

Lesson 3 – 1 Kings 15

Text: 1 Kings 15; 2 Chronicles 14-16

Main Characters: God, Asa, Azariah, Ben-Hadad, Baasha, Hanani

Key Passages:

- 2 Chronicles 14:11 – Asa cried out to the Lord for aid, realizing that God could save his people.
- 2 Chronicles 16:7-12 – Later in his life, Asa stopped relying on God and was punished for it.

Main Storyline:

Asa became king of Judah after his father, Abijah, died. Asa was the first truly good king of Judah, as he immediately sought to rid Judah of the idolatry and sin that had been prevalent under the previous kings (Solomon, Rehoboam, and Abijah). He destroyed altars, idols, and high places, and he commanded Judah to seek God and to observe His laws. The Lord gave Asa rest in the land (no wars).

After 10 years of peace, Zerah the Ethiopian came and attacked Judah with an enormous army which was far more powerful than that of Judah's. Asa went out with his men to meet Zerah in battle. Realizing his position, he called upon the Lord and begged for His aid. God answered Asa's prayer, and He struck the Ethiopians so mightily that their army was broken and could not recover. The men of Judah pursued them relentlessly and plundered many of their cities before returning to Judah.

The Spirit of God came upon Azariah, a prophet, and he met with Asa to encourage him to remain steadfast in his faith in God. Azariah reminded Asa that, for many years, the people of Judah had been without God, as they had been living in idolatry and sin. He encouraged Asa to continue to seek God, to be strong, and to know that all of his work would eventually be rewarded. Asa took courage and continued his work of cleansing the land of Judah of idolatry and sin. When he finished, he gathered his people together for a great sacrifice where they all entered into a covenant with God. They all promised to seek the Lord with all of their hearts and souls; anyone that did not seek the Lord was to be killed.

Asa and was extremely serious about his obedience and devotion to the Lord. Asa even removed his grandmother, Maacah, from being queen mother (likely removed her from his house). She had made an idol of Asherah (female counterpart to Baal), but Asa cut it down, crushed it, and burned it.

Unfortunately, Asa was not able to maintain his zeal and faith in the Lord. Later in his reign, Baasha, the king of Israel, built a fort at the border between Judah and Israel, preventing anyone from passing over the border. Asa wanted the fort removed, but instead of asking God for assistance, he paid Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, to break his treaty with Israel and attack Baasha so that he could destroy the blockade. Though his plan worked, God was not pleased with his lack of faith in Him.

Hanani, a prophet, came and rebuked Asa for his lack of faith. He reminded Asa of his great battle with the Ethiopians, and how God saved them from an army much stronger than Judah's. Hanani also told Asa that, because of his reliance on man (not God), there would be many wars for the rest of his life. Asa did not repent, however, and instead became enraged. He threw Hanani into prison and also began to oppress some of the people of Judah.

Asa continued to have problems for the rest of his life. In addition to the wars that he was having to deal with, he also developed a disease in his feet. He still refused to seek the Lord's assistance with his disease, and instead sought the aid of physicians. He died about 2 years later. When he died, the people gave him a very large and elaborate funeral; though he turned evil, he had been a good king.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Devotion to the Lord is a serious matter; we must deal appropriately with those who fall away.
- 2.) God can deliver us from the darkest, bleakest situations; we must remember to rely on Him first.