

# King Abijam

*Bible Characters*

By Bob Vincent

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** 1 Kings 15:1-8; 2 Chronicles 13  
**Preached on:** Sunday, March 10, 2024

**Trinity Presbyterian Church**  
2623 N Robison Road  
Texarkana, TX 75501

**Website:** [www.rbvincent.com](http://www.rbvincent.com)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/rbvincent](http://www.sermonaudio.com/rbvincent)

The Scripture text is taken from 1 Kings chapter 15 beginning at verse 1, and if you will notice there with a little small letter B there and also above it, the letter A in the verse that precedes it, what it says is, and this is very important, “Most Hebrew manuscripts Abijam.” Most Hebrew manuscripts Abijam. That’s very important because I’m not preaching on Abijah. I am preaching on Abijam, and you’ll see the significance of that as the sermon unfolds by God’s grace. So I will correct the NIV as I read it. Verse 1:

1 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijam became king of Judah, 2 and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother’s name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom [that’s another version of Absalom]. 3 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. 4 Nevertheless, for David’s sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong. 5 For David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not failed to keep any of the Lord’s commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite. 6 There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam throughout Abijam’s lifetime. 7 As for the other events of Abijam’s reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? There was war between Abijan and Jeroboam. 8 And Abijam rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. And Asa his son succeeded him as king. (1 Kings 15:1-8)

The word of the Lord. [“Thanks be to God.”]

*Lord, please help me as I attempt to work through some things that may be technical, but, Lord, that you will grant to me the gift of simplicity that even a young child could understand what I'm saying and, Lord, that this will come with power and practical application so that we may all profit from the word that we've had read and that is now to be preached to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Now the first thing I want you to see is why the variation here. Why is this King called Abijam here, but in 1 Chronicles, he's called Abijah, and I hope to answer that question for you today. If you will turn back to the left a few verses, and you will see there in 1 Kings 11, beginning at verse 1, 1 Kings 11, beginning at verse 1, to the left, and that's page 542.

1 King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. 2 They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them [it's not about race, it's about religion], You must not intermarry with them because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. 4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. 5 He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. 7 On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. 8 He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods. (1 Kings 11:1-8)

Now when you realize this, what a traitor to the Lord God of Israel that King Solomon became. He had enormous prosperity. No king in all the earth at that time had greater wealth, power, wisdom, and control than King Solomon, whose name means peace. It's a variation of the Hebrew word shalom (shallûm, שלום), which when I pronounce the benediction, "The Lord

give you peace,” it means prosperity in relationships, in your health, in your finances, as well as peace. So he’s well named, his Hebrew name is Shlomo (sh<sup>l</sup>ōmōh, שלֹמֹה), which doesn’t sound as pretty as Solomon.

But this amazing king, to whom the Lord appeared twice and offered him whatever he wanted, and he asked for wisdom (1 Kings 3:5-14; 9:2-9; 11:9). And God gave him that wisdom so that no one was like him. People came from all the ends of the earth to hear his wisdom (1 Kings 10:1-25).

And so there he is—wonderful beginning—wonderful beginning—dreadful, dreadful end.

And I hope that Ecclesiastes was written as a book of repentance by Solomon, in which case I’d like to see him in heaven; otherwise, he’s in hell. And that’s a very striking point, isn’t it? I hope that the book of Ecclesiastes is written by Solomon as his epistle of repentance and turning to the true God again, because he did horrible things.

And so, of course, we have his son Rehoboam, and you see the kingdom that’s torn apart in his day (1 Kings 12:16-20), and then we turn over to the passage we just read there in 1 Kings 15, and we discover the name of this king is Abijam, 1 Kings 15:1.

What is the significance of the name of Abijam? The significance of the name of Abijam is, “My Father is Yam.” My Father is Yam (‘abiyyām, אֲבִי יָם). What’s the significance of that? Who was Yam? Yam was a sea monster (yām, יָם).

Hold your hand there and turn with me, if you will, to the right to the book of Psalms, Psalm 74. Yam was a sea monster. No wonder that when the Jewish experts on Hebrew and Greek translated the Bible a couple of centuries before Christ, they liked to modify that because that’s a huge embarrassment. Think about it. My Father is Yam? Gracious sakes, it’s horrible. Look here at Psalm 74 and that’s on page 911.

This Psalm was written by Asaph, who was the chief singer, and he’s going on and on in a great lament before God. “God, where are you? Why have you abandoned us? Why are we being defeated before our enemies?” In verse 9:

We are given no miraculous signs; no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be. How long will the enemy mock you, O God? Will the foe revile your name forever? Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!  
(Psalm 74:9-11)

In other words, they're in tough, tough shape, and they're crying out to God, "Help us! Help us!" And then they remind God of something, verse 12:

But you, O God, are my king from of old; you bring salvation upon the earth. (Look at verse 13), It was you who split open the sea by your power (Split open the sea, Yam (yām, יָם). You split open Yam by your power; you broke the heads of the monster (tanniyn, תַּנְיִן) in the waters. (Psalm 74:12-13)

Yam (yām, יָם)

—6. cosmic (Reymond 167ff): קָרַע הַיָּם Am 9<sub>3</sub>, with שָׁרַשׁ Job 36<sub>30</sub>, בָּלַב-יָם Pr 23<sub>34</sub>; יָם the power which is hostile to God, Eissfeldt *Kl. Schr.* 3:256ff; Kaiser 140ff; → תְּהוֹם and 7.

—7. יָם after Ug. *Ym*, pronounced \**Yammu* Gordon *Textbook* §19:1106; Aistleitner 1173; Kaiser 44ff, (: HBauer ZAW 51:92: = יָם !), ? Amor. *ym* (Huffman 210); → Albright *Religion* 166f; Eissfeldt *Kl. Schr.* 3:258ff; *Handbuch der Orientalistik* 1/8, 1.1, 84f; *Wb. Myth.* 1:289f: earliest instances Ps 74<sub>13</sub> Job 7<sub>12</sub> 26<sub>12</sub>; questionably Is 51<sub>10</sub> 57<sub>20</sub> Job 38 (for יָם !)  
9<sub>8</sub> (→ בְּמָה 1), → יַמּוּאֵל.

(Koehler, Ludwig and Walter Baumgartner (1958), *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill), vol. 2, p. 414)

Sea Monster (tanniyn, תַּנְיִן)

General remark: the meaning of the sbst. is always sea-monster, dragon, and not as in BibHeb. serpent; cf. for the original general sense of the sbst. Driver *Mythological Monsters in the OT* (StOr. 1; 1956) 234–249 = Levi della Vida *Fschr.* The instances in JArm., Syr., Eth. and Arb. mean that the sbst. could be considered as a loanword from Heb.; but occurrences of the

word in EgArm. and Ug. refer to a much earlier usage: pl. תַּגְיָנִים(י).

**B.** —1. a) **sea-monster, sea-dragon**, on which see Werner H. Schmidt *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift* (WMANT 17<sup>2</sup>; 1967) 122, and Westermann BK 1/1: 190f: Gn 1<sub>21</sub> Is 27<sub>1</sub> 51<sub>9</sub> parallel with רַהַב, **Ps 74**<sub>13</sub> parallel with יָם 148<sub>7</sub>, Jb 7<sub>12</sub> parallel with יָם; b) **dragon** Jr 51<sub>34</sub> (an image for Nebuchadnezzar); cf. place name עֵין הַתַּגְיָן Dragon's Spring Neh 2<sub>13</sub> (→ עֵין B 16). (*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1764)

Do you see this? And then he says, “It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan (liwyātān, לְוִיָּתָן).”

Leviathan (liwyātān, לְוִיָּתָן)

לְוִיָּתָן: לְוִיָּה + -ān, Bauer-L. *Heb.* 500r, “wreath animal” Ug. *ltn* (Gordon *Textbook* §19:1400; Aistleitner 1488; \*lōtān < \*lawtān, Albright BASOR 46:19<sup>18</sup>); MHeb. Syr. Mnd. (Drower-M. *Dictionary* 236a pl. masc. and fem.): **Leviathan**, sea monster, parallel with נָחַשׁ עֶקְלָתוֹן and נֶבֶרִיָּה (both Ug. !) Is 27<sub>1</sub>, (parallel with תַּגְיָן), with several heads (Ug. !) **Ps 74**<sub>14</sub> (→ Pritchard *Pictures* 670, 671, 691) Ps 104<sub>26</sub> Jb 3<sub>8</sub> 40<sub>25</sub>: the ocean encompassing the earth, Gunkel *Schöpfung* 46f; alt. sea dragon, crocodile (Hölscher *Hiob.* 17, 99f), whale (Driver *Fschr. Levi della Vida*, 238f; Wallace BA 11:61ff; Kaiser 74ff, 145f; RGG 4:337; Gordon in AAltmann *Biblical Motifs* (1966): Reicke-R. *Hw.* 1076; Stolz BZAW 118:46, 63. † (*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 524)

Cf. also Rahab (rahab, רַהַב)

General remark: the meaning of the sbst. is always sea-monster, dragon, and not as in BibHeb. serpent; cf. for the original general sense of the sbst. Driver *Mythological Monsters in the OT* (StOr. 1; 1956) 234–249 = Levi della Vida *Fschr.* The instances in JArm., Syr., Eth. and Arb. mean that the sbst. could be considered as a loanword from Heb.; but occurrences of the word in EgArm. and Ug. refer to a much earlier usage: pl. תַּגְיָנִים(י).

**B.** —1. a) **sea-monster, sea-dragon**, on which see Werner H. Schmidt *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift* (WMANT 17<sup>2</sup>; 1967) 122, and Westermann BK 1/1: 190f: Gn 1<sub>21</sub> Is 27<sub>1</sub> 51<sub>9</sub> parallel with רַהָב, **Ps 74**<sub>13</sub> parallel with תַּיִן 148<sub>7</sub>, Jb 7<sub>12</sub> parallel with תַּיִן; b) **dragon** Jr 51<sub>34</sub> (an image for Nebuchadnezzar); cf. place name עֵין הַתַּנִּין Dragon's Spring Neh 2<sub>13</sub> (→ עֵין B 16).  
(*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1764)

And then he goes on in the next page and he says, (you lose your fingerprints when you get old), “and gave him as food to the creatures of the desert.”

I want you to think about it for a moment. What is this? Well, you discover in the Old Testament again and again and again that Canaanite mythology is the backdrop to praise the one true and living God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose personal name is Yahweh—to praise Yahweh.

And so the authors of Scripture cite Canaanite mythology to say our god is better than their gods. Our god is a real god. The one true and living god is God, and their gods are false gods. That doesn't mean they don't have a supernatural reality behind them. They do. But they're not gods. They're creatures, creatures who seized power when humankind sinned and particularly when humankind was divided at the Tower of Babel. And so what we see here is that Yam and Leviathan, the sea monster—God has conquered them.

Now I want to throw out an idea to you for a moment. While the Bible uses Canaanite mythology, and the mythologies of other lands, including Egypt, to display the greatness and grandeur of the one true God, the only true God—there is no one but he—there is a reality to these gods that is clearly indicated in Scripture (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

We have a divine counsel, for example, that meets in the case of God discussing, “How can I destroy King Ahab of Israel?” And one spirit comes before the throne of Yahweh, the one true God, and says this, another spirit comes before his throne and says that, and finally, a lying spirit comes before the throne of Yahweh in heaven and said, “I'll do it. Let me do it. I just love to deceive and lie. I'll trick him.” And God says to this lying spirit, “Go and prosper.” And so this lying spirit empowers the prophets of Baal

and the prophets that purport to be of Yahweh, he empowers them to trick King Ahab into going into battle, “You’ll succeed and you’ll prosper,” and Micaiah the prophet said, “If you prosper, God has not spoken by me.” (1 Kings 22:19-28; 2 Chronicles 18:18-27)

So we understand that the gods of the nations, the pagan gods, whether they’re Egypt or Babylon or among the Canaanites, are actual spirits, evil spirits, wicked spirits that have been permitted and authorized by God to rule over the nations until the fullness of time, when God sent forth his Son to be born of a woman and born under the law, to redeem those under the law, and to call all men to Christ (Galatians 4:4-7; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; Ephesians 4:7-10; Colossians 2:15-23).

So we understand something here: This background is really important as we analyze this king who is the grandson of Solomon, and he’s the second king of a divided kingdom, king of Judah. So let’s look at that now in chapter 15 verse 1, page 551:

In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijam became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. (1 Kings 15:1)

And so on, and we go all that, but look at verse 3,

He committed all the sins his father had done (That’s Rehoboam); his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been. Nevertheless, for David’s sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong. (1 Kings 15:3-4)

Now I want us to see the explanation for this by going over to 2 Chronicles for a moment. 2 Chronicles chapter 13 and I want to see if we can see the difference here.

Now it’s important when we read the Bible to understand the purpose of the human author. Is the Bible God’s word? Yes, absolutely. Is the whole Bible, every jot and tittle, God’s word? It is exactly what God wanted written. It is word for word, letter for letter—the smallest Hebrew letter is the yod (י), or jot, and the smallest distinguishing mark in Hebrew is the tittle, which is

how you can distinguish Hebrew letters such as chet (ח) from he (ה), and so on. The tittle, the tiny distinguishing mark. And Jesus tells us that the very letters themselves are inspired by God (Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; 17:17).

At the same time, just as Jesus is fully God, absolutely God, in every sense the Lord Jesus Christ is truly God, very God of very God (John 1:1-3; 20:28; Hebrews 1:10-12 with Psalm 102; John 8:58-59), he is at the same time truly human (Hebrews 4:15; John 11:33; John 4:6; Matthew 4:2; 24:36).

He's a human being just like you and me, except he never sinned. He didn't have a sinful nature. So he's truly God, truly human.

So God's word—God's Word incarnate, the Lord Jesus, fully God and fully human—so God's word written is fully divine and fully human.

That means that God uses human authors with their backgrounds, with their education, with their concerns, all of those things to create a book that is fully human, truly human, that reflects the ideas, patterns of speech, education, languages, differences of the human authors.

Now, what is the purpose of Chronicles—First and Second Chronicles, which are really one book in Hebrew, and they're the very last book of the Hebrew Bible? First and Second Chronicles are one book in Hebrew, and they're the very last book of the Hebrew Bible.

Even though the Hebrew Bible contains every single one of the books in your Bibles—your Old Testament and the Hebrew Bible are the same books; they just have different names and a different order.

What is the purpose of Chronicles? Chronicles' purpose is to show the hand of the Lord in delivering his people, and we have an amazing story of deliverance here, as we look at 2 Chronicles chapter 13, page 692.

In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam, Abijah became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother's name was Maacah, a daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. (2 Chronicles 13:1)

Now, what does Abijah mean? It means, "My Father is Yahweh." My Father is Yahweh (ʿabiyāh/'abiyāhû, אַבִּיָּהוּ/אֲבִיָּהוּ).



So in Kings, he has the name, “My Father is Yam,” the sea monster (‘abiyyām, אֲבִי יָם). And in 2 Chronicles, his name is Abijah, “My Father is Yahweh.” What’s the significance?

I’ve got to do a little speculation with you here. I believe that the man may have been converted. Something happens to this man, and we read on and go on down the next paragraph there, which is a continuation in verse 2:

There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. Abijah went into battle with a force of four hundred thousand able fighting men, and Jeroboam drew up a battle line against him with eight hundred thousand able troops. (2 Chronicles 13:2)

Now look at verse 4, and it’s hard for me to believe that a king named “My Father is Yam,” the sea monster, is standing and making this speech. I think he changed his name. I think that he changed his name because he came to see that the God of the Bible is the true God, and that he stood and distanced himself from Solomon’s apostasy.

So, verse 4:

Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, ‘Jeroboam and all Israel, listen to me! Don’t you know that the LORD, the God of Israel, has given the kingship of Israel to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt?’ (2 Chronicles 13:4)

Covenant of salt is more valuable than a covenant of gold because salt in that day was extremely valuable. And so he says by a covenant of salt. It’s a lasting covenant. (More accurately, see below)

Salt was used in all the offerings; its importance as a preservative made it a natural symbol for the covenant which was established by sacrifice. Even general agreements were attested by sacrifice, and the phrase “covenant of salt” speaks of such agreements as binding and irrevocable. Note the expression in Ezra 4:14, “we have been salted with the salt of the palace.” (Harris, W. Hall, eds. (2019) *The NET Bible Notes*. 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson), *in loc.*)

And then he says:

Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, an official of Solomon son of David, rebelled against his master. Some worthless scoundrels gathered around him and opposed Rehoboam son of Solomon when he was young and indecisive and not strong enough to resist them. (2 Chronicles 13:6-7)

Now, get that background. This man knows a little bit of Bible history. This man is reciting this Bible history as he stands up boldly proclaiming the mighty acts of God, and he's declaring to Jeroboam and the northern kingdom of Israel, their apostasy from the true religion, that is, the true religion is the one that's established in Jerusalem in the temple that Solomon built under divine authority and inspiration.

King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.'"

Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things.

"All this," David said, "I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan." (1 Chronicles 28:2-3, 11-12, 19)

And so now look at what he says in verse 8:

"And now you plan to resist the kingdom of the LORD, which is in the hands of David's descendants. You are indeed a vast army and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made to be your gods. But didn't you drive out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and make priests of

your own as the peoples of other lands do? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams may become a priest of what are not gods.” (2 Chronicles 13:8-9)

You’re idol worshipers. You’re worshipping phony gods. They’re not gods. They’re demon spirits. They rebelled against the true God, and they’re aligned with Satan against the true God. You’re worshipping, he says, those that are no gods at all.

Now look at verse 10: “As for us,” Abijah, “My Father is Yam,” the sea monster? **No.** Abijah, “My Father is Yahweh.”

As for us, the LORD (Yahweh) is our God, and we have not forsaken him. The priests who serve the LORD are sons of Aaron, and the Levites assist them. Every morning and evening they present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the LORD. They set out the bread on the ceremonially clean table and light the lamps on the gold lampstand every evening. We are observing the requirements of (Yahweh our God) the LORD our God. But you have forsaken him. God is with us; he is our leader. His priests with their trumpets will sound the battle cry against you. Men of Israel, do not fight against Yahweh, the God of your fathers, for you will not succeed. (2 Chronicles 13:10-12)

I don’t know about you, but as I read this account, it seems to me that “My Father is Yam,” the sea monster (‘abiyyām, אֲבִיָּאָם), has had a conversion. He’s had a change of heart. He’s come to see that Yahweh is the living and the true God, and he’s taking his stand on this, and he’s become a preacher and he’s pointing out the sins of Jeroboam and the host of Israel, the northern kingdom, which outweighs them two to one.

And by the way, the Hebrew word *eleph* (‘ālah, אֶלֶף) can be a company, or a thousand, or an animal: “Cattle ... Thousand ... Group of a thousand, Part of a Tribe, Clan ... Region” (*Ibid.* vol. 1, pp. 59-60).

And so it seems to me that you have 800 companies of soldiers versus 400 companies of soldiers. Is it exactly a thousand? Can be. But it can also simply be a company of soldiers under a commander. So you have this vast

army. The point is that the armies of Israel outweigh the armies of Judah two to one.

Now, in verse 13, it says:

Jeroboam had sent troops around to the rear, so that while he was in front of Judah the ambush was behind them. (2 Chronicles 13:13)

Verse 14:

Judah turned and saw that they were being attacked at both front and rear. Then they cried out to the LORD. The priests blew their trumpets and the men of Judah raised the battle cry. At the sound of their battle cry, God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. The Israelites fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hands. Abijah and his men inflicted heavy losses on them, so that there were five hundred thousand casualties among Israel's able men. (2 Chronicles 13:14-17)

That is, 500 vast companies of fighting men.

The men of Israel were subdued on that occasion, and the men of Judah were victorious because they relied on the LORD, the God of their fathers. (2 Chronicles 13:18)

Because they relied on Yahweh, the God of their fathers.

My God is Yahweh. My God is no longer Yam, the sea monster. My God is Yahweh.

Verse 19:

Abijah pursued Jeroboam and took from him the towns of Bethel, Jeshanah and Ephron, with their surrounding villages. 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. The other events of Abijah's reign, what

he did and what he said, are written in the annotations of the prophet Iddo. (2 Chronicles 13:19-22)

Now, I find that very striking, isn't it?

My Father is Yam of 1 Kings. My Father is Yahweh of 2 Chronicles.

What is the purpose of the chronicler? The purpose of the chronicler—remember, it is probably Ezra who wrote this book, the priest who returned from Babylonian captivity and wrote probably Ezra and Nehemiah and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

He wrote these things to teach Israel from their history about the danger of serving other gods.

You know, I find an interesting thing. As you read the Bible, from Genesis through the very end of the Hebrew Bible in 2 Chronicles, you discover idolatry was a besetting sin of the people.

Do you remember that Jacob wants his children to deal with their sins and he calls them together and he said, "Give me your gods, your false gods, your idols," and he takes them, and he buries them (Genesis 35:2-4).

Idolatry was a perpetual problem for the sons of Abraham, even though it wasn't for Abraham, nor was it for Isaac, nor was it for Jacob, but the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had a perpetual problem with idolatry until when? When they came back from the Babylonian captivity.

The Babylonian captivity was the great fire of purging that purged out of the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for all time, a commitment to idolatry. And so idolatry ends with the Jewish people as they return.

Why do we say the Jewish people? Because the chief tribe is Judah. Benjamin was also with them. The northern kingdoms are called Israel. But Judah survives as the leading tribe, and it is under the Judeans that the nation is reestablished and in the days of Darius I (522-486 BC) the temple is rebuilt (516 BC). Idolatry is banished from the people.

You remember that Ezra had to deal with people, and they had intermarried with the pagan women, just as Solomon had intermarried with pagan

women, and he demanded that they divorce their wives (Ezra 10:1-12, 18-44). Why?

That sounds hard, doesn't it? Divorce your pagan wife. Why? Because if you have pagan wives, you cannot be part of the community of the new Israel of God, returned in 539 BC under the authority of King Cyrus the Great. You cannot be part of this company. Why? Because you've got to think of the welfare of the community and not just your own sense of welfare. Divorce your foreign wives. Separate yourselves. Why? Because they will contaminate you.

You see, the deal is that after the return from the Babylonian captivity, there is a zeal to be pure and to follow the way of the Lord absolutely and not to engage in idolatry and not to have people inside the community who will engage in idolatry.

It's a tough time. They've been through hell on earth in the Babylonian captivity. "By the waters of Babylon, we sat down. We laid our harps on the trees. Our captors demanded of us a song. 'Come on, we know you Jews are famous for your dancing and singing. Sing us a song.'" And they cried, "Lord, if I forget Jerusalem, may my tongue forget its skill and my hands no longer." Anyhow, I've butchered the paraphrase of Psalm 137.

The point I want to make is returning from Babylonian captivity, they aim at being a pure people.

And then they encounter people in their return, and that encounter has to do with the Samaritans. Who were the Samaritans?

Under the Assyrian Empire, when they exiled the northern tribes and sent them throughout their world, throughout their empire, they brought in other people, because the Assyrian and Babylonian empires practiced deportation and importation—getting rid of the native population because they were troublemakers and bringing in other people so that they could not coalesce and form a unity against the Assyrian or Babylonian empires.

The Persians were different. They had a different philosophy. They were the George Herbert Walker Bushes that wanted "a kinder and gentler nation." Now what they did was they allowed people to return to their native lands.

They allowed them to worship their own gods. And that's why, under Cyrus the Great, the temple is rebuilt.

Who are the Samaritans? The Samaritans are the pagans brought from the outer reaches of the Assyrian Empire and placed in Israel. And they do two things, they worship their own gods, and they add another god to their pantheon, Yahweh, because they were desperate.

They were in trouble. Lions were eating them. They didn't know what to do. So they call out and say, "Help, we need somebody to help us!" And so they send a priest down there who teaches them how to worship Yahweh, the God of Israel (2 Kings 17:24-41).

And so they worship Yahweh, they worship the pagan gods and they're syncretists. What is syncretism? Syncretism wants to mix religions together. You know, "Can't we all just get along?" St. Rodney King.

And so the point is that in syncretism, you can worship your gods, we'll worship our gods, and if you wanted the greatest example of syncretism in the world today, it's India. It's India, at least among the Hindus, because there are many gods. And that's why when missionaries win Hindus to Christ, it's easy externally to win a Hindu to Christ, "I'll just add your God among the pantheon of deities I worship."

Now that's not true for the people who ruled India for a season. They were radical monotheists, and that's the Muslims. But India itself, as over against Pakistan to the west and Bangladesh to the east, which are Muslim states, India is very accommodating, "We'll just add one more deity."

And that's what you're dealing with, with the Samaritans. They're syncretists. They've mixed their religion with the religion of the Bible, and so they represent a danger. And that's why when they come and say, "We want to build along with you, we're going to join with you" (Ezra 4:1-5). "Accept our big contribution to your building fund. We just want to have some of us on your board." (I had a deal like that one time, and I turned it down.)

The Samaritans, pagans. So what have we got? We've got the return from Babylon. They've rejected idolatry. And we have an example in the chronicler of Abijam who is maybe converted, and he certainly takes a

strong stand for the Lord. And because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers, 2 Chronicles 13:18, he delivered them. Wow!

Now I'm going to ask us to turn to the New Testament for a moment. In closing, Matthew chapter 7. Matthew chapter 7, the conclusion on the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew chapter 7 and beginning at verse 21, and that's page 1,506 and this is what we read in verse 21.

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

Verse 22:

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:22-23)

What do we conclude from this? Did God truly change the heart of Abijam, "My Father (God) is Yam," the sea monster, to Abijah, "My Father is Yahweh"?

Was the external change accompanied by a change of heart? We can't say absolutely of any Old Testament person, except those that are explicitly labeled as those who go to be with the Lord (Genesis 5:23-24; 1 Samuel 3:7; 2 Kings 2:11-12; 2 Chronicles 33:12-13; 34:3).

And it's very possible to see God do extraordinary things. Did Abijah, "My Father is Yahweh," do extraordinary things in his name? Did God set a trap and defeat utterly, totally, and completely the two to one army of Jeroboam? Yes, he did.

Did he do it in response to Abijah and his fellow Judeans calling on the name of the Lord? Yes, he did.

But here's the issue. Verse 21:



Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

“Many ...”

So we think about it for a moment. Has God ever used you to do miracles? God's used Sandy and me to do miracles many times over the years. We've seen extraordinary miracles done financially, healing, and other things.

Does that mean I'm a Christian? Does that mean that I'm going to go to heaven? Not necessarily.

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' (Matthew 7:22)

I've done those things. Does that mean I'm on my way to heaven? Not necessarily. And then he says:

Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:22)

What does that mean? How can I know for sure that the Lord knows me? And the question is, do I know the Lord? Do I have a relationship with the Lord? Not just do I have power that does come from God to do extraordinary things, sometimes to foretell the future, to cast out demons, to do miracles. That isn't what we look to. We look to a relationship. Do I know the Lord Jesus Christ? And if you're watching on the internet, do I know the Lord Jesus Christ? That's the issue.

Not your power, not your ability. There are many people who seem to produce miracles who don't know the Lord. And I cited an example last week of Jim Jones. What an apostate! He was an atheist. He began to tell people he was God. "Too many of you have your eyes on this book." He threw it out. He liked to stomp on the Bible. Wow, what a terrible man, and he led all those people from the People's Temple in San Francisco to a piece of land in Guyana on the northern coast of South America, and they end up committing mass suicide drinking the Kool-Aid. (David Chidester (2003)

*Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press) p. 64ff.)

The point is, what? Do you have power to do things?

You see somebody, Jim Jones had all kinds of clever tricks like taking chicken guts and putting them up his sleeve.

So somebody would come for prayer, he'd lay his hand on that person, and he'd pull a tumor out—the chicken guts that he had stuffed up his sleeve. Can you believe that? That's really true. He did those things.

So you look at people on TV, and they're impressive. Man! Wow! And who are we?

We're just a little church on Robison Road in Texarkana, Texas. We're not big. Since COVID and our loss of our dear Orenne Niven, we don't have a choir anymore. We don't have a magnificent symphony.

My wife and I love to listen to Christian music, and I'll say, John MacArthur probably has the best choir on the internet. Wow! Wow! You know, and there are others, Hillsong and others. We love listening to Christian music.

The point is, you come to Robeson Road across from Texarkana Community College, you're not going to be dazzled with our great choir back here. You're not going to be dazzled by anything. What do we have to offer you here?

We have one thing to offer you, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's all we have to offer you is the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Lord Jesus Christ is enough. We want you to know the Lord Jesus Christ because if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, you may rest assured that he knows you and that in the world to come, you will be safe and secure.

Once you come to Christ, you can never truly be lost, if you truly come to Christ, and that's the invitation I extend to you today if you're watching.

Come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and may the God who Abijah professed to follow at the end, truly be your God, that you may say, "My Father is Yahweh."

In Jesus' name, may we pray.

*Lord, bless this word. May we find in it eternal security in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

Our closing hymn you have printed, "In Christ Alone."