

Kings and Prophets 13-05-31a

This is Friday, the 31st of May, 2013. After a couple of weeks hiatus, we are back in our study of Kings and Prophets. We'll be picking up this evening in Chapter 15 of 1 Kings, and it's parallel in 2 Chronicles 14.

Actually, probably 13. Let's take a moment as we begin to dedicate our time to the glory of the Lord Jesus and the furtherance of the plan and program of God the Father in our lives, both individually and collectively, and then we will begin. Father, from week to week as we assemble and pause to reflect on how great your provision is, how generous your grace is, how overwhelmingly you have provided for us and blessed us, we come before you humbled and thankful for the ways that you have seen fit to raise us up and incorporate us into your plan and purpose.

We thank you for this opportunity to equip ourselves, to put on the full armor that you have made available to us, to receive the ministry of your Holy Spirit, to teach, to guide, to lead us into the truth so that we can perform those functions, engage in that righteousness that we are called to carry out in this life. We thank you for the passage that is before us. We ask your blessing on us as we study it together.

May each one find in the treasure of your word those helpful things that will enable us to live in a way that is pleasing in your sight. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

When we left off our study some time ago, we had finished looking at the reigns of the first kings in the divided kingdom scenario, Jeroboam in the north, Rehoboam in the south. Their reigns do not end at exactly the same time, but they are fairly close. As we are going to see tonight, Rehoboam checks out first, and his son Abijah, or Abijam, depending on which verse you look at, succeeds him on the throne.

This is where we pick up in chapter 15 of first kings. Remember the note at the end of chapter 14 that there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, and it just says all days. There is in *italic*.

Because throughout their reigns, this division was in some cases a cold war, and in other cases not so cold, but it was a conflict. There was tension. There was war, not only military, but of an economic, of a social, of a spiritual nature, all during this time.

Rehoboam reigned in Judah. He was 41 years old when he became king, and he reigned 17 years in Jerusalem. Jeroboam is going to reign about 22 years, or five years longer than this.

So just keep that in mind as we go forward, because upon the death of Rehoboam, we come to chapter 15, and Abijah, I'm just going to call him Abijah, even though it says Abijam. I just don't think Jam was his name, I think. And one of the reasons for this confusion, and this, by the way, is a hint of things to come in our two studies tonight, but it is possible for errors to creep into

the text in a variety of ways.

The Hebrew letter He looks like an H with the two top sticks off. It is an upside-down U, and there's a tiny little gap at the top on one side. That's the letter He.

The letter Mem, and I'm talking about, by the way, in the Aramaic square script. There is an analogous set of problems with the original Hebrew script in which some of the Old Testament was written. The earliest records from this time were written in the Old Hebrew alphabet, but by the post-exilic time, all of the scriptures had been copied into manuscripts using this square Aramaic script, just so people could read them.

They didn't know the old alphabet anymore. Have you ever seen the Cyrillic alphabet, the one the Russians use? It's got backward Rs and things that look like a pi. If you want to really get weirded out, look at the Cherokee alphabet, because Sequoyah, when he made the Cherokee alphabet, he looked through some books that were at hand in English and other languages, and when he needed a symbol for some particular syllable, the Cherokee alphabet is a syllabic alphabet.

The letters stand for syllables, and he wanted a symbol for these different syllabic sounds. He would just grab one, regardless of its etymology, its history, its usage, what it sounded like or meant in another language. He didn't care.

He needed a symbol. He just grabbed one. So there are squiggles and squirrels and Cyrillic and English letters that have no relationship whatsoever to their source, and it's a bit of an effort to learn that syllabary, that Cherokee alphabet.

Well, in the Aramaic square script, several letters are easily confused. Dalet and resh, the difference in those two, it looks like. I'll paint this.

Well, I can't tell which way is backward to you, but it looks like just a bend. There's a vertical and then a horizontal. It goes this way, and I think I'm doing that for me.

It's like this for you. Well, the corner is round for a resh, and it's got a little point on it for a dalet, and that's the difference between an R and a D in Hebrew. It's just that little point.

If it's a round corner, it's a resh. If it's a pointed corner, it's a dalet. Well, obviously, writing on skins and pieces of whatever comes to hand, you're going to misread those if you're unfamiliar with the words, and so the names of foreign gods will be different in two parallel Old Testament passages.

One will have a D and one will have an R. Similarly, and in this case with abijah, and this is back to my point, but it has echoes for later tonight, the hay, which looks like this upside-down U with a little gap on one side, is very similar to the maim, which has got a little round top instead of a square top, and it doesn't have the gap, and then it's got a little hook over. In the modern printed versions, you've got a real pronounced— it looks like a little house with a chimney, and

there's a floor in the house. Well, when they would write this, sometimes that's just a little hook over.

It's not very long, and so maim and hay are confused. Chet and hay are often confused. The difference between a hay and a chet is just closing that little gap at the top.

So I say all of that to say this. The guy's name is Abijah, and that's what we're going to call him, Abijah. And Abiyah, or Yabi and then the Tetragrammaton, Abiyahweh.

And Av, of course, is father. This is what Jesus called out to his father. This is what the apostle Paul uses, Abba, father.

Even today in modern Hebrew, if you watch NCIS and you hear the Israeli gal talking about her father who got killed off in some recent episode, but you hear her, when she's speaking Israeli Hebrew, you'll hear her say Abba, Abba. It's just unchanged. Well, this is Abbi, which is my father.

My father is the Lord, is the translation. So we begin the chapter in the 18th year of King Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. How long was Jeroboam king in the north? 22 years.

This is the 18th year when Rehoboam dies. So the first second king in the divided kingdom is in the south. The Judah king dies first.

So his son comes to the throne while Jeroboam is still on the throne in the north. Abijah becomes king over Judah. He reigned three years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Ma'akah, the granddaughter of Abishalom. Who do you think Abishalom is? Take the I out and take the H out, and who do you have? Absalom, granddaughter of Absalom. So he's got a pretty good lock on the throne because not only is he Rehoboam's son, which makes him Solomon's grandson and David's great-grandson, but he has married in the family, sort of.

You remember there were some half-brothers situations. Absalom and Solomon were half-brothers, right? So that makes them distantly related, distant enough that they can be married. So this is the granddaughter of Absalom.

And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him. His heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. Now, make a little mental note at least, or even a note in your Bible next to that verse.

His heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. Notice it says, his father David. This is father in the ancestral sense, right? It is said that David is the Lord Jesus' father also.

Son of David makes David the father. Nevertheless, for David's sake, the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem. Why is this

called a lamp? What does a lamp do? At night, it shines.

You don't need it in the daytime, but when things are dark, a lamp is what you want. There is a reflection of light that comes from a lamp that enables you to see. So the lamp, and if you go all the way to Revelation 1, the seven lampstands, this is the means by which light shines forth.

Even though his heart is not for the Lord, God uses him to shine his glory forth from Jerusalem. So he is given a lamp. God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem.

God gave him the means of shining forth glory. We're going to see how that took place in the following episodes, specifically by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem, because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. This is a classic case of what I used to put in my notes as BBA, blessing by association.

He is living on the momentum of his great-grandfather, because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not turned aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, which is ironic, because who is Uriah's grandfather? Let me put it this way. Who is Abijah's great-grandmother? Uriah the Hittite's wife, right? And her name is what? Just making sure you're engaged, paying attention. Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, her who had been the wife of Uriah, as the Scripture calls her, he's a lineal descendant.

And that's the one place where David is remembered for failing. Now, this is classic. You've got a guy that reigned for three years.

You've got a summary of what happened. He came to the throne. He's there three years, and he died.

And you think, well, okay, we're ready to move on. Here's verse 9, and you've got King Asa. Lots about Asa that we have, and you think that's great.

If this were the only account that we had, we would figure it was an uneventful three years. Right? But much more took place. Much more took place.

Point of application. Be careful about drawing conclusions from the silence of Scripture. Just because Scripture doesn't say a lot, doesn't mean that there isn't a lot there.

We have the entire career of Abijah summed up in eight verses here. Now turn to 2 Chronicles 13. Here we have 22 verses about the reign of Abijah.

Same guy. There was one place where I said make a mental note or make a mark in your Bible over in 1 Kings. What was the thought there? He did not walk in the ways of the Lord.

You remember that? He walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him. His heart was not loyal to the Lord his God. Remember that in verse 3, right? Keep that in mind now as we read 2 Chronicles 13.

In the 18th year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king over Judah. He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Micaiah.

It said Ma-ah-kah in the other place. The difference is a yod, smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, easily inserted or omitted. Somebody might have seen a wrinkle in the parchment and said, oh, there's a Y there.

Or that might have been her original name and it fell out. Micaiah, the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.

This matches what we heard over in Kings. Now, this is all new information beginning at verse 3. We thought it was uneventful, but look. Abijah set the battle in order with an army of valiant warriors, 400,000 choice men.

Jeroboam also drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 choice men, mighty men of valor. Then Abijah stood on Mount Zimmerayim, which is in the mountains of Ephraim. If it's in the mountains of Ephraim, who is the aggressor? Who has moved into the enemy's territory? This would be Abijah.

Abijah has marched north. He's in the mountains of Ephraim. He's on quote-unquote enemy territory.

Now, listen to what he says. In fact, he invites northern Israel to listen to what he says. Hear me, Jeroboam, and all Israel.

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

We saw that story over the last few studies. Have you not cast out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the people of other lands, so that whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams may be a priest of un-gods? But 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. 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. Now 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.

Now, suppose this was the only account that you had, and you didn't have our eight verses over in Kings. What would you think about Abijah so far? Remember David? You come to me with a sword, and I come to you in the name of the Lord God of hosts, whom you have defied. Come here to me, little boy, and I will feed your flesh to the fowl of the air and the beasts of the field.

David says, no, I'm going to hurt you bad. You've defied the Lord. This is a pretty powerful speech, is it not? Does he have a point? Are these more or less the facts? So what's wrong with this picture? What was the passage I had you mark over there in 1 Kings? He walked in the sins of his father.

His heart was not loyal to the God of David, his father. Right? So, what do we know about this speech? It's beer foam. It's blather.

It's a big put-up job. It is a self-righteous falsehood. These things are true, but they don't really say anything about the spiritual condition of Abijah's heart or his reign or his rule.

He says wonderful things, and he's a rascal. Right? Be careful about making assumptions where the word of God has not spoken. We have the benefit of both of these accounts to help us learn this lesson.

It is easy to draw faulty conclusions if we do not carefully gather all of the biblical evidence. This is the root of what's called proof texting. You get into a discussion with someone, and they'll yank a verse out of Romans, or they'll yank a verse out of the Old Testament, and they will say, based on this, I will now pronounce theological truth.

And the verse itself is true, but their use of it and the conclusions they draw from it are just as false as they can be. These facts are true. However, what has Abijah left out? What do we know? What do you know that he has left out? Wasn't there a prophet who ripped up a cloak and handed some pieces, hither and yon, according to the word of the Lord? Where's that piece of information in this speech? I will give you a personal observation here.

When people start to prevaricate and start to make faulty arguments, it almost always, either consciously or unconsciously, becomes ad hominem. There will be personal attacks in it. Take another look at this speech.

Hear me, Jeroboam, and all Israel. What does he not call Jeroboam? What's the guy's title? King. He's the king.

How long has he been the king? Over 18 years? Right? Leaves off his title. Disrespects him. 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? Covenant of salt.

What do we know about salt? Was there any salt involved when God came to David and said, You and your sons, not like a man on the throne, etc.? What's salt got to do with it? Did he throw salt over his shoulder and say, Amen, good luck with that? Why is salt mentioned? Salt.

That's the only time people call me, is when they need help. That's why the ringtone.

Covenant of salt. Why salt? What is the one thing you can eat that is permanent? What happens to most food if you keep it too long? It spoils. But what's one thing you eat that never spoils? You can carry it around.

You can dig it out of a pyramid and eat it, and it's perfectly fine. Salt. We eat, people have eaten, and used as a preservative, and a flavoring, and a seasoning, salt.

You don't eat rocks, if you can help it. You don't eat permanent things except for salt. It's sort of unique in that regard.

A covenant of salt is a permanent covenant, a lasting covenant, a healthful, seasoned covenant. Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon, the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord. Kind of.

Why? Some people say, they used to have this thing, the devil made me do it. Well, in this case, this occurred with God's blessing. Why? Why did Jeroboam lose ten-twelfths of the kingdom? Somehow this gets left out of the story.

It's all Jeroboam. Servant Jeroboam rebelled against his lord. Your entire kingdom up here is illegitimate, and he is no king.

He's a lackey. He's the chauffeur taking over the mansion. Worthless rogues gathered to him.

He's a mere servant, and everybody that joined with him is a worthless rogue. This is your classic ad hominem, your classic personal abusive attack. Is everybody in northern Israel a worthless rogue because they support the king that God ordained? No.

Is every Christian who supports a given leader in this country a worthless rogue if we don't care for that leader? No. God has said, pray for those that have the rule over you, whether it's in the church or whether it's in the nation. Fear God, honor the king.

That is a New Testament command. Fear God, honor the king. Whoever is the president, and you talk about him, his name should be prefaced with Mr. Always Respect the office.

A guy can be the worst officer ever commissioned in the Marine Corps, but if he's wearing rank insignia higher than yours, you snap a salute, and you make it just as good as the salute you give the finest officer you've ever known. Why? You salute the office. You salute the rank.

It is a function to be fulfilled. You respect those that have the rule over you. Pray for them.

Honor them. Doesn't matter how big of a rascal they are. Doesn't matter if you think they got there illegitimately, as many in this country have thought about our current president.

Questions about his origins and his history and his politics and so on. Fine. Question it all you

want, but he is still Mr. Obama.

He is still the president of the United States. Every Marine will salute him as the commander-in-chief. Every Army, every Navy, every Air Force, every person in the military, all the people of this country should render respect to those who hold an office.

And this is illegitimate, what Abijah is doing. Worthless rogues strengthen themselves against Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. When Rehoboam was young and inexperienced and could not withstand them.

Well, what do you do if you're young and inexperienced? You rely on the counsel of wise elders, which Rehoboam spit on and rejected. That gets left out of the story also. Now you think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord.

So far you could say this is, it's a little twisted, but it's factual. Verse 8 is where Abijah's argument leaves the rails. Now you think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord, which is in the hand of the sons of David, and you're a great multitude, and with you are the gold calves which Jeroboam made for you as gods.

Calf part is true, but you think to withstand. He's making a spiritual argument here, that based on spiritual things, you should capitulate and return to a united monarchy. It's a clever argument.

You think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord. God is on our side and not on your side, because your king Jeroboam has made these golden calves. It kind of hangs together as an argument, doesn't it? The king up there has sponsored a false priesthood, false worship.

Have you not cast out the priest of the Lord? Any guy with a bull and seven rams can become a priest. As for us, the Lord is our God. We have not forsaken Him.

What does it tell us in Kings? This king has forsaken Him. He's blowing smoke. He's making an argument based on what a lot of other people are doing in Judah, but not he himself.

Our priests are the sons of Aaron, so he has crafted this persuasive argument with spiritual ramifications, spiritual implications, and yet he himself is just as false as Jeroboam, just in a different way. His heart doesn't follow the Lord. But he makes this big argument, and what does he do? He argues from history, his version of history, edited for effect.

He argues from spiritual ideals, edited for effect. Now look, verse 12, God Himself is with us as head, and His priests with sounding trumpets to sound the alarm against you, O children of Israel. Remember what happened when Rehoboam decided he was going to go up there and attack Jeroboam? What did the prophet say? Nix, where is that in this story? God said, We are not to attack you, O people of the north.

This thing is of God. And in Rehoboam's day, they left. They returned.

They didn't fight their brethren. Abijah thinks that was a big mistake, and so he wants to go reopen that argument. Do not fight against the Lord God of your fathers, for you shall not prosper.

Now, all of this sounds great, doesn't it? Remember, this is just the three-year reign in which in Kings, on this spot in 1842, nothing happened. The plaque my dad's got on his... I forget the year, but you know. Look at verse 13 and following.

Jeroboam is not impressed with this, quote, moral high ground argument, which is actually as hypocritical as they come. Jeroboam, while he's spouting this long speech, caused an ambush to go around behind them. So they were in front of Judah, and the ambush was behind them.

So in front, you've got the blocking position so that they can't advance, which is your anvil, and Jeroboam sends the hammer around behind, so that now all you do is start pounding the anvil with the hammer, and everything in between is going to get crushed. This is called talking a big fight, meanwhile getting surrounded. That's the technical name of it in military strategy.

So in verse 14, 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. Then 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. This is the real surprise.

Judah was surprised that they were surrounded. The real surprise is that God delivers them. Now, keep your finger here, and turn back to 1 Kings 15, verse 4. He walked in all the sins of his father, verse 3, which he had done before him.

His heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. Nevertheless, everything we have just been reading about is contained in verse 4. Nevertheless, for David's sake, the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, and that lamp was not extinguished by his foolish, hypocritical, wrongly courageous actions in going up and attacking where he shouldn't attack, saying what he shouldn't say, doing what he shouldn't do. But God preserved him anyway.

Why? For the sake of David. The Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem. If Jeroboam had won this battle, had defeated and wiped out Abijah's army, what do you think would have been the next step? What is lying defenseless directly to the south? Jerusalem.

And Jeroboam would then be the king of a reunified monarchy. But God delivered them. Why? God has plans that go beyond Abijah.

Abijah does everything he can to wipe himself out. But Abijah is blessed because God honors his great-grandfather David and because God has bigger plans for Jerusalem. Abijah is only going to be the king for three years.

And in that three years, he nearly loses the southern kingdom. If God had not delivered him on this occasion, there would have been no southern kingdom. But God sees the end from the beginning.

God is looking ahead. Now, what sort of story do you think Abijah would tell after this battle? Well, look how valid my arguments were. Even though that sneaky Jeroboam tried to ambush us, God was on our side because we have the right priests, because we have the right kingdom, because we are sons of David and Jeroboam is not, et cetera, et cetera.

He could justify this to himself and fool himself into thinking that God honored him because he was righteous, right? But we know better. It is a commonplace for people to look at circumstances where God has provided deliverance and justify themselves, justify their priorities, justify their spiritual understandings, justify their theology, justify their application, and it has nothing to do with them. This deliverance has nothing to do with Abijah, does it? He is wonderfully and miraculously delivered and it has nothing to do with him.

He has done every single thing wrong. It is because God is looking at other priorities than teaching Abijah a lesson or giving Abijah a comeuppance for his rash, unfortunate, faulty decisions, words, and actions. Do not think because you experience blessing, because you are not under discipline, because you are not wiped out and in abject misery that everything in your spiritual life is okay.

This is the application. Look at Abijah. He could draw all sorts of faulty conclusions from this episode, could he not? Can you and I draw faulty conclusions because we are not under some nuclear holocaustic discipline and judgment, because we are relatively blessed, because we are relatively secure, because we are relatively prosperous? Does that mean that our spiritual life is healthy? What is the standard of measure? It is not outcome in circumstances.

God has got a bigger plan in circumstances. God may be preserving you because of someone else, someone in your periphery, someone before you, someone after you, someone besides you. Do not judge your spiritual status by circumstances, good or bad.

Just because things are bad doesn't mean you screwed up. Just because things are good doesn't mean you haven't screwed up. Circumstances are not the measure.

The Word of God is the measure. Are you following the exhortations? Are you seeking to walk the narrow road? Are you trying to get through that straight gate that leads to life? That's the measure. Where is your heart? Not where is your circumstances, not how much treasure do you have, how much misery or lack thereof are you experiencing.

Where is your heart? The Word of God is a critic, a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is an easy thing to be lulled into false security, false conclusions, because we are not being imminently judged. That's not the measure.

Don't get to the judgment seat and find out that you have lost everything because your heart

was not right. Now, listen for the promptings, the leading of God's Holy Spirit. You know in your heart, if you have any seeking attitude at all, if you have any interest at all, if you care at all about the things of God, God the Holy Spirit will lead us into the truth, all truth, the truth about where we stand, the truth about whether or not we are living a fruitful and pleasing life.

We can discriminate between the pruning and the chastising of the Lord that makes us more productive and more fruitful versus judgment, which is designed to turn us from a bad path. But do not look at circumstances and say, everything is going great, I must be doing right before the Lord. Look at Abijah.

The guy gets a tremendous deliverance and victory and returns virtually unscathed from a horribly misbegotten campaign and he is harshly judged by the Word of God. Very great disparity. Let's pause here and take our break.

We're not quite through looking at Abijah. We'll come back and see how his reign finishes up and who succeeds him when we come back.