



Writing Life Faith

Life of a King: Abijam's Toolkit

The Fifth King.

You can read King Abijam's story in 1 Kings 15:1-8 and 2 Chronicles 13

When I, Abijam, son of Rehoboam, claimed the kingship following my father's death, I had one goal in mind: reunite the Kingdom. Lucky for me, no one challenged my coronation.

Almost right after I became king of Judah, war broke out between my people and Jeroboam's people. I armed by 400,000 select warriors and marched to face Jeroboam and his 800,000 select troops. Luckily, I had a secret tool in my back garment.

I stood atop Mount Zemaraim and reminded all Israel that God was with us. I hadn't prayed to God, or even spoken His name, in months, but it was true. I told the Israelites they should come to my side. I also wanted them to give me their taxes. I blasted Israel for their sinfulness, and told Jeroboam that God was with us, for we had kept the Levitical laws. From my position of authority, I declared God our leader.

Meanwhile, the scourge of the land, Jeroboam, had sent his army around to ambush us. Luck was with me though. I pulled out my secret weapon. "Men, cry to the LORD for help!" I shouted. When they did, God came down and destroyed Israel's army. Hot off this victory, I captured more towns and subdued Jeroboam's forces.

Day by day, I grew more and more powerful. My secret tool had worked wonders.

If you've done your homework, the question on your mind right now should be: *Why is Rehoboam's son called 'Abijam' in Kings and 'Abijah' in Chronicles?* Let me be honest, I only noticed the discrepancy earlier this week. Turns out it's the same guy, with variant spellings of his name.

It's interesting to note that Jeroboam also named his son Abijah. Perhaps this was a subtle attempt to ultimately unite both Kingdoms under that name, or more likely, it was a power trip by both kings. The name 'Abijah' literally means *my father is Yahweh (God)*.

That aside, Abijam/Abijah (I'll refer to him as Abijam) was the son of Rehoboam and Maacah (granddaughter of David's rebellious son Absalom). His reign is the shortest so far, in both duration and verses of Scripture dedicated to it. Spoiler warning: the less Scripture dwells on a king, the more likely they're bad.

Aside from winning a major battle against Jeroboam son of Nebat and the Israelite forces, Abijam does nothing for God's glory. Despite his wickedness, we see a great act of God's strength and learn a key lesson about the role He should play in our lives. So how did Abijam's unbelief remind Judah of God's power?

The Beginning.

"Abijam committed the same sins as his father before him, and he was not faithful to the LORD his God, as his ancestor David had been." (1 Kings 15:3)

We immediately see that Rehoboam made no effort to guide his son in accordance with the LORD's ways. It's a wonder Abijam even knew about the covenant God made with David. That said, Abijam makes the same mistakes. He trusts in his military strength and accumulates fourteen wives and sires thirty-eight children.

Then the war gongs start up. Abijam gathers his troops to fight Jeroboam's Israelite army. They meet in the hill country of Ephraim, where Abijam delivers a captivating speech about the LORD's power...coming from someone who showed no signs of believing in God.

The Middle.

"Don't you realize that the LORD, the God of Israel, made a lasting covenant with David...?" (2 Chronicles 13:5a)

In his speech to both armies, Abijam restates God's covenant with David. He denounces Israel's detestable practices and reminds everyone that in Judah, things are done according to God's laws.

Meanwhile, Jeroboam sends part of his army to ambush Abijam's forces from the rear. When they realize their plight, the men of Judah call for God's help, and He defeats Jeroboam's forces. **God hears our voices.** He may not always answer as we wish, but He hears us.

The End.

"When Judah realized that they were being attacked from the front and the rear, they cried out to the LORD for help." (2 Chronicles 13:14)

Coming off this major victory, Abijam pushes further into Israel and captures more towns. Once the conquest is over, I can't help but notice Scripture's words: *"Meanwhile, Abijam of Judah grew more and more powerful."*

Thinking back to Abijam's words on the mountain, he told everyone God was in charge. Then how come there's no record of Abijam giving God the glory, Abijam worshipping God, or Abijam squashing Judah's idolatry? Evidently, God wasn't the true leader that day. Shocker, but **nominally giving God credit while taking glory for yourself isn't compatible with genuine religion.** Saying you'll give someone the credit they deserve, only to act as if the success came from you, is dishonest and wrong. It's turning another person into a tool for your desires. As Hudson Taylor said, "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply."

We, like Abijam, can claim we're following God and working for His glory. But are we? Is our underlying motive always God-centered? Or have we adopted an Abijam mindset, utilizing God only when we need Him, then filling in the rest ourselves?

What Defined Abijam?

It's crucial we examine our lives for traces of an Abijam mentality. Abijam knew of God, but in his mind, he didn't realize that...

God is More Than a Tool

"So Judah defeated Israel on that occasion because they trusted in the LORD, the God of their ancestors." (2 Chronicles 13:18)

Note two things in this verse. First, Scripture says, *"On that occasion."* God chose to help Abijam in this circumstance, but that is no indication of Abijam's righteousness. It's incredibly dangerous to assume that sporadic acts of God signify His acceptance of your lifestyle. Second, when Scripture says, *"God of their ancestors,"* it neglects to say *"Their God."* God was with their ancestors, but it doesn't seem He was with them.

Abijam saw God as nothing more than a tool for winning battles and accumulating assets. **Abijam viewed God not as the master builder He is, but as another tool in his arsenal.** God was someone to call on in times of crises, and beyond that...who cared?

To ask a personal question: *How often do we look at God in the same way?* There were seasons of my life where I saw God as a tool. I would read Scripture and pray sporadically, but only when it was convenient, or I had a big need. I've since realized that if I want to experience God's presence on more than just the occasional instance, I need Him to take control of everything.

If you're tired of periodic religion or feeling like God isn't there, ask Him to give you a greater desire to love and obey Him in all circumstances (not just when you need Him to win a war). Try infusing Him in your whole life. Give God the credit. Let Him use you; don't use Him.

Good/Bad.

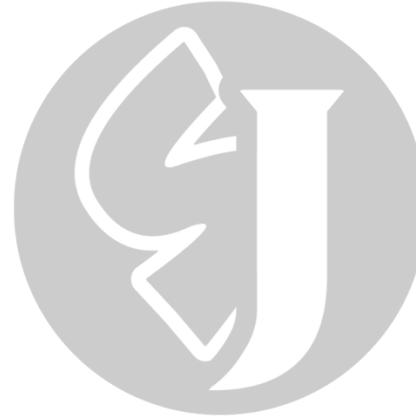
Even though Abijam's reign was short, his war with Israel taught us two things:

1. God listens to His people if they cry out, even when they're living sinfully.
2. God is a master carpenter, and shouldn't be made into a tool.

Aside from one nice speech, the fifth king showed no love or reverence for God. Which is why we need to put Abijam in his place on the Kings Chart. He is our fourth king on the 'BAD' side.

Abijam taught me how God can provide for anyone's needs, but if I want Him to dwell in me, I need to cultivate a lifestyle of doing His will...not just in moments of desperation. I pray your desire is the same.

Fear not, for after a trilogy of bad kings, we'll soon be returning to the good side. As always, God has a plan for His people, found in 2 Chronicles 13:15... *"And the men of Judah began to shout. At the sound of their battle cry, God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel and routed them before Abijam."*



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