

Abijam, King of Judah

1 Kings 15:1-8

1 Kings 15:1-8 - *"In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah. He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom. 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. 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; 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. And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. So Abijam rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David. Then Asa his son reigned in his place."*

Background Notes

A few background notes will help us understand the historical setting for this inspired account of Abijam, king of Judah.

After the reigns of King Saul, King David, and King Solomon, the United Kingdom of Israel split into the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. The first king of the northern kingdom was Jeroboam I, who is mentioned in verse 1. He was not a good king. He was the Jeroboam who set up pagan shrines with golden calf idols at Dan and Bethel. The Bible says this Jeroboam *"made Israel sin."*

Rehoboam was the first king of the southern kingdom of Judah. Although he was Solomon's son, he was not a good king. He allowed idolatry and immorality to increase in the land of Judah.

Abijam was Rehoboam's son. (Note: in Chronicles, he is called "Abijah.") His mother's name was Maachah (v2). She was the granddaughter (not daughter) of King David's son Absalom. ("Abishalom" is another name for Absalom.) So we see that from both his mother's side and his father's side, Abijam was a descendant of the house of David.

However, the more important point is what we read in verse 3. Abijam *"walked in all the sins his father had done before him. His heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David."*

What sins were these? What sins of his father, Rehoboam? Those sins are described in 1 Kings 14:22-24: *"Now Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. For they also built for themselves high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images on every*

high hill and under every green tree. And there were also perverted persons in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.” Abijam continued to practice all these sins.

The state of war that existed between the northern kingdom under Jeroboam I and the southern kingdom under Rehoboam continued throughout the three years of Abijam’s reign (v6-7). Then Abijam “*rested with his fathers*” - another way of saying that he died. The year was about 911BC. And his son, Asa, reigned in his place.

Doctrinal Points

1. The overall pattern of a person’s life exposes the heart.

Proverbs 23:7 indicates that the overall pattern of a person’s life exposes his or her heart. A person may think that no one can read his or her heart, but the *overall* pattern of that person’s life is a pretty good indication of his or her true heart. We see two examples of this truth here in 1 Kings 15:1-8.

The overall pattern of King David’s life was good (v5). David “*did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and did not fail to keep any of the Lord’s commands all the days of his life - except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.*” So even though David arranged the death of Uriah the Hittite after he had committed adultery with Uriah’s wife Bathsheba, God was still able to say that, except for that terrible sequence of events, David did what was right in the Lord’s eyes - and that he had kept all the Lord’s commands all the days of his life! In fact, in Acts 13:22, God said, “*David is a man after My own heart.*”

After what David had done, how was God able to say David was “*a man after My own heart*”? He could say that because God looks at the overall pattern of a person’s life. The *overall pattern* of a person’s life exposes that person’s true heart.

David certainly reaped what he had sown when God disciplined him for his sins. And yet the overall pattern of David’s life was that he did what was right in the Lord’s eyes. The Lord is able to look at the heart, but the overall pattern of a person’s life exposes the heart.

That same truth is brought out in Abijam’s life - only the reverse aspect. “*He walked in all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David*” (v3). But 2 Chronicles 13 records an interesting speech made by King Abijam. When Jeroboam and his army wanted to make war with the southern kingdom, Abijam made this proclamation: “*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. Have you not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests, like the peoples of other lands, so that whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams may be a priest of things that are not 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. And 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 lamp stand 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!"

Does this sound like the same Abijam who is described in 1 Kings 15? And yet it is the same Abijam! The point is, Abijam's good words and actions were very short lived. The overall pattern of Abijam's life was not pleasing to God. No matter what he said, he was **not** loyal to the Lord. He forsook the Lord his God, and continued to practice all the sins of his father.

Just as Abijam's true heart was exposed by the overall pattern of his life, our hearts are exposed by the way we live. The overall pattern of our lives exposes our hearts.

2. God's promise of a dynasty to David should not be allegorized.

Verse 4 says, *"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."* The words, *"God gave him a lamp"* meant that David would have successors. God promised that David's dynasty would continue.

In 2 Samuel 7:16 God had told David, *"And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."* That same promise was made in 1 Kings 11:36: *"My servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put my name there."* God had promised David that he would have an unending dynasty.

These promises that God made to David are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ is a descendant of David. But now let me ask you: How do you think David understood God's promise of an unending dynasty? Do you think he took that promise literally? Or do you think he "allegorized" it, and understood God's promise meant that one of his descendants would eventually "reign in the hearts of people," or "reign in Heaven"?

Of course David took the promises literally - and we should too! Jesus Christ does indeed reign in the hearts of His people, and He reigns in Heaven, but the Lord Jesus Christ will *literally* reign on this earth in a coming day. The promised Davidic kingdom will *literally* be set up here on earth, and Jesus Christ, David's descendant, will *literally* reign in that *literal* earthly kingdom! God's promise of an eternal dynasty to David should not be allegorized.

Practical Applications

1. How many “exception clauses” are there in your Christian record?

Look again at verse 5: *“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.”* Forever, David will regret that he caused that “exception clause” in the eternal word of God.

How many “exception clauses” exist in your Christian record? We’re not talking about all the sinful mistakes we made before we became Christians. We’re thinking about how many “exception clauses” would be found in our life records *as Christians?*

If the Lord were to write out a one-sentence overview of our lives as He did with David, how many items would follow the word “except” in our records? Would it be a very long sentence? Something to think about, right? How many “exception clauses” are there in your Christian record?

2. Don’t mar your Christian record by a moment of sinful pleasure.

Think about it. The record of David’s life, and all that he said and did for the Lord, was marred because of one moment of sinful pleasure!

Think of all the wonderful psalms of praise that David wrote! Think about how he defeated Goliath in the name of the Lord! Think of the preparations he made for building the great Temple of the Lord! And yet his record of faithfulness was forever marred by a moment of sinful pleasure and all that followed it.

What a lesson for all of us! If we have a record of faithful service to the Lord, let’s be careful not mess it up by a relatively short time of sinful pleasure.

Hebrews 11:5 indicates that there is pleasure in sin, but that pleasure is short-lived. The pleasure of sin lasts for a short time, but that sin has destructive consequences. How many Christians who have been in the limelight in a large church, or on radio, TV, or a well-known ministry, have marred their records because of short-lived sinful pleasure?

No one is immune to temptation. Let’s be on our guard! Don’t mar your Christian record by a moment of sinful pleasure.