

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

“It’s so easy!” That is a motto from my older son. He thinks he is smart. I agree that nowadays every kid is gifted. God shapes my son to be a quick learner. From school to sports, he can acquire new knowledge and skills faster than his brother does. The problem is, he becomes complacent once he can handle the basics. The education system makes his life lighter too. It seems easy for students to get an A. Perhaps most schools want to boost their records. Then there are teachers who are generous to give high grades. I met a professor like that in my seminary years too. That Mr. Nice Guy treats everyone like his grandkid. Every student has to write an essay as part of the course requirement. I highly suspect if he reads our writings in detail. Without exception, he puts on the front page of every assignment: Good Work! A. But in the real world, an excellent report card means very little. A graduate with a great GPA does not necessarily mean that he/she will be a capable worker. Eventually, a supervisor will use performance to determine whether or not the person is a valuable employee. Similarly, how much we know about God must be translated to how closely we follow Him. Faith and actions go hand in hand. Those are two important criteria when God examines us. God used the same standards to evaluate the kings of Israel. The Bible gives clear remarks if a king was good or evil in God’s eyes. Today we will study Abijah, the fourth king of Judah. Now Israel was split into two nations. The north was still called Israel, while the south was called Judah. I put the kings we have studied so far on the slide. There are two major differences between the kings of the south and those of the north. First, every king in Judah was the son of the predecessor. Second, all the kings in Israel were evil because they did not do what God required.

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

Our main passage today is 2 Chronicles 13. However, we will read **1 Kings 15:1-8** first to get some background about king Abijah. The Chronicles and the Kings complement each other. One feature that separates them is that the Chronicles only record the history of the southern kingdom. Let us highlight a few things from this passage. Abijah only reigned for three years. He was a bad king because he replicated the sins of his father Rehoboam, rather than the godly example of David. However, it does not mean that an evil king would sit on the throne for a shorter period of time. There were exceptions in both kingdoms. God continued to raise up kings in Judah because He would not betray the covenant He made with David. “Giving a lamp” in verse 4 means a man will have an heir to come after him. One king after another would succeed David’s throne until the appearance of Jesus, the Messiah. God’s Kingdom will last forever. Aren’t you grateful that God will always keep His promises? We mentioned before that some of God’s promises are conditional and some are not. Loving parents will cook for their kids even when they misbehave. However, most dads and moms will be glad to reward their children if they have good performance. The author says David was an upright person in God’s eyes except for the sin he committed to Uriah. David killed that loyal army officer and seized his wife Bathsheba. Think about that comment. David did everything right except for the one sin. Had he ever burst out anger or spoken harsh words to people, or overlooked God’s Law? He very likely did. Obedience to God does not mean perfection. No one can abide by God’s requirements 100%

at all times. We will continue to sin in big and small ways, intentionally and unintentionally. God sees Christians as righteous because Jesus had atoned for their sins – past, present and future sins. The Holy Spirit lives inside you if you are a child of God. He gives you strength to overcome temptations and convicts you when you fall. God’s forgiving grace is always there when we confess our sins. Those who cherish their relationship with God will not squander His love. However, we will be a prodigal son over and over again until we see God in glory. It takes away our pride when we realize how weak we are when we depart from God and depend on ourselves.

Now the baton was in Abijah’s hand. How he handled his relationship with God determined the destiny of his reign and his country. But as we read earlier, Abijah got a failing grade from God. He chose a wicked path instead of following David’s righteous way. However, **2 Chronicles 13** records one commendable act of Abijah. He relied on God and won a battle. We will read one section of the chapter at a time, then we will examine what we can learn from the story.

First, we will read **verses 3 to 9**. A civil war broke out between the north and the south. Jeroboam had a huge advantage for he had twice the size of manpower. Abijah’s troop now stationed at Ephraim. His army had crossed the border and was in the territory of the northern kingdom. The map on the screen shows the approximate location. How would Abijah execute his attack? Before Abijah sent his soldiers, he condemned the people of the north in a speech. He stated that Israel was an illegitimate nation. Its king Jeroboam was but a servant of Solomon and a traitor. His followers were just guerilla fighters. Abijah said his dad Rehoboam was too weak to confront them. Now Abijah would take care of them. Not only was the northern kingdom an illegitimate country, it also had an unauthorized religious system. Jeroboam carved two golden calves as their gods. He also assigned people who were not Levites as priests. Chapter 11 of the book says that Jeroboam disallowed Levites and Aaron’s descendants to serve in religious ceremonies. Therefore, those who were faithful to God abandoned their homes and moved to Jerusalem. Jeroboam had all the necessary elements to run his rituals. But his people were not worshipping the one true God! False religions are always imitations of the true one. They can fool people who do not pay full attention. Nowadays, identity theft is a serious crime. I was once a victim too. I received an email that appeared to come from my credit card company. The message says there was an issue with my account. It urges me to click a link to log on to fix the problem. You can guess the rest of the story. Some bad guys stole my credit card information and bought stuff with it. Fortunately, I was not liable for the loss. Please do not repeat my dumb mistake. Any email that asks you for personal information is most likely a fraud. You must call your credit card company to verify the fact. Similarly, one should examine carefully before accepting a religion. Any belief system can promise a lot. Say a prayer and practice some rituals and you will be blessed. You will go to a happy place after you leave this world. What is the foundation for those claims? The Bible is true not because people believe in it. It is true because it originates from the God of truth. Skeptics try to invalidate the places, people and events recorded in the Bible. They all fail. The objective facts in God’s Word are also supported by subjective experience. Any Christian can testify that God is actively working in his/her life.

In the first part of his message, Abijah convicted the Israelites for following a lie. He then continued to say that only the people of Judah got the real deal. Now please listen to the reading from **verse 10 to 12**. Abijah said his countrymen had never forsaken Jehovah, and they had been following God’s commands whole-heartedly. Those words were like a slap on his face. His

grandpa Solomon, his father Rehoboam and Abijah himself all deserted God and bowed down to idols! That was why one country was split into two. By God's mercy, Abijah was made a king. What made Judah superior to the northern counterpart was that people there still worshipped Jehovah. The one and only temple was in Jerusalem. There were Aaron's descendants serving as priests, and other Levites taking care of the ceremonial duties. Their animal sacrifice and incense all followed the book. But of course, people paid tribute to some false gods too. We have to ask why Abijah made an address in a battlefield. Remember Abijah only had half the number of soldiers compared to Jeroboam. Perhaps the message was a psychological tactic. Abijah wanted to weaken the morale of the northern troop by inflicting their conscience. They were rebels who ran away from God. Regardless of Abijah's motive, at least he was correct that Jehovah was behind Judah. Abijah said in **verse 8** that Jeroboam was now resisting "the kingdom of the Lord, which is in the hands of David's descendants." Also, Abijah advised the northern army in **verse 12** not to "fight against the Lord, the God of your father, for you will not succeed." Why would God use a wicked king like Abijah to confront another evil nation? In today's world, it is considered an offense to point out others' mistakes. People protest: "Who are you to judge me? Even if I did one wrong thing, you are no better than me!" Sometimes, I honk at drivers who run a red light or get too close to my vehicle. The righteous genes in me causes me to show my discontent. Do you know how some drivers react? They honk back at me! Gradually, I reason that it is wiser to ignore what people do if they cause me no harm. What if the driver walks out and beats me up? Abijah's action makes me think of the religious leaders in Jesus' time. In **Matthew 23:2-3**, Jesus reminds His listeners: 2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." What an irony! Jesus asked people to follow the instructions of the religious leaders if they taught from God's Word. However, one should not follow their bad example. Church life and Bible study may not mean much if we do not practice what God says. Our neighbors and colleagues must see a godly life in us before we share the gospel with them. We should be a living Bible at home before our kids too. Otherwise, they may conclude that everything they learn in Sunday school are fine but impractical moral lessons. This fallen world always finds ways to ridicule and attack Christianity. We live by God's standard and not the world's standard. We strive to please God and not men. While we can never be perfect, we seek constant correction from our Master to live an obedient life.

Was Abijah's speech able to stop the northern troop? Not really. We will now read verse 13 to 18. Jeroboam sent some soldiers to enclose Abijah's army. People of the south thus cried out to God for help. The priests also blew their trumpets, possibly to boost the morale. God showed mercy and came to their rescue. **Verse 15** states that "... God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah." Also **verse 16** describes that "... God delivered them into their hands." Abijah's men still had to fight the battle. But God gave them a victory. Our prayer does not take away our responsibilities. God of course can resolve our problems before we lift a finger. God can heal an incurable disease or stop a catastrophe miraculously. However, there are many more examples in the Bible where people experienced God's presence when He worked through them. God can work the same way in our lives too. Perhaps God gives us wisdom to figure out a creative solution, He sends an expert to assist us or He makes our work more effective. We know clearly that God is on our side when we come out of the trouble. The people of Judah arrived at the same conclusion. The author adds a comment in **verse 18**: they won "because they relied on the Lord, the God of their fathers." The implication is that Abijah could

never have defeated Jeroboam if he had relied on himself. Abijah was outnumbered by a two to one ratio. But at the end, the southern soldiers eradicated fifty out of eighty thousand of Jeroboam's soldiers. That is over 60% reduction! The passage describes that it was a huge blow to Jeroboam. So much so that the north was never able to recuperate its military force when Abijah was reigning. The author specifies that Abijah depended on the God of his ancestors. The same God who was faithful to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David would be faithful to everyone who submits to Him. God is trustworthy. His love endures forever. God has a unique plan for your life. He wants you to know Him, believe in Him and rely on Him. Unfortunately, one resounding victory did not change the heart of Abijah. He continued to worship idol rather than turned back to Jehovah. Abijah's example speaks for a lot of people. They believe God can be manipulated just like any idol. But God is not a means to achieve our goals. Rather, God intends to use us as a means to accomplish His will. People in a dire situation may call out to whichever deity they can find. A non-believer may pledge: "I will believe in your God if He gets me out of this great trouble." By God's mercy, a financial stress is relieved, a broken relationship is restored or an immigration application is approved. The person then soon disappears. God wants to be our Lord rather than our assistant. He wants to receive all the glory when we realize that it is His mighty hand helping us.

#### 結論 CONCLUSION

On the surface, it was a battle between two nations. In the spiritual realm of things, Jehovah was waging a war against the idols of the northern kingdom. God helped the people of Judah to conquer the false gods behind Jeroboam. God proved to Abijah that He was the only true God. The good triumphed over the evil. God gave Abijah an opportunity to return to Him. But Abijah stayed in his course of disobedience. He could not blame his father or grandfather for their bad examples. God was always there. God's Law, the temple, priests and prophets were all present to help Abijah. But he insisted on the wicked way. I get an interesting word-play from the story. People will **forsake** God. But God will remain faithfulness **for the sake** of His unchangeable attributes. Many of us are first generation Christians. We can choose the secular path of our ancestors. But by God's grace, we become His children through Jesus. We should now choose to imitate after Jesus. God is always there for us when we obey Him.

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

「這件事情實在太簡單了！」這是我大兒子的口頭禪。他以為自己很聰明。我覺得今天任何孩子都很優秀。神塑造我的大兒子成為一個學東西很快的人。從讀書到體育，他學東西都比他的弟弟要快。問題是，一旦他掌握了基本知識後，他就會變得自滿。教育制度也使他活得更輕鬆。學生似乎很容易就能拿到甲等。也許大多數學校都希望提高自己的成績。再加上有些老師很慷慨地給學生高分數。我在神學院的時候也遇到過這樣的教授。那一位好好先生對待每個人都像他的孫子一樣。所有學生都必須寫一篇文章作為課程要求的一部分。我非常懷疑他有沒有詳細地閱讀我們的作業。他毫無例外地在每份功課的第一頁寫上：很好，甲等！但是，在現實世界中，出色的成績單意義不大。積分高的畢業生並不一定意味著他有好的工作能力。最終，老板會根據工作表現來評估一個員工。同樣，我們對神的認識必須轉化為我們對神的跟從。信心和行動是有直接關連的。當神評估我們時，這兩個標準都同樣地重要。神使用相同的標準來評估以色列的君王。聖經明確指出每一個王在神眼中是善還是惡的。今天，我們將會看猶大的第四個王亞比雅 (或翻譯為亞比央)。到了這個時候，以色列已經被分為兩個國家。北國仍然被稱為以色列，而南國則被稱為猶大。我把我們曾經學過的王放在幻燈片上。南國與北國的王之間有兩個主要區別。首先，猶大的每個王都是前王的兒子。第二，以色列所有的王都是邪惡的，因為他們沒有按照神的要求去做。

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

今天我們的主要經文是在歷代志下第 13 章。但是，我們會先來讀 [列王紀上 15:1-8](#) 來了解亞比雅的背景。歷代志和列王紀互相補充。它們的差別是，歷代志只記錄了南國的歷史。讓我們提一下這段經文中的一些內容。亞比雅在位僅三年。他是個壞的王，因為他效法了他父親羅波安的罪，而不是大衛的敬虔榜樣。但是，這並不意味著邪惡的王統治的時間一定就比較短。兩個王國都有例外。神繼續在猶大興起君王，因為神不會忘記祂與大衛所立的約。在第 4 節「仍有燈光」是表示一個人將有繼承人。一個接一個的王將延續大衛的王位，直到耶穌的出現。神的國度會存到永遠。你是否很慶幸神會永遠遵守祂的承諾？我們之前提過，神的一些應許是有條件的，而有些是沒有條件的。小孩子就算不聽話，父母還是會給他飯吃。但是，大多數爸媽都會樂意地獎勵表現良好的孩子。作者說，大衛在神眼中是個正直的人，除了他對烏利亞所犯的罪。大衛殺死了那位忠誠的軍官，並搶走了他的妻子拔示巴。我們思考一下這句評語。大衛除了犯了一項罪之外，其他一切都很好。他有沒有曾經發脾氣或在言語上冒犯別人，或是疏忽神的律法？他很可能試過。順服神並

不意味著完美。沒有人可以始終 100% 遵守神的要求。我們會一直有意無意地犯各樣罪。神看基督徒是義人，是因為耶穌為他們贖了罪 - 過去、現在和將來的罪。如果你是神的兒女，聖靈就住在你裡面。祂會給你力量來勝過試探，並在你跌倒時責備你。當我們認罪時，神會樂意寬恕我們的罪。珍惜與神關係的人不會浪費祂的恩典。但是，我們會一次又一次成為浪子，直到我們在榮耀裡見到神的面。當我們明白遠離神而依靠自己時是多麼的軟弱，這便挪去我們的驕傲。

現在，棒子已經交在亞比雅的手中。他如何處理與神的關係將會決定他的統治和國家的命運。但是，正如我們前面所讀到的，亞比雅不及格。他選擇了一條邪惡的道路，而不是遵循大衛公義的正途。但是，歷代志下第 13 章記錄了亞比雅一件值得稱讚的事。他依靠神贏了勝仗。我們會分段來讀那一章的部分內容，然後我們來思考從故事中可以學到的功課。

首先，我們將閱讀第 3 至 9 節。南北國之間爆發了內戰。耶羅波安有巨大的優勢，因為他有雙倍的軍力。亞比雅的部隊現在駐紮在以法蓮。他的軍隊越過邊界，在北國的領土上。屏幕上的地圖顯示出大概的位置。亞比雅將如何安排他的進攻？在亞比雅差遣士兵之前，他發表演說譴責北國的人民。他說以色列是一個非法的國家。它的王耶羅波安是所羅門的僕人和叛徒。他的追隨者只是游擊隊員。亞比雅說他的父親羅波安太軟弱了，無法對付北國。現在，亞比雅要來收拾他們。北國不只是個非法國家，而且還擁有未經授權的宗教制度。耶羅波安造了兩隻金牛犢作為他們的神。他還指定不是利未支派的人為祭司。第 11 章提到，耶羅波安禁止利未人和亞倫的後裔主持宗教儀式。因此，那些忠於神的人放棄了家園，投奔到耶路撒冷。耶羅波安設置了一些宗教的元素。但是他的子民並不是敬拜獨一的真神！假的宗教永遠是模仿真實的信仰。一個不小心便會上當。如今，身份盜用是一種嚴重的罪案。我也曾經是受害者。我收到了一封似乎來自我的信用卡公司的電子郵件。內容說我的帳戶有點問題。我必須按一個鏈接來登錄以解決問題。你可以猜到接下來的情節。一些壞蛋盜用了我的信用卡信息，並用來購物。還好我不需要承擔任何的損失。請不要重複我的愚蠢錯誤。任何要求你提供個人信息的電子郵件很可能是欺詐。最簡單的處理方式是打電話給你的信用卡公司求證。同樣，在接受宗教信仰之前，也應仔細驗證。任何信仰體系都保證給人好處。說句禱告和參與一些儀式，你就會得到祝福。離開這個世界之後，你會去到一個快樂的地方。這些主張的根據是什麼？聖經是真實的，不是因為人們相信它。聖經之所以是真實的，是因為它源於真理的神。懷疑論者試圖否定聖經中記載的地方、人物或事件。但他們都失敗了。人的主觀經歷也驗證了神的客觀真理。任何基督徒都可以見證神積極地活在他們的生命中。

在亞比雅的信息的第一部分中，他指出以色列人的罪，因為他們跟隨一個虛假的宗教。然後他繼續說，只有猶大人相信的才是正牌貨。現在，請聽 10 至 12 節的經

文。亞比雅說，他的人民從來沒有背棄過耶和華，他們一直全心全意地遵守神的命令。這些話真是自打嘴巴。他的祖父所羅門、他的父親羅波安和亞比雅本人都遠離神，敬拜偶像！這就是為什麼國家一分为二的原因。靠著神的憐憫，亞比雅被立為王。猶大比北國優勝的是，那裡的人仍然敬拜耶和華。唯一的聖殿在耶路撒冷。亞倫的後裔擔任祭司，其他利未人則負責禮儀的職務。他們的獻祭和燒香都是根據律法做的。但是，當然，人們也敬拜一些假神。我們必須問為什麼亞比雅在戰場上致辭。請記住，亞比雅的士兵人數只有耶羅波安的一半。那篇信息可能是一種心理戰術。亞比雅可能希望透過譴責士兵的良心來挫敗他們的士氣。他們是離棄神的逃兵。無論亞比雅的動機是什麼，至少他說對了一點，耶和華是站在猶大那一邊。亞比雅在第 8 節說過，耶羅波安現在是「... 抗拒大衛子孫手下所治耶和華的國 ...。」另外，亞比雅在第 12 節中建議北國的軍隊「... 不要與耶和華你們列祖的神爭戰，因你們必不能亨通。」神為什麼要使用像亞比雅這樣邪惡的王來責備另一個邪惡的國家？在當今世代，指出人家的錯誤被視為一種冒犯。人們會抗議說：「你有什麼資格批評我？就算我做得不對，你也不比我好！」有時候，我會向那些闖紅燈或是靠我的車子太近的人按喇叭。我裡面的正義基因使我看不順眼。你知道一些司機的反應嗎？他們向我按喇叭作回敬！我逐漸明白，別人又沒有對我造成傷害，不要多管閒事可能是比較明智的。萬一對方下車揍我一頓怎麼辦？亞比雅的行動使我想到了耶穌時代的宗教領袖。耶穌在馬太福音 23:2-3 中提醒他的聽眾：2 「文士和法利賽人坐在摩西的位上，3 凡他們所吩咐你們的，你們都要謹守遵行；但不要效法他們的行為；因為他們能說，不能行。」真夠諷刺！耶穌要求人們遵循宗教領袖的教導，只要他們是按照神的話語來給人指示。但是，不要效法他們的壞榜樣。如果我們不實踐神所說的話，教會生活和聖經學習可能沒有多大的意義。在我們與別人分享福音之前，我們的鄰居和同事必須看到敬虔的模範。我們也應該在孩子面前成為一本活的聖經。否則，他們可能會得出結論，在主日學中學到的一切都很好，但卻是不切實際的道德故事。這個墮落的世界一直會嘲笑和攻擊基督信仰。我們是按照神的標準而不是世界的標準生活。我們努力取悅神而不是取悅人。雖然我們永遠無法做到完美，但我們應該不斷尋求主的修正，活出順服祂的樣式。

亞比雅的演說能阻止北國的軍隊嗎？不能。現在我們來讀第 13 至 18 節。耶羅波安派遣士兵夾攻亞比雅的軍隊。南國的人於是向神呼求。祭司還吹響了號角，可能用以鼓舞士氣。神憐憫並拯救他們。第 15 節說：... 神就使耶羅波安和以色列眾人敗在亞比雅與猶大人面前。第 16 節還描述：... 神將他們交在猶大人手裡。亞比雅的士兵仍然必須戰鬥。但是神給了他們勝利。我們的禱告並沒有代替我們的責任。神當然可以在我們動手之前就把問題解決。神可以藉著神蹟治愈不治之症，或是停止一場災難。但是，聖經中有更多的例子，說明人在他們的努力中經歷到神的同在。神也可以在我們的生活中以同樣的方式工作。也許神賜給我們智慧，找到具創意的解決方案。祂也可以差派專家協助我們，或者使我們的工作更有果效。我們清楚地知道，是神幫助我們脫離困境。猶大人民得出了同樣的結論。作者在第 18 節中補

充了一句評論：... 猶大人得勝，是因倚靠耶和華他們列祖的神。言下之意是，如果亞比雅依靠自己，就永遠不可能打敗耶羅波安。亞比雅的軍隊人數是北國的一半。但是最後，南國士兵消滅了耶羅波安八十萬大軍中的五十萬。減少了百分之60以上！經文描述這對耶羅波安是巨大的打擊，以至於亞比雅在位期間，北國無法補充它的軍力。作者指出，亞比雅依靠他祖宗的神。對亞伯拉罕、以撒、雅各和大衛信實的那位神，也必然會對順服祂的人同樣的忠誠。神是值得我們信靠的。祂的慈愛永遠長存。神為你的人生定了獨特的計劃。祂希望你認識祂、相信祂並依靠祂。可惜的是，一次重要的勝利並沒有改變亞比雅的心。他繼續敬拜偶像，而不是轉向耶和華。亞比雅的榜樣代表了很多人的經歷。他們以為神可以像任何偶像一樣被操縱。但是神不是實現我們目標的手段。相反，神要使用我們成為實現祂旨意的途徑。處在困境的人可能會呼喚他們所能找到的任何神明。一個非信徒可能會保證：「如果你的神幫我解決這個大麻煩，我也許會相信祂。」因著神的憐憫，經濟的問題、破裂的關係或身份的申請搞定了。然後那個人很快便消失了。神希望成為我們的主，而不是我們的助手。當我們意識到是祂大能的手幫助我們時，我們便應該把所有的榮耀歸給祂。

## 結論 CONCLUSION

表面上看來，這是兩個國家之間的一場戰爭。但是從屬靈的角度來看，是耶和華向北國的偶像宣戰。神幫助猶大人打敗了耶羅波安背後的假神。神向亞比雅證明祂是唯一的真神。正義戰勝了邪惡。神藉此給亞比雅一個回轉的機會。但是亞比雅卻一意孤行。他不能怪他的父親或祖父的壞榜樣。神一直都在那裡。神的律法、聖殿、祭司和先知都在幫助亞比雅。但是他堅持偏行己路。我從故事中得出一個有趣的文字遊戲。人們會拋棄 (forsake) 神。但是，神因著祂不改變的屬性 (for His sake) 永遠保持信實。我們許多人都是第一代基督徒。我們可以持續祖宗世俗的道路。但是靠著神的恩典，我們通過耶穌成為了神的兒女。我們現在應該選擇效法耶穌。當我們順服神的時候，祂會永遠與我們同在。