

Who was King Abijah in the Bible?

King Abijah, also called King Abiah or King Abijam, was the son of King Rehoboam and father of King Asa. Abijah reigned for only three years (913-911 BC) in Judah before he died. Abijah was a wicked king: “He committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been” (1 Kings 15:3). King Abijah attempted to reclaim the northern ten tribes of Israel as part of his kingdom, and so there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam throughout Abijah’s lifetime (verse 6).

King Abijah had some victories over Israel to the north. Second Chronicles 13 describes a battle in which Abijah and his 400,000 men triumphed over Jeroboam with his 800,000 men. King Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim and spoke out to Jeroboam and Israel about God’s covenant with David, Jeroboam’s rebellion against Rehoboam, and Jeroboam’s ridding Israel of the Levites and allowing anyone to become a priest of false gods. Abijah concluded, “God is with us; he is our leader. His priests with their trumpets will sound the battle cry against you. People of Israel, do not fight against the Lord, the God of your ancestors, for you will not succeed” (2 Chronicles 13:12). The troops of Israel had come behind those of Judah to ambush them, intending to attack them from both front and rear. But the men from Judah cried out to God, the priests blew their trumpets, and “at the sound of their battle cry, God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah” (2 Chronicles 13:15). Abijah also took the towns of Bethel, Jeshanah, Ephron, and their surrounding villages from Jeroboam. From that time, King Jeroboam’s strength lessened: “Jeroboam did not regain power during the time of Abijah. And the Lord struck him down and he died. But Abijah grew in strength. He married fourteen wives and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters” (Chronicles 13:20-21).

Abijah's mother was Maakah, and she apparently held a position of authority as queen mother throughout Abijah's reign and into the reign of her grandson Asa. After Abijah's death, there was peace between Israel and Judah for ten years (2 Chronicles 14:1), and Abijah's son, King Asa, instituted wide reforms throughout Judah. One of Asa's reforms was to depose his grandmother Maakah because of her promotion of Asherah worship (1 Kings 15:13). Second Chronicles 14:2 says, "Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God."

Abijah's short reign was unfortunately marked by doing evil in the eyes of the Lord. Even though God had granted him victory over Israel, Abijah continued the same error as his father, Rehoboam—not being fully devoted to God (2 Chronicles 12:14; 1 Kings 15:3).