household.
- This was a known fact, whether the northern tribes now cared to admit it or not.

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- Abijah fortified his statement by noting that the kingdom had been given to David and his descendants “by a covenant of salt” (V 5).
- By this, he was referring to the salt used in all sacrifices (Lev. 2:13), including the sacrifice that would have sealed the covenant of David’s kingship.
- Having reminded the Israelite forces of the divine legitimacy of the Davidic monarchy, Abijah turned to the primary case against its opponents (V 6).
- He reminded the men that Jeroboam had once been a servant of Solomon, yet he had risen up in rebellion against his master.
- So, the Israelites arrayed against Judah were serving a rebel, not a true leader.
- In V 7, Abijah strengthened this thought by underscoring the treachery involved in Jeroboam’s rebellion.
- He had gathered a gang of worthless scoundrels (“children of Belial”) around him and defied a young and inexperienced Rehoboam, who was unable to resist.
- Although there was some truth in this, Abijah conveniently left out that Rehoboam’s foolish hard-line approach toward the northerners’ grievances contributed mightily to their decision to break away (1 Kings 12:1-16).

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- God’s promise to David may have been in Abijah’s mind when he posed a question to the Israelite forces: Did they really expect to prevail against the Lord’s kingdom as entrusted to David’s heirs?
- Abijah then contrasted this truth with the reality behind the breakaway monarchy; acknowledging their vast numbers pointed out that they had no God—all they had were the two golden calves Jeroboam had furnished them.
- He had set up these idols, at the northern and southern borders of his realm, precisely to prevent his people from traveling to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

II. AN EARNEST WARNING GIVEN —II Chr. 13:10-12

- In V 10, Abijah then turned things around, contrasting Israel’s state-sponsored idolatry with Judah’s adherence to the Lord.
- Read one way, his claims can come off sounding insufferably arrogant—a classic holier-than-thou boast if ever there was one.
- But taken as simple facts, they are undeniable. Unlike Israel, Judah had not abandoned Yahweh—they had kept His sanctioned priests.
- Abijah expanded on this truth in minute detail.

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- By keeping the morning and evening sacrifices, burning the incense, faithfully setting out the shewbread on a clean table, and maintaining the golden lampstand, Judah had kept “the charge of the Lord,” but Israel had “forsaken Him” (V I I).
- The Israelites had Jeroboam, a proven fighter indeed, to lead them; but Judah had God Himself as their Captain.
- Their soldiers were led into battle by His priests blowing their trumpets.
- The imagery Abijah chose seems purposely designed to bring to mind the trumpets blown at Jericho and in other battles.
- Abijah wove all these facts into a passionate warning to his opponents, addressing them fervently: “O children of Israel,” He pleaded with them, “fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers”
- Now, even though Judah had also forsaken Jehovah with idolatry, He was still the God of their fathers; which was a shared heritage with the North
- Yet, Abijah warned them bluntly, “Ye shall not prosper.”

III. A TREACHEROUS AMBUSH THWARTED —II Chr. 13:13-18

- Abijah’s warning had little effect upon Jeroboam and the Northern army

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- He had hardly finished speaking when Jeroboam had set an ambush behind his army so that they were caught between two forces.
- In front of them was the main body of Israelites, but closing in from behind was a surprise attack from a stealth unit.
- The men of Judah looked around them and found themselves being suddenly attacked in front and behind. This was obviously a frightening development, and they responded the only way they knew how: “They cried unto the Lord” (V 14).
- The priests joined the cry with their trumpets; and the contrast again is unmistakable.
- Israel was relying on superior numbers and shrewd strategy; Judah was relying on God, their only hope.
- In putting their hope in God’s hands, however, the men of Judah did not cower in helpless passivity.
- They “gave a shout” (V 15-17); showing their trust in God’s intervention by resolutely facing the battle they were in

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- The Lord responded to their battle cry by acting against their enemies.
- He “smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah” in a rout. We are not told specifically what God did to bring about this dramatic outcome.
- Verse 16 tells us simply that they “fled before Judah.” They were unable to get away, however; God delivered the Israelite army “into their hand.”
- The slaughter of the Israelite forces was horrific; they lost more than half their men—five hundred thousand out of eight hundred thousand.
- The chronicler wrapped up this episode by repeating the main lesson to be learned.
- The men of Israel were defeated, and the men of Judah prevailed because they put their reliance, their trust, in the Lord, the God of their fathers.
- It was a simple lesson, and one that should not have been easy to forget.
- How are we to square such a neat and tidy outcome with the negative appraisal of Abijah in I Kings 15, as noted at the outset?
- Abijah was a man who had serious flaws, much like Rehoboam and Solomon, but who nevertheless **maintained the worship of God** and did not allow Judah to fall into idolatry under his watch and **God was keeping His promise to David**



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“ADVANCE YOUR KNOWLEDGE”



1. How did the size of Abijah’s army compare with the armies of his opponents?
2. Why did Abijah take his stand on an elevated spot?
3. What did Abijah remind his adversaries of with regard to David’s kingdom?
What did he say about Jeroboam’s rebellion? What did he leave out?
4. What did Israel worship in place of God?
5. Why might Abijah have mentioned the priests and their trumpets?
6. What was Abijah’s main plea to the soldiers of Israel? What was his blunt warning?
7. Why did God give victory to Judah and overwhelm Israel?



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“DEVELOPING THE LESSON”



1. Sometime after Abijah began to reign over Judah, he was confronted by a massive army under King Jeroboam of Israel. When Abijah mustered his troops in anticipation of battle, he soon discovered he was outnumbered. Where did he get the courage to confront the enemy?
2. Jeroboam's ultimate downfall was that he had abandoned God and established his own form of idolatry and led Israel against the Lord. What were the results and consequences of setting up his own religion?
3. When Abijah's army saw that the Israelite army had the upper hand, the Judean soldiers cried out to the Lord for help, and the priests blew their trumpets. What would that look like for us today on this Church age?



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PROVERBS 27:17

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