

SECOND CHRONICLES

Chapter 13

Abijah King of Judah

In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam, Abijah became king of Judah, ² and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother's name was Maacah, ^a a daughter ^b of Uriel of Gibeah. There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. ³ Abijah went into battle with a force of four hundred thousand able fighting men, and Jeroboam drew up a battle line against him with eight hundred thousand able troops. ⁴ Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, "Jeroboam and all Israel, listen to me! ⁵ Don't you know that the LORD, the God of Israel, has given the kingship of Israel to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt? ⁶ Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, an official of Solomon son of David, rebelled against his master. ⁷ Some worthless scoundrels gathered around him and opposed Rehoboam son of Solomon when he was young and indecisive and not strong enough to resist them. ⁸ "And now you plan to resist the kingdom of the LORD, which is in the hands of David's descendants. You are indeed a vast army and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made to be your gods. ⁹ But didn't you drive out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and make priests of your own as the peoples of other lands do? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams may become a priest of what are not gods. ¹⁰ "As for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him. The priests who serve the LORD are sons of Aaron, and the Levites assist them. ¹¹ Every morning and evening they present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the LORD. They set out the bread on the ceremonially clean table and light the lamps on the gold lampstand every evening. We are observing the requirements of the LORD our God. But you have forsaken him. ¹² God is with us; he is our leader. His priests with their trumpets will sound the battle cry against you. Men of Israel, do not fight against the LORD, the God of your fathers, for you will not succeed." ¹³ Now Jeroboam had sent troops around to the rear, so that while he was in front of Judah the ambush was behind them. ¹⁴ Judah turned and saw that they were being attacked at both front and rear. Then they cried out to the LORD. The priests blew their trumpets ¹⁵ and the men of Judah raised the battle cry. At the sound of their battle cry, God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. ¹⁶ The Israelites fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hands. ¹⁷ Abijah and his men inflicted heavy losses on them, so that there were five hundred thousand casualties among Israel's able men. ¹⁸ The men of Israel were subdued on that occasion, and the men of Judah were victorious because they relied on the LORD, the God of their fathers. ¹⁹ Abijah pursued

Jeroboam and took from him the towns of Bethel, Jeshanah and Ephron, with their surrounding villages.²⁰ Jeroboam did not regain power during the time of Abijah. And the LORD struck him down and he died.²¹ But Abijah grew in strength. He married fourteen wives and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters.²² The other events of Abijah's reign, what he did and what he said, are written in the annotations of the prophet Iddo.

13:1–14:1 The Chronicler's account of Abijah's reign is about three times longer than that in 1Ki 15:1–8, largely due to Abijah's lengthy speech (13:4–12; see note on 28:1–27). The most striking difference in the accounts of Abijah's reign in Kings and in Chronicles is the evaluation given in each: Kings offers a negative evaluation (1Ki 15:3), for which there was no doubt warrant, while the assessment in Chronicles is positive, in view of what the Chronicler is able to report of him. The kings' reigns, like the lives of common people, were often a mixture of good and evil. (CSB)

Ch 13 Cf 1Ki 15:1–8. The son of Rehoboam undergoes rehabilitation in the Chronicler's history; here he receives no condemnation but leads a just war against the north and becomes a model king. The Chronicler does not follow his source in condemning Abijah (1Ki 15:3–4), and he adds a lengthy account of warfare (vv 3–18). (TLSB)

13:1 *Abijah*. A significant modification is the change in name from Abijam ("my father is Yam," a Canaanite god), the consistent name in Kings, to Abijah ("my father is the LORD"). This may be merely a spelling variant, or it could be the difference between a given name and a throne name. (TLSB)

13:2 *three years*. 913–910 B.C. (CSB)

Micaiah. Also appears in the form Maacah (11:20–22). Abijah's mother was the granddaughter of Absalom. (TLSB)

Gibeah Town in Benjamin associated with Israel's first king, Saul. (TLSB)

13:3 *four hundred thousand ... eight hundred thousand*. Surprisingly large figures but in line with those in 1Ch 21:5 (see note there). Apparently this was all-out war. (CSB)

Hbr word for "thousand" here is also a special military term. (TLSB)

13:4–12 Abijah's speech. The Chronicler includes the kingdom of Israel as the kingdom of Yahweh (cf 1Ch 17:14; 28:5; 29:11, 23; 2Ch 9:8). Note the vocabulary of the Chronicler's retribution theology ("forsaken," vv 10–11; "succeed," v 12). Abijah declared the legitimacy of two things: the Davidic dynasty (vv 4b–7) and the divinely instituted worship of the Lord at Jerusalem (vv 8–11). The speech of Abijah and the battle that follows (vv 13–18) are not included in Kings. (TLSB)

13:4 *Mount Zemaraim*. Location uncertain. The town Zemaraim was in the territory of Benjamin (Jos 18:22); presumably the battle was along the common border of Benjamin and Israel. (CSB)

C 9 mi N of Jerusalem; cf Jsh 18:22. (TLSB)

all Israel. The reference is to the northern kingdom. (CSB)

Hear me. Addressees are apparent later in the speech, but Jeroboam is not among them. In vv 6–8, Jeroboam is spoken of in the third person. The appeal in v 12 is to the “sons of Israel.” Jeroboam is not addressed at all. (TLSB)

13:5 See 7:17–18; 1Ch 17:13–14. (CSB)

covenant of salt. See notes on Lev 2:13; Nu 18:19; 2Ki 2:20. (CSB)

Probably refers to a perpetual covenant (salt is a preservative). In Lv 2:13, salt was necessary for the covenant to be effective. A meal, which probably included salt, was sometimes part of the ratification of a covenant (cf Gn 26:30; 31:54; Ex 24:11; 2Sm 3:20). It may also be an allusion to the “covenant of salt” in Nu 18:19, linking the Mosaic covenant to the Davidic covenant. (TLSB)

13:7 Not all in the northern kingdom are rebuked, only the leadership—a subtle appeal to those in the north who had been led into rebellion. (CSB)

Crucial to understanding the speech of Abijah. (TLSB)

scoundrels. See note on Dt 13:13. (CSB)

him. The immediate antecedent is “lord” in v 6. This then references the failings of Rehoboam in ch 10. (TLSB)

young and indecisive. Cf. 1Ch 22:5; 29:1. Rehoboam was 41 years old at the time of the schism (12:13). (CSB)

Inexperienced. Statement likely describes Rehoboam’s upbringing, although Solomon had called himself “a little child” (1Ki 3:7) because he lacked administrative discretion. (TLSB)

13:8 *kingdom of the LORD*. The house of David represents the kingdom of God (see 9:8 and note). (CSB)

By warring against Rehoboam, Jeroboam was in effect trying to dethrone God, who would rule in Israel through the sons of David (1Ch 28:5). The Chronicler equates the Davidic throne with that of the Lord (cf 1Ch 29:23). (TLSB)

have with you. They may have brought the idols to the battle. Cf 1Sm 4:3. (TLSB)

golden calves. Cf 11:15. Rebellion of the north is defined not only as rebellion against the divinely appointed king but also as a religious rebellion exemplified in false worship practices never established or instituted by the Lord. (TLSB)

13:9 See 1Ki 12:25–33. (CSB)

like the peoples. When Jeroboam “made priests” in defiance of God’s Law, the worship the priests conducted at Bethel and Dan was just as offensive as the idolatrous rites of the Gentiles surrounding Israel. (TLSB)

consecrate himself. Cf. Ex 29:1. (CSB)

Whoever comes for ordination. See ESV note. Common technical term for “ordain” or “consecrate.” (TLSB)

young bull or seven rams. Emphasizes the offerings rather than the consecration, as in Ex 29:1. Jeroboam put the office of priest up for sale. (TLSB)

no gods. A climactic denunciation of Israel’s gods. (TLSB)

13:10–12 The Chronicler’s concern with acceptable worship focuses on the legitimate priests and the observance of prescribed worship (cf. 1Ch 23:28–31). (CSB)

13:10 Counters the conclusion of v 9. (TLSB)

the LORD is our God. Just as Israel’s false king is countered by Judah’s true king, so also the false deities are countered by the true God. (TLSB)

We have priests ... for their service. Northern priests lack correct lineage, whereas true priests (as the boast continues in v 11) maintain the Lord’s divinely instituted worship requirements. (TLSB)

13:11 Such lists of divinely instituted worship practices and duties are common to the Chronicler’s work, in which the temple and priesthood play a major role. (TLSB)

13:12 *sound the call.* See notes, Nu 10:2, 8–9. Main point of the speech: Israel cannot win the battle. More than a confrontation of two armies, it is a confrontation of theologies. The Chronicler’s claim of victory for the south is a claim of orthodoxy represented in the Davidic kingship and the divinely instituted worship of the Lord (1Ch 17:16; 2Ch 2:5–6; 14:11; 20:6, 12; 32:7–8). (TLSB)

13:13–21 Battle of Abijah. (TLSB)

13:13 *ambush.* Common strategy in both ancient and modern warfare (cf Jsh 8:2; Jgs 20:29). The larger, northern army, deployed in a clever manner, would have routed Judah if God had not “defeated Jeroboam and all Israel” (v 15). For other instances where God

fighters for those who rely on Him, giving the enemy into their hand, cf Jsh 10:14, 42; 23:3; 1Ch 16:12. (TLSB)

13:14 *cried to the LORD*. Their prayer became their battle cry. The ambush caught Judah's army by surprise, but their reaction was one engendered by trust in Yahweh (v 18). (TLSB)

trumpets. Hbr term is used c 30 times in the OT. (TLSB)

13:15 *shout*. Also see Gideon's defeat of Midian with the cry "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" (Jgs 7:20) and Saul's battle with the Philistines (1Sm 17:20, 52). Simultaneous with the trumpet blast and battle shout, the Lord acts to defeat Jeroboam and all Israel. (TLSB)

13:16–17 Of 800,000 Israelite soldiers, only 300,000 survived. (TLSB)

13:18 The north chose to fight against Yahweh, the God of their fathers (v 12). In contrast, the south "relied on the LORD, the God of their fathers" (cf v 14). This concludes not only the battle but also the statement of its theological significance. (TLSB)

13:19 *took cities*. Bethel, where Jeroboam erected a golden calf (1Ki 12:28–29), was north of Jerusalem but south of Jeshanah and Ephron. These border towns soon reverted to Israel. Baasha, the next northern king, fortified Ramah, only 5 mi N of Jerusalem (16:1). (TLSB)

13:20–21 Personal fates of the two kings, Jeroboam and Abijah, serve respectively as a final notice of the Lord's disfavor and favor. (TLSB)

13:22 Concluding formula for a king's reign. The Chronicler's source is "the story of the prophet Iddo," which helps explain the different material he presents. (TLSB)

Ch 13 The Lord fights against Jeroboam for the sake of Abijah and Judah. Today, when trouble assails and surrounds you, call out confidently to the Lord. He fights mightily on your behalf and in ways beyond your comprehension, as demonstrated in His victory over Satan at the cross. • Hear my cry, O Mighty Ruler, and overthrow the enemies of Your kingdom. Amen. (TLSB)