

2 Chronicles 13 • Making a Stand for the Lord

Introduction

Some Christians are alarmed when they come across a web site or magazine article or even a speaker who is openly critical and to-the-point about someone they deem to be a false teacher or promoting a false doctrine. Even if the facts of the matter are correct, the tone that is taken still seems to bother some Christians. Often the reason is reported as believing that one is supposed to go to another in private first and try to rectify things before moving to a public venue. But the truth is that the private route is for personal issues. Where God's Word and name are concerned, the repeated biblical example, even by Christ Himself, is to deal with it as something far different than a personal breakdown between friends. What is the proper way to make a stand for the Lord, especially against false Christians?

¹In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king over Judah. ²He reigned three years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Micaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.

Now there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. ³Abijah began the battle with an army of valiant warriors, 400,000 chosen men, while Jeroboam drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 chosen men *who were* valiant warriors.

⁴Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, "Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel: ⁵Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? ⁶Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his master, ⁷and worthless men gathered about him, scoundrels, who proved too strong for Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, when he was young and timid and could not hold his own against them.

[Read v.1-3]

Q: How do we know from the names of these two kings that this battle will probably have deeper spiritual meaning?

A: "Abijah" means "God my Father", whereas "Jeroboam" means "the people contend".

Q: Why is it an important distinction that both sides were composed of "valiant warriors"?

A: In those times, warfare often became a sort of "mob" affair as hordes followed on in hopes of joining in the looting. The designation of "valiant warriors" is a way of stating they were a properly trained and fielded military force, the best representatives of each side.

[Read v.4-7]

Q: How would you characterize Abijah's speech?

A: It's not a two-way dialogue, but a pronouncement of the truth. He is addressing people who have substituted the truth for a lie and therefore does not allow for anything but the plain, stated truth. He begins with the fact that God made a covenant with **David** to rule Israel and with no other, defining from the outset that the problem here is with the obedience to God's Word.

Q: What is significant in the characterization that it's a "covenant of salt"? What is this describing in ancient terms?

A: Salt was a mandatory ingredient in sacrifices, particularly as a part of covenants. (Leviticus 2:13) Salt is the opposite of leaven because it preserves from decay and corruption, signifying the purity and preservation of fidelity necessary to worship God. Everything was seasoned with salt to signify purity and perfection of the heart. Because salt was incorruptible, so were the covenants of God. In the language of the day, Abijah would be making a clear distinction between possessing the true covenant (one of salt), one which will never decay, versus Jeroboam and his followers' false covenant which is fated to crumble and fall apart.

Q: What is revealed for the first time regarding Jeroboam's true influence on Rehoboam's ill-advised decision which led to Israel dividing into two?

A: Apparently Jeroboam wasn't as neutral as he originally presented himself (2 Chronicles 10) but actually influenced those closest to Rehoboam, overwhelming him with the bad advice that led to Rehoboam forming his own kingdom.

[Continued on the next page.]

Point: False teachers/false believers not only routinely set aside normal processes to elevate themselves into higher positions, but often manipulate as many factors as possible to produce the desired outcome. Jeroboam wasn't someone who was wronged, but someone who manipulated the situation to make it appear that way. Ever notice how false prophets/false teachers are always accusing others of attacking them and excusing themselves for the attacks they themselves make?

Q: How are the remarks concerning the worthless men gathered around Rehoboam a continuation of Abijah's use of the truth?

A: While confronting Jeroboam with the truth of his involvement in causing Israel to divide into two, Abijah doesn't absolve Rehoboam of making his own mistakes in the process.

Point: Wrongs don't offset each other. The only thing that can set things right is adherence to the truth regardless of who committed which sin.

[Read v.8-12]

Q: What are the specific charges Abijah makes to prove their unfaithfulness to God's covenant?

1. They refuse to submit to God's rule which He set up through the house of David alone for Israel. (v.8)
2. Like Jeroboam's name, which implies a very large number of people, their trust is not in God but rather in their own strength and size. (v.8)
3. The golden calves accompanying them are irrefutably false gods because Jeroboam himself made them. (v.8)
4. They have driven out the priests and Levites from among them, insuring that there is no one to properly oversee and execute worship according to God's Word so they can do things their own way. (v.9)
5. They have created a false priesthood following the same patterns as other nations who also embrace false gods. (v.9)

Q: How does Abijah contrast Israel's behavior with Judah's?

A: He states the things they're doing to continue being obedient to God's Word concerning the proper worship of God facilitated by the true priesthood. The contrast between the two sides is summarized in v.11, "we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but you have forsaken Him."

Point: The way to deal with those who embrace false beliefs is not to open a dialogue or provide a forum for discussing the merits of different points of view, but to confront them openly and plainly with the truth. It's the same way Jesus dealt with the Pharisees and false religious leaders of His day.

Q: What is Abijah's bottom-line conclusion based on the fact that Israel is not following God's Word but Judah is?

A: Not only that "God is with us", but that to fight Judah is to actually engage in battle with God Himself.

Point: Abijah is zealous for the name of the Lord, not his own name. Spiritual warfare, although it may take physical forms at times on earth, is not really a struggle between peoples, but a struggle between people and God. Christians have to always remember Who they're actually representing and Who will actually do the fighting.

⁸“So now you intend to resist the kingdom of the LORD through the sons of David, being a great multitude and *having* with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made for gods for you. ⁹Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the peoples of *other* lands? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams, even he may become a priest of *what are* no gods.

¹⁰“But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the sons of Aaron are ministering to the LORD as priests, and the Levites attend to their work. ¹¹Every morning and evening they burn to the LORD burnt offerings and fragrant incense, and the showbread is *set* on the clean table, and the golden lampstand with its lamps is *ready* to light every evening; for we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but you have forsaken Him.

¹²“Now behold, God is with us at *our* head and His priests with the signal trumpets to sound the alarm against you. O sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you will not succeed.”

¹³But Jeroboam had set an ambush to come from the rear, so that Israel was in front of Judah and the ambush was behind them. ¹⁴When Judah turned around, behold, they were attacked both front and rear; so they cried to the LORD, and the priests blew the trumpets. ¹⁵Then the men of Judah raised a war cry, and when the men of Judah raised the war cry, then it was that God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. ¹⁶When the sons of Israel fled before Judah, God gave them into their hand. ¹⁷Abijah and his people defeated them with a great slaughter, so that 500,000 chosen men of Israel fell slain. ¹⁸Thus the sons of Israel were subdued at that time, and the sons of Judah conquered because they trusted in the LORD, the God of their fathers.

¹⁹Abijah pursued Jeroboam and captured from him *several* cities, Bethel with its villages, Jeshanah with its villages, and Ephron with its villages. ²⁰Jeroboam did not again recover strength in the days of Abijah; and the LORD struck him and he died.

²¹But Abijah became powerful; and took fourteen wives to himself, and became the father of twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. ²²Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his words are written in the treatise of the prophet Iddo.

[Read v.13-22]

Q: For what reasons did it turn out that Jeroboam was willing to listen to Abijah?

A: In order to manipulate the situation and set a trap. He wasn't actually interested in listening.

Point: *This is but one of many biblical examples teaching that we have an obligation to announce the truth even when ears are unwilling to respond to it.*

Q: Why was Judah not overcome by Israel's trickery?

1. *"They cried to the LORD"*. Unlike Jeroboam, they were not relying on their own strength, but that of the Lord's.
2. *"The priests blew the trumpets."* This is actually something stipulated in God's Word. It was an indication that they were completely obedient to God's Word through all things.

"When you go to war in your land against the adversary who attacks you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the LORD your God, and be saved from your enemies.

Numbers 10:9

Q: What is the ending to this story which provides the definitive contrast between these opposite spiritual conditions?

A: Jeroboam – "the people contend" – who set aside God's Word and covenant to establish his own, not only lost the war, but his life. Abijah – "God my Father" – who set aside his own name and ways for those of God was victorious and prospered.

Overall Application

- *How should we communicate with people engaged in false doctrines or even cults? Have you noticed that in every biblical example of this kind of conflict, the only tool for the Believer is God's truth? Why is this different than ironing out a hurt with a fellow Believer?*
- *When you find yourself in such situations, are you careful to always place priority on God's name? Or do you sometimes feel that because the persecution is directed at you that you need to defend your own name? Who and what is the battle really about?*
- *How would you apply the fact that Abijah's pride wasn't in possessing the things of God, but in their being used properly according to God's Word and will?*