

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CHRONICLES 13

This chapter begins with the reign of Abijah, (^{<4130>}2 Chronicles 13:1,2), gives an account of a battle between him and Jeroboam, previous to which Abijah made a speech to Jeroboam and his army, to vindicate his own cause, encourage his own soldiers, and intimidate the enemy, and dissuade them from fighting, (^{<4133>}2 Chronicles 13:3-12) and in the mean while Jeroboam laid an ambush for him, which greatly distressed him, (^{<4133>}2 Chronicles 13:13,14), nevertheless he obtained a complete victory over him, (^{<4135>}2 Chronicles 13:15-20), and the chapter is concluded with some account of his family and reign, (^{<4137>}2 Chronicles 13:21,22).

Ver. 1. *Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah.*] (See Gill on “^{<41150>}1 Kings 15:1”).

Ver. 2. *He reigned three years in Jerusalem, etc.*] (See Gill on “^{<41150>}1 Kings 15:2”),

his mother’s name also was Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah; (see ^{<4112>}2 Chronicles 11:20), (See Gill on “^{<41150>}1 Kings 15:2”).

and there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam; and in this chapter is an account of a battle fought between them, not recorded in the book of Kings.

Ver. 3. *And Abijah set the battle in array, with an army of valiant man of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men, etc.*] Collected such an army of select men, led them into his enemy’s country, and set them in order of battle:

and Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him, with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour; double the number of Abijah’s army, he having ten tribes to collect out of, and Abijah but two.

Ver. 4. *And Abijah stood upon Mount Zemaraim, which is in Mount Ephraim, etc.*] Which might have its name from a city of Benjamin of this name, to which it was near, though within the borders of Ephraim,

(^{<1682>}Joshua 18:22) formerly inhabited by the Zemarites, from whence it might have its name, (^{<1018>}Genesis 10:18) here Abijah stood, that he might be the better heard by the armies pitched in the valley; and very probably he desired a parley, and it was granted, otherwise he would not have been safe in the position in which he was;

and said, hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel; as many as were now gathered together, and which were a great number.

Ver. 5. *Ought you not to know,* etc.] They did know what he afterwards says, but he would have them consider and acknowledge it:

that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever; to him and his seed, particularly to the Messiah, that should spring from him; but whether Abijah had this in view is a question, (see ^{<1073>}2 Samuel 7:13,16)

even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt? that is, a perpetual one, which was inviolable, and never to be made void; called so, because salt preserves from corruption and putrefaction, and because made use of in sacrifices offered when covenants were made; the Targum is,

“as salt waters, which never lose their saltness.”

Ver. 6. *Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up,* etc.] Notwithstanding it was well known the kingdom was entailed on the posterity of David by an everlasting covenant; Abijah calls Jeroboam Solomon’s servant, by way of great contempt, as Jarchi observes, he being the general receiver of his tax in the tribe of Ephraim, (^{<1113>}1 Kings 11:28)

and hath rebelled against his lord; his rightful king and sovereign; the charge is no less than high treason.

Ver. 7. *And there are gathered unto him vain men,* etc.] Void of the fear of God, and all that is good:

the children of Belial: men unprofitable, good for nothing, or that had cast off the yoke of the law of God, were lawless and abandoned persons:

And have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon: rejected his government of them; went into a strong opposition to him, and set up another king over them:

when Rehoboam was young and tender hearted, and could not withstand them; not that he was young in years, for he was forty one years of age when he began to reign; though Joshua is called a young man when he is supposed to be between fifty and sixty years of age (⁽¹²³¹⁾Exodus 33:11), and though “adolescentia” and “juventus” are both used in Latin writers for “youth”, yet Varro ^{f42} distinguishes them, and makes the former to begin at the year fifteen, and continue to the year thirty, and the latter to begin at thirty, and end at forty five; so that, according to this, Rehoboam was then in his stage of youth; but perhaps the meaning here is, that he was young in the kingdom, scarcely settled on his throne, and the advantage of that was taken; not was he cowardly and fearful; and if Abijah meant that by “tender heartedness”, he not only reproached but belied his father; for he would have fought with Israel in order to have reduced them to obedience, but was forbidden by the Lord; if by “tender hearted”, he means that he had a tender regard to the command of God, it is true; but that seems not to be his sense, but the former.

Ver. 8. *And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David*, etc.] To oppose them, prevail over them, and get it out of their hands, which is delivered to them by the Lord, as the Targum:

and ye be a great multitude; of which they boasted, and in which they trusted, being ten tribes to two, and in this army two to one:

and [there are] with you golden calves which Jeroboam made you for gods; or, “but ^{f43} there are with you”, etc. which Abijah suggests would be so far from helping them, that they would be their ruin, they having, by the worship of them, provoked the Lord against them.

Ver. 9. *Have ye not cast out the priests of the Lord the sons of Aaron, and the Levites*, etc.] Because they would not sacrifice to his idols, and that they might not instruct the people in the pure worship of God, and that he and his people might be free from the payment of tithes, firstfruits, etc. and their cities fall into his hands:

and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of [other] lands? after the manner of the Gentiles, without any regard to any particular tribe, which God had appointed those to be taken from:

so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams; which were five more than what were required by the law of Moses for the consecration of a priest, (⁽¹²³⁰⁾Exodus 29:1), the same

may be a priest of [them that are] no gods; by nature, only nominal and fictitious deities, as the calves were, which had no divinity in them, (see ~~1~~1 Kings 13:31).

Ver. 10. *But as for us, the Lord [is] our God,* etc.] The Word of the Lord, as the Targum; we know and acknowledge no other; not the calves at Dan and Bethel, nor any other idols, only the one living and true God:

and we have not forsaken him; his laws, statutes, ordinances, and worship; for though Abijah was not a religious man, yet it seems the form of religion was kept up, and temple service was observed, in his days:

and the priests which minister unto the Lord; by offering sacrifices, and burning incense:

are the sons of Aaron; and they only:

and the Levites wait upon their business; some in singing songs of praise, vocally and instrumentally, others in keeping the doors of the temple and the treasures of the house of God, and others in assisting the priests at the altar.

Ver. 11. *And they burn unto the Lord, every morning and every evening, burnt sacrifices and sweet incense,* etc.] That is, the priests; the one they did on the altar of burnt offering, and the other on the altar of incense, and both every day, morning and evening:

the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table; the shewbread table, every sabbath day, when they took the old bread off, which had stood there a week:

and the candlestick of gold, with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening; these were lighted every evening, and dressed every morning; and though there were ten tables and ten candlesticks in Solomon's temple, yet only one of each was used at a time; and therefore from hence it is not to be concluded that all the rest were taken away by Shishak:

for we keep the charge of the Lord our God; observe all the rites and ceremonies, laws, and ordinances enjoined by him; the Targum is,

“the charge of the Word of the Lord our God:”

but ye have forsaken him; his fear or worship, as the same paraphrase.

Ver. 12. *And, behold, God himself is with us for our Captain,* etc.] To go before our armies, and fight our battles for us:

and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you; which was one use of the trumpets, that the people might be remembered by the Lord, and saved from their enemies, (^{<0410>}Numbers 10:9), so that this circumstance was against Jeroboam and his army, and for Abijah and his:

O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers; for fighting against his people, that retained the pure worship of him, was fighting against him:

for you shall not prosper; he seems to be assured of victory.

Ver. 13. *But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them,* etc.] While Abijah was making his oration, he detached a party from his army, which got about, and lay in ambush, behind the army of Abijah:

so they were before Judah; Jeroboam and the greater part of his army:

and the ambushment was behind them; which Jeroboam had sent thither.

Ver. 14. *And when Judah looked back,* etc.] On hearing a noise behind them:

behold, the battle was before and behind; men were set in battle array, and the battle was begun, and an attack made upon them both ways:

and they cried unto the Lord; for help against their enemies, and to deliver them out of their hands:

and the priests sounded with the trumpets; to inspire them with cheerfulness, and to suggest to them that God was with them and they need not be afraid.

Ver. 15. *Then the men of Judah gave a shout,* etc.] Taking heart at the sound of the trumpets, and in order to encourage one another, and intimidate the enemy; (see Gill on "^{<0972>}1 Samuel 17:20"),

and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah; possessed them with a panic, so that they fled at once, as follows.

Ver. 16. *And the children of Israel fled before Judah,* etc.] Were in such a fright and consternation, that they could not stand their ground, or engage at all; but took to flight immediately:

and God delivered them into their hand; to be taken and slain by them.

Ver. 17. *And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter,* etc.] As they fled, pursuing them:

so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men; such a slaughter as is not to be met with in any history, as Josephus^{f44} observes; though Abarbinel wonders he should say so, and affirms that he had read of larger numbers slain at once; but he is the only man that ever pretended to it; Jerom^{f45} makes the number but 50,000, and some copies of the Vulgate Latin^{f46}, and Josephus Ben Gorion, as Abarbinel^{f47} relates; but the true Josephus, the Targum, and all the ancient versions, agree with the Hebrew text; more than half Jeroboam's army was cut off, and 100,000 more than Abijah had in his.

Ver. 18. *Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time,* etc.] Humbled and weakened, but not reduced to the government of the house of David:

and the children of Judah prevailed; or grew strong:

because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers; trusted in him, and not in an arm of flesh; the Targum is,

“in the Word of the Lord God of their fathers.”

Ver. 19. *And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam,* etc.] As he and his army fled:

and took cities from him; the following ones:

Bethel with the towns thereof; the villages adjoining to it; here one of the calves was set up, which either Jeroboam took care to remove before this place fell into the hands of Abijah, or Abijah let it remain, and did not destroy it:

and Jeshanah with the towns thereof; which Reland^{f48} thinks is the same that is called by Jerom^{f49} Jethaba:

and Ephraim with the towns thereof; a city so called, thought to be the same that is mentioned in the passage, (see Gill on “~~<415>~~John 11:54”); it is here called, in the Targum, Ephron; so Jerom ^{f50} calls it, and says it was Sichem.

Ver. 20. *Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah*, etc.] So as to bring an army into the field against him, and fight him:

and the Lord struck him; by some Jewish writers ^{f51}, this is interpreted of Abijah; and the reason of his being stricken, they say, was because he did not destroy the calf when he took Bethel; but it is best to understand it of Jeroboam, since Abijah is afterwards said to wax mighty:

and he died; not immediately, for he lived two years after Abijah, (~~<414>~~1 Kings 14:20 15:9), but continued under a lingering disease he was smitten with, and which issued in his death.

Ver. 21. *But Abijah waxed mighty*, etc.] In his kingdom, increasing in riches and numbers, power and authority, and in his family:

and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons and sixteen daughters; not after the above battle, nor since he began to reign; for he reigned but three years; but he, no doubt, married wives and had children before he came to the throne, as he might have others after.

Ver. 22. *And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings*, etc.] Not only his warlike actions, and his course of life, but some remarkable sayings of his, he being a man of wisdom and eloquence, as his above speech shows;

are written in the story of the prophet Iddo; who might write the history of his own times; (see ~~<415>~~1 Kings 15:7).