

Asa & Jehoshaphat

Introduction:

After the death of Jeroboam's house, Israel had 6 kings in the same period of time that Judah had two. All of Israel's kings were wicked and God had no reason to help them when difficulties arose. As a matter of fact, due to their wickedness, many died after being visited by a prophet and told of their imminent death due to their wickedness.

	Israel	Judah
3.	Baasha Killed Jeroboam's house(24 year)	3. Asa(good)(41 years)
4.	Elah Assassinated by Zimri(2 years) (End of house of Baasha)	
5.	Zimri Killed house of Baasha(7 days)	
6.	Omri Made Samaria capital(6 years)	
7.	Ahab Married Jezebel(22 years) Elijah begins work.	4. Jehoshaphat(good)(25 years)
8.	Ahaziah (2 years) Elisha begins work	
9.	Jehoram (12 years) Slain by Jehu (End of Ahab's House)	
10.	Jehu Killed house of Ahab & Jehoram	5. Jehoram(one of the worst)(8)

The lives of Asa and Jehoshaphat contain some very important events that place them squarely into Paul's words to the Romans

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Rom. 15:4-5

Although these men are not listed among those in Hebrews 11, they are still very helpful as part of the great cloud of witnesses.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, Heb. 12:1

Asa

While Kings only gives us a summary of his life, Chronicles expands and gives important details. Yet the account in Kings gives some important facts that are helpful to understand his life and fidelity to the Lord.

*And he **banished the perverted persons** from the land, and **removed all the idols** that his fathers had made. 13 Also he **removed Maachah his grandmother** from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa **cut down her obscene image and burned it** by the Brook Kidron. 14 But the high places were not removed. **Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days.** 1 Kings 15:12-14*

As soon as he began his reign, he immediately sought to bring Israel back into conformity to the quality and type of life revealed in the law. Recognizing that "evil companionship corrupts" He removed all the "perverted persons" from the land. This generally had reference to the ritual harlots and homosexual prostitutes who honored the idols who authorized them.

There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel. Deut 23:17-18

Any Israelite who frequented the places of perverted persons would also be perverted by their contact not only with fornication, but also idolatry. He also removed all the idols and even his own grandmother because of her obscene(literally something horrible that causes one to shudder). image.

The High Places

The one thing he did not do(perhaps because he could not) was remove all the high places. These were places other than Jerusalem where Israel would gather to worship God. It was not idolatry, but still a departure from the Law and almost always a single step into idolatry. Moses had strictly enjoined upon them that after the place where God would choose was selected, never again would Israel temple offer sacrifice anywhere else.

You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. 3 And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. 4 You shall not worship the Lord your God with such things.5 "But you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. Deut 12:2-6

Very few kings were successful in removing them, and even after they did, the people still refused to come to Jerusalem.

*41 **Jehoshaphat** the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. ... **Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.** 1 Kings 22:41-43*

*In the second year of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, **Amaziah** the son of Joash, king of Judah, became king. ... **However high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.***

*In the seventh year of Jehu, **Jehoash** became king, **3 But the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.** 2 Kings 12:1-3*

*In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, **Azariah** the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king. 2 ... **4 except that the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.** 2 Kings 15:1-5*

*In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, **Jotham** the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign. ... **35 However the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.** He built the Upper Gate of the house of the Lord. 2 Kings 15:32-35*

*Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that **Hezekiah** the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. **4 He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image** and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. 2 Kings 18:1-5*

***Josiah** was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. ... **Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem,** and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven. ... **9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren.** 2 Kings 22:1; 23:5-9*

Asa's heart was Loyal

Yet though they were not completely removed, he did all he could to remove them.

***Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God, 3 for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places,** and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images. **4 He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers,** and to observe the law and the commandment. **5 He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah,** and the kingdom was quiet under him. 2 Chron 14:2-6*

This appears to be a contradiction, but it is not. The passage in Kings speaks of the results of all his efforts, while here in Chronicles it speaks of the efforts he put forth to remove them. He did all

he could to eradicate them, but the stubbornness of the people of Judah would not bend even under these efforts.

God helped him fight against the Ethiopians.

Because of his “loyal heart” God could do for him what he refused to do in Israel. After Asa’s “fervent and righteous prayer,” God moved against this army and the prayer “availed much.”

*Then Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and he came to Mareshah. 10 So Asa went out against him, and they set the troops in battle array in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. 11 And **Asa cried out to the Lord his God**, and said, **"Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!"** 12 So the Lord struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. 2 Chron 14:9-12*

God Sent a Prophet

This prophesy of Azariah contains some very important words that should be followed today just as they were then.

*Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. 2 And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: **"Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.** 3 For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; 4 but **when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them.** 5 And in those times **there was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands.** 6 So nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity. 7 But you, **be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!"** 2 Chron 15:1-7*

This prophet reminded them that God can only be with men when they are with him. If God is sought, He will be found, but if God is forsaken He will forsake us. This sums up the blessings and curses in Deuteronomy. He then sums up the history since the time of Solomon. The nation had been a long time without God, teaching priests and the Law. They had gone back in their hearts to the times of the judges when everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Also like the Judges, Israel went through the same cycle. They were unfaithful, then trouble came. They sought Him and He helped them. Yet in all that time there was no peace, only turmoil and trouble. So God sums up His efforts during these times as he used the nations to destroy and break down.

After the great victory and after this inspired sermon, Asa took heart and became ever more zealous, fulfilling even more fully the words spoken above.

And when Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had taken in the mountains of Ephraim; and he restored the altar of the Lord that was before the vestibule of the Lord. 2 Chron 15:8-9

It was now the 15th year of the reign of Asa, and at that time a great revival and awakening occurred. The impact of these events were felt not only among the people of Judah, but also many came out of Israel, heeded his words and were moved to make a covenant.

*Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those who dwelt with them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for they came over to him in great numbers from Israel when they saw that the Lord his God was with him. 10 So **they gathered together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.** 11 And they offered to the Lord at that time seven hundred bulls and seven thousand sheep from the spoil they had brought. 12 Then **they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord** God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; 13 and whoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. 2Chron 15:9-14*

The Erosion faith created by Prosperity and Peace.

Although these great things were all done in the 15th year of his reign, by the 36th year, most of it had been forgotten and new problems arose.

First, the next time a battle loomed, instead of relying on God as they had promised to do only 21 years earlier, they choose to ignore God and seek an alliance with Syria.

*In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, **Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. 2 Then Asa brought silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-Hadad king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, 2 Chron 16:1-2***

Second, God sent a seer(prophet) to preach nearly the same sermon Asa had heard 21 years earlier.

*And at that time **Hanani the seer** came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: "Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and **have not relied on the Lord your God**, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. 8 **Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand** For the **eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.**" 2 Chron 16:7-8*

He first rebuked them for their sin and revealed the consequences in the escape of the king of Syria which would not have occurred if they had relied on the Lord. He then reminded them of the earlier victory gained when they had relied totally on the Lord, and then reminded them that God is always looking throughout all the earth for those who rely on and trust only in Him. To those who are loyal, He will be strong and helpful.

His concluding words of rebuke were especially strong. He tells him his actions were foolish and revealed the consequence would be that God would remove peace from the land and replace it with war.

Asa's Heart was Loyal to the Lord all his days. 1 Kings 15:14

The Scripture can't be broken. Asa was loyal all his days, yet Asa, did not initially choose repentance at this time, but further rebellion. This is a classic example of Peter's words that the Lord is longsuffering not wishing that any should perish.

*Then **Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time. 2 Chron 16:9-10***

His actions came from anger and rage(*the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God*), he remained in that anger and was still weakened in his faith three years later, when he chose physicians over the Lord.

And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians. 2Chr. 16:12

He died two years later. But we must untangle this seeming contradiction. We only have two choices. Either the inspired book of Kings got this wrong, or in spite of all these things, somehow his heart was still loyal. Hence the book of Kings says he was loyal all the days of his life, the book of Chronicles gives us a short period of time in which in anger and rage, he put God's prophet in prison and failed to seek God for his disease.

The only answer is subsequent repentance and an inner attitude that was still present even under the influence of sin. We can sin, then repent and confess without the loss of our loyalty. So did David with Bathsheba, and Samson. Although it is not chronicled, the only solution to the dilemma of his loyalty to God under such circumstances is that he did not lose his faith and trust in God even though he fell into grievous sin. So Saul of Tarsus lived in all good conscience and was loyal to his God through ignorance and strong emotions. This is a tough Scripture and we must move carefully.