

As we move through Chronicles we continue to see the different leaders who are given the responsibility by God to rule His people with justice and fairness, along with compassion and mercy. Some were better at it than others.

Last week we saw how Solomon had ruled God's people with harshness at times, and yet his son Rehoboam took that a step further as his youthfulness had a mean streak that translated to cruelty.

2 Chronicles 10:4-7 ⁴ "Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you." ⁵ He said to them, "Return to me again in three days." So the people departed. ⁶ Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you counsel *me* to answer this people?" ⁷ They spoke to him, saying, "If you will be kind to this people and please them and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

At this Rehoboam took counsel with the young men he grew up with and ended up accepting their counsel.

2 Chronicles 10:10-11 ¹⁰ The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to the people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter for us.' Thus you shall say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins! ¹¹ 'Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I *will discipline you* with scorpions.'"

He also turned his back on the Lord by forsaking the law of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 12:1 ^{NAU} When the kingdom of Rehoboam was established and strong, he and all Israel with him forsook the law of the LORD.

In what ways do you suppose he forsook the law of the Lord?

The law certainly included the sacrificial system and so it is likely that he became lax in this area which is probably one of the most important aspects of the law because not only was it God's

prescribed way of worshipping Him, but also God's way of showing clearly that forgiveness of sin must include a sacrifice.

And so, for Rehoboam to forsake the law of the Lord meant that it would be impossible to make atonement for his sins and the sins of Israel under that system that God established.

It isn't until God threatens Rehoboam with an invasion by Shishak, the king of Egypt, that Rehoboam decides to humble himself and the Lord withholds His wrath.

2 Chronicles 12:5-7 ⁵ Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the princes of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, 'You have forsaken Me, so I also have forsaken you to Shishak.'" ⁶ So the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is righteous." ⁷ When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, "They have humbled themselves *so* I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some *measure* of deliverance, and My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by means of Shishak.

However, God would use Shishak to discipline Rehoboam and Israel and as we come to the closing of chapter 12 we read this.

2 Chronicles 12:13-16 ¹³ So King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Now Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. And his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. ¹⁴ He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the LORD. ¹⁵ Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer, according to genealogical enrollment? And *there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.* ¹⁶ And Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David; and his son Abijah became king in his place.

Now, what is interesting about Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, is that he grew up in the same house as his father with the same privileges and to some extent the same knowledge of how the Lord had dealt with his grandfather, Solomon, and how in contrast to Solomon, his father Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord.

Abijah knew all of this and with all of the wealth of Solomon's kingdom he could have turned out just like his father and simply

reigned with his own interests in mind, forsaking the Lord and continuing a harsh reign over God's people.

And yet we find the opposite to be true as we'll see in a moment.

2 Chronicles 13:1 ^{NAU} In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king over Judah.

Why is there a reference to two separate kings in this verse?

Keep in mind that we are now dealing with a divided kingdom to where we have two separate kingdoms with two separate kings. One king over Judah, the other king over Israel. These would be known as the southern and northern kingdoms.

This division took place during the reigns of Rehoboam and Jeroboam around 932 B.C. Abijah comes on the scene around 915 B.C.

And so, as we come to chapter 13, we see that Jeroboam has been ruling Israel in the north, while Abijah is ruling the southern kingdom of Judah.

By way of reminder, this split happened for a specific reason and it goes back to the counsel Rehoboam took from his young counselors to rule God's people with no mercy as he taxed and forced hardships on the people of God.

It was at this point that Jeroboam rebelled against Rehoboam's rule and took 10 tribes and began to rule in the north while Rehoboam took the remaining two, Judah and Benjamin, and ruled in the south and so the two nations warred against each other until their respective captivities by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

But when Abijah comes on to the scene he finds himself on the defensive against Jeroboam who outnumbered Abijah's army 2 to 1.

2 Chronicles 13:1-3 ^{NAU} In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king over Judah. ² He 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. ³ Abijah 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.

Now, purely from a tactical standpoint, if you are outnumbered 2 to 1, are your chances better or worse for winning the battle?

Anybody who studies war would tell you that unless you have a number of things that would overcome the numbers, like having the high ground, having more horses and chariots, or just a better strategy to possibly outflank your opponent, attrition alone will put you at a large disadvantage.

And so, you might think that Abijah would try to convince Jeroboam to hold off the battle so that he could gain some of these advantages as he buys more time. But notice the attitude Abijah brings to the battlefield.

2 Chronicles 13:4-12 ⁴ Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, "Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel: ⁵ "Do 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? ⁶ "Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his master, ⁷ and 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. 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. ⁹ "Have 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. ¹¹ "Every 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."

Do the lopsided numbers against Abijah even come into play as far as Abijah's decision to enter into this battle?

Why not?

He knows that the Lord has done something special with the house of David. Note what he says.

2 Chronicles 13:5 ⁵ "Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David ¹and his sons by a covenant of salt?"

What is the significance of the covenant of salt?

The salt covenant was symbolic of endurance, preservation, and freedom from corruption. It is a perfect picture of our CREATOR.

And so, when God establishes a covenant of salt with His people all of His attributes that declare His enduring and sustaining grace are put forth in a way to remind His people that all that salt represents is to allow them to look to God's faithfulness.

One of the main pictures of salt is the way it sustains and by implication God uses it to sustain His people forever as it is referred to as an everlasting covenant.

^{NAU} **Numbers 18:19** "All the offerings of the holy *gifts*, which the sons of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and your daughters with you, as a perpetual allotment. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the LORD to you and your descendants with you."

In fact, in the worship system that God established He also gives a command to include salt in every grain offering to remind Israel how God will season and sustain His people.

Leviticus 2:13 ¹³ "Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt."

Even the incense that God commanded Moses to make was a special recipe that was reserved only for the worship of God. If anyone used the same ingredients in the same measure to make perfume for themselves, they were to be cut off from the people of God, and salt was one of the ingredients.

Exodus 30:34-38 ³⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take for yourself spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, spices with pure

frankincense; there shall be an equal part of each. ³⁵ "With it you shall make incense, a perfume, the work of a perfumer, salted, pure, *and* holy. ³⁶ "You shall beat some of it very fine, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I will meet with you; it shall be most holy to you. ³⁷ "The incense which you shall make, you shall not make in the same proportions for yourselves; it shall be holy to you for the LORD. ³⁸ "Whoever shall make *any* like it, to use as perfume, shall be cut off from his people."

I found a web site, (http://homeworship101.com/fyi_salt_covenant.htm), simply entitled Salt Covenant and found some of these spiritual metaphors for salt.

Salt historically symbolized hospitality

and YAHWEH'S people should be the world's most hospitable people.

Salt heals - if you settled a dispute with your neighbor then you would invite the person into your home to share a dish of salt. Each of you would lick your finger, dip it in the salt and then eat the salt together. This is the symbol of friendship that heals the rift.

Salt is pure - germs cannot live in it. By analogy, Believers are to be pure and have salt in us (Mar.9:50), and at birth salt was rubbed on a new born baby's skin to purify it (Ezk.16:4).

Salt purifies - by analogy, the Believers are the salt of the earth (Mat.5:13). They purify the world by not accepting false philosophies, dishonest ways of doing business, selfish desires, etc.

Salt, just a dash, adds to the taste and pleasure of a meal (Job 6:6). By analogy the Believers should add - just a dash - of spiritual interest, hope, and excitement to other people's lives. Too salty ruins the taste of the meal, and the spiritual message.

Salt produces thirst, and the Believers should produce spiritual thirst in those around them.

No salt in the diet leads you into an early grave, and within a month you will die a slow agonizing death - you figure out the analogy! Sodium regulates the passage of nutrients into the

cells. Without it, nutrients cannot enter your cells and you will have malnutrition and exhaustion no matter how good your diet. Without our CREATOR we would be spiritually starved and morally exhausted.

Salt-famine causes civilization to collapse. During Europe's Dark Ages, due to glacial melting, the ocean levels rose flooding all the salt flats of Europe causing a salt famine (ref. Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe by Belgian historian Henri Pirenne). The daily average ration fell to less than two grams per person and caused many to die from dehydration and madness. To get salt, some who were stronger would assault the weak, cut their jugular vein and drink the victim's salty blood, giving birth to the myth of the vampire.

The salt crystal is an enduring mineral. Large salt mine deposits, surviving thousands of years, and under great pressure, still hold their flavor and taste.

Salt can dissolve in water - but its quality remains. By analogy, Believers are in this world but not of this world (Jon.15:19).

Salt can be subjected to extreme heat and it still retains its particular chemical composition. But we are warned, as the salt of the earth, we should not lose our flavor (Mat.5:13; Mar.9:49-50; Luk.14:34).

Salt can only be ruined if it reacts chemically with some other substance. By analogy, the Believers should not be influenced by the deceitful riches and the material cares of this world.

And so, for Abijah to remind Jeroboam of the importance of the salt covenant that God made with David was to remind him of the everlasting covenant that only David and his offspring who ruled on the throne in Jerusalem would share with the Creator God.

Abijah understood that Jeroboam was treading on holy ground and was trying to assume a covenant that was not given to him by God.

But Jeroboam would not take this counsel, which though given by the mouth of Abijah, was God's grace and mercy being extended to Jeroboam and Israel so that they might not suffer God's wrath.

But as we'll see Jeroboam's pride will not allow him to submit either to Abijah or God.

2 Chronicles 13:13-22 ¹³ But Jeroboam had set an ambush to come from the rear, so that *Israel* was in front of Judah and the ambush was behind them. ¹⁴ When Judah turned around, behold, they were attacked both front and rear; so they cried to the LORD, and the priests blew the trumpets. ¹⁵ Then 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. ¹⁶ When the sons of Israel fled before Judah, God gave them into their hand. ¹⁷ Abijah and his people defeated them with a great slaughter, so that 500,000 chosen men of Israel fell slain. ¹⁸ Thus 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. ¹⁹ Abijah pursued Jeroboam and captured from him *several* cities, Bethel with its villages, Jeshanah with its villages and Ephron with its villages. ²⁰ Jeroboam did not again recover strength in the days of Abijah; and the LORD struck him and he died. ²¹ But Abijah became powerful; and took fourteen wives to himself, and became the father of twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. ²² Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his words are written in the treatise of the prophet Iddo.