

January 30

Scriptures: Read 2 Chronicles 13 & 14

Key Verse: "... Lord it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude..." (2 Chronicles 14:11)

Overview

The strife that had existed between Rehoboam and Jeroboam finally broke out into a full-scale war under the rule of Rehoboam's son Abijah (referred to as "Abijam" in 1 Kings 15:1). Although from the book of Kings we learn that his heart was not loyal to the Lord, as was David's, yet the chronicler notes that Abijah's reign was not without some periods of great faith in God. He ruled Judah for only three years, but his decisive victory over Israel helped to bring peace in the land for many years.

The Lord had forbidden Rehoboam and Jeroboam to fight, since they were brethren, but here He does not intervene to stop this battle, possibly in order to bring judgment upon Jeroboam and the northern tribes for their apostasy. Although Abijah's army was half the size of the Jeroboam's, Abijah put his trust in God. He believed that his enemies could not "withstand the kingdom of the Lord" under the divinely appointed Davidic dynasty, which had been sealed by a "covenant of salt" (13:5; cf. Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19). Salt is a preserving agent; therefore, the expression refers to God's covenant that will be preserved and will endure forever; it cannot be broken. The Lord Himself promised that David would have a lasting dynasty (cf. 2 Samuel 7:16), and His promises will always be fulfilled. Through the great Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ, God has fulfilled this lasting "covenant of salt", for Jesus will forever reign.

In Abijah's warning to Israel, he mocked their idol worship of calves as "things that are not gods" (13:9) and stressed that his kingdom, Judah, had remained faithful to the Lord their God. They observed the regular offerings as Moses had instructed, which were officiated over by authorized priests from the line of Aaron. On the other hand, Jeroboam's heathen priests could be from any tribe.

While Abijah was warning Israel not to fight against the Lord, Jeroboam's heart was unmoved. He had already sent an ambush behind the men of Judah to attack them. They realized their only help was in the Lord, so they all cried out to Him. The priests, obedient to Moses' instruction, blew their trumpets in faith that the Lord would save them (13:14; cf. Numbers 10:9). In a miraculous way, the Lord intervened to help Judah, and they were victorious. The Northern Kingdom suffered a terrible loss, so that for many years they were of no threat to Judah. In fact, Judah was strengthened by taking over Bethel, the site where Jacob had seen his great vision (Genesis 28:10-19). It was there that Jeroboam had established the Northern Kingdom's centre for calf worship, a practice he had brought back with him from Egypt.

After Abijah's death, his son Asa succeeded him. His reign was peaceful and prosperous for the first ten years. "The Lord had given him rest" (14:6), because he did what was right in God's sight. The peace Judah experienced was a blessing from God because the people had sought Him

and were obedient to Him by destroying anything connected with idolatry (14:3, 5; cf. Deuteronomy 12:2-3). These included the pagan altars and shrines Solomon had built for his foreign wives (1 Kings 11:5-8).

Asa must have learned to trust in God from his father's experience in battle with Jeroboam. When he was far outnumbered by the Ethiopian army that came against him, Asa expected the impossible, knowing nothing was too hard for the Lord (cf. Genesis 18:14; Mark 9:23). It appears that his enemies were a united force from Ethiopia, Egypt, and other parts of North Africa (16:8). Once again, the Lord intervened; He not only saved them from defeat, giving them a miraculous victory, but also blessed them with an abundance of spoil.

These two chapters clearly illustrate what the inspired writer is seeking to show through his historical record: "the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers" (13:18). Faith in God can truly move mountains (cf. Matthew 17:20).

Prayer

Lord, our reading shows clearly that when we seek You and do Your will, we are blessed, but when we do our own thing, we're lost. Keep us, O Lord, in Your will, for there is nothing impossible for You.