

1 Kings 15

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 22 August 2016 10:29

This chapter is illustrative of what happens to a nation when God is left out of its knowledge, understanding and practices. We see the same kind of evils today in Western countries, where black is made out to be white, and the leaders dismiss God, the same God Who gave their nations great power and mercy in the past. Now, they follow themselves and their finite minds and dead spirits, and the people follow *them!* In this way once great nations are now cess-pits of depravity and wickedness. God WILL judge.

Verses 1-5

1.

Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat reigned Abijam over Judah.

2.

Three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.

3.

And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father.

4.

Nevertheless for David's sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem:

5.

Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

1 Kings 15

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Eighteen years into the reign of Jeroboam, Abijam began to rule over Judah after the death of Rehoboam. He reigned for only three years. He, too, took Judah down the path of idolatry and godlessness. Once again, scripture compares the current king to the late David, who was 'perfect' before God. (Note: Perfect does not mean completely sin-free).

Abijam, then, followed the evil path of his father, but, for the sake of David's good name, God did not destroy him. The only spot in David's life was the grave sin of Uriah the Hittite. Why not the adulterous sin of Bathsheba? Probably because the adultery became 'active' when David contemplated sending her husband to his death. Thus, the sin against Uriah was his priority, in order to have Bathsheba.

We often hear a plea by adulterers, that "*We just fell in love*". No, this is not what happens! A married woman/man is on the other side of a moral wall, so is 'off limits'. To even contemplate taking another man's wife/husband, takes planning and deliberate sin. The only way it "*just happens*" is when the wall is knocked down in preparation for adultery! Adultery does not simply arise of its own accord – it takes plenty of sinful thought and scheming, and then maneuvering to get together, all the while committing sin and deciding to ruin a marriage, or to otherwise gain what is illicit. From start to finish, then, adultery is a gross sin involving a great deal of thought and sinfulness.

Verses 6-10

1.

And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life.

2.

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.

3.

And Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead.

1 Kings 15

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4.

And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah.

5.

And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.

We are reminded that Jeroboam and Rehoboam were at war most of the time. Abijam just carried on with the wars when his father died. He did not last very long and was buried in Jerusalem. Then, his son, Asa (father of Jehoshaphat), became king of Judah, going back to God's commands, reversing the many evils committed by his father and grandfather. Perhaps this is why God allowed him to reign for much longer – 41 years. According to the text his mother was Maachah. But, she is also said to be the mother of Asa's father. This is an Hebraism, similar to saying that Asa was the 'son' of David. That is, in the lineage of David. Thus, Asa is in the lineage of Maachah, in actuality she was his grandmother. Those ignorant of Hebraisms would superficially say this constitutes a mistake in scripture. Not so!

Verses 11-15

1.

And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father.

2.

And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.

3.

And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron.

4.

1 Kings 15

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But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.

5.

And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which himself had dedicated, into the house of the LORD, silver, and gold, and vessels.

Asa did what was right in God's eyes, "*as did David his father*"... another Hebraism. Importantly, Asa removed the sodomites from Judah, and all the idols. Concerning the sodomites, Matthew Henry comments,

"Immorality he first struck at: He took away the sodomites out of the land, suppressed the brothels; for how can either prince or people prosper while those cages of unclean and filthy birds, more dangerous than pest-houses, are suffered to remain?"

Sodomites are unclean and filthy. They are more dangerous than anything else and must not be allowed to remain, because they spread the filth. We must rid the land of sodomites!

The idols were given freedom by Asa's "fathers" (plural) back to Solomon's sadly corrupt end-of-reign. Note that Asa was swift and thorough, even removing his grandmother as queen, and destroying her groves and idol, burning them to dust. I have said elsewhere that a symbol is necessary when removing what is sinful – we must be rid of it, and, if tangible, we must burn it, to show commitment to God. The idol or object itself is not evil, for it is only a manmade thing. It must be removed and burnt because of what it represents... its existence being an affront against the Lord. It is why Roman Catholic churches were torn down and their idols burnt, by Oliver Cromwell.

For reasons not given, Asa stopped short of removing the 'high places' (altars on mountain tops). Even so, Asa made it known that worship of idols was evil and stopped the activity, making the high places 'out of bounds'

Thus, his "*heart was perfect with the LORD*". When this was done, he took hold of everything once dedicated to God back into the Temple... silver, gold and holy objects. This implies that during the reign of his father and grandfather, things were removed and stored away in a palace treasury.

1 Kings 15

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Verses 16-21

1.

And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

2.

And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

3.

Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants: and king Asa sent them to Benhadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,

4.

There is a league between me and thee, and between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; come and break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

5.

So Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelbethmaachah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali.

6.

And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah.

However, other things did not change – there was continuous war between the southern and northern kingdoms. The difference was that this time the war was between God's people and

1 Kings 15

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the corrupt Israelites. Even the name of the northern king, Baasha, means 'wicked'. Note that God never once condemned Judah for going to war against evil men. The same applies to 'just wars' today.

As part of his war against Judah, Baasha began to build a city called Ramah, about five miles from Jerusalem. The idea was to prevent help reaching Asa and to use it as a fortified hill from which to attack Jerusalem. Knowing the dangerous position he was in, Asa gathered up all the treasures in the Temple and put them into the custody of high ranking servants, who, together, travelled to see Benhadad, king of Syria, in his palace at Damascus, just over 200 miles north-east of Jerusalem. He was son of Tabrimon, the former king of Syria, as was his father, Hezion, who was friendly with Solomon.

Asa reminded Benhadad that his country and Judah had a long-standing friendship. He was sending the gold and silver to him as a present, to strengthen their 'league' (alliance). Asa urged the king to break his alliance with Baasha and to come to his side with military strength. Benhadad made good the alliance with Judah and sent his army against Israelite cities, striking at Ijon, Dan, Abelbethmaachah, Cinneroth and Naphtali. The message was very clear, and Baasha pulled back his own forces to his capital at Tirzah, abandoning the fortification of the hilltop of Ramah.

Verses 22-24

1.

Then king Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none was exempted: and they took away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded; and king Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah.

2.

The rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet.

3.

And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

1 Kings 15

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Asa then proclaimed the superiority of Judah over Israel and “none was exempted”. This implies that his proclamation included a warning to any who had sympathies with Israel – they complied with Asa or they would be dealt with. Asa sent workmen to dismantle the fortification at Ramah and the materials were sent to build/rebuild Geba and Mizpah. Geba was a steep terraced hill not far from Ramah and about six miles north-east of Jerusalem: it replaced Ramah as a fortified city, this time to defend Jerusalem. The site of Mizpah is varied, but may have been in Gilead, a Benjamite territory.

The reader is again referred to the book of Chronicles for further information on the reign of Asa. Though Asa was a godly ruler, we note that in his old age he suffered from a problem with his feet. This could have been any one of known foot ailments. When he died he, too, was buried in Jerusalem and his son, Jehoshaphat, inherited the throne. Asa’s son surpassed his own reign for godliness and I have no doubt that Asa’s good example played a big part in this.

Verses 25-30

1.

And Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned over Israel two years.

2.

And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

3.

And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon.

4.

Even in the third year of Asa king of Judah did Baasha slay him, and reigned in his stead.

5.

1 Kings 15

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And it came to pass, when he reigned, that he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite:

6.

Because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger.

In Israel, Nadab began his rule when Asa was in his second year of rule. Like so many kings who were evil, his reign lasted for a very short time – just two years. Like his father he ruled wickedly, defying the God Who owned Israel. And because he was wicked, so, too, were the Israelites. It takes very little prompting for men to be wicked and to overthrow God's laws, when their leaders do the same.

In his wickedness he did not realise that another would soon kill him. Baasha, of the Issachar clan, conspired with others to take Nadab's throne. Nadab laid siege to the city of Gibbethon, a town in Dan, not far from Gezer, belonging to the Philistines (who took it from the Levites). It was while the city walls were attacked that his own officer, Baasha, assassinated him in the confusion of battle, immediately taking control and kingship. This was in Asa's third year.

As was prophesied by the Lord, not one of Jeroboam's family was left alive after this takeover. In this way, violent overthrow destroyed the entire lineage of Jeroboam for his wickedness. As so often happens, one wicked man was removed by another wicked man. We are told that his demise was the direct result of his wicked rejection of God's laws and commands.

Verses 31-34

1.

Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

2.

And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

1 Kings 15

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3.

In the third year of Asa king of Judah began Baasha the son of Ahijah to reign over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty and four years.

4.

And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

The life and times of Nadab are also listed in Chronicles. As usual there was constant war between north (Israel) and south (Judah). Baasha ruled 24 years and was evil in God's eyes, being as wicked as Jeroboam and leading all of Israel to follow his example. In modern days, Christians are not usually chosen as workers of status, because those who are his superiors want fellow sinners to rule with them. The same goes for genuine ministers, whose obedience to the Lord highlights the sins of less obedient believers, and so they tend to reject or shun the genuine men. And so we see that sin is sin, in every age.

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