

Perth Bible Class

Studies in the Revival Kings of Judah

Study 1 – King Asa

Scripture records – 11 Chronicles 14 – 16 & 1 Kings 15

HISTORICAL SETTING – The period of the Kings commenced with Saul but only he with David and Solomon reigned over the united nation of Israel. With the death of Solomon the nation divided and ten tribes followed Jeroboam retaining the name Israel while two tribes Judah and Benjamin under the name of Judah had Rehoboam as King. All of the Kings of Israel from Jeroboam were evil to differing degrees and they came from different family backgrounds. The kings of Judah all came from the line of David with the exception of a woman called Athaliah who usurped the throne. Some were good kings while some were evil. While some were good and some evil they did not necessarily follow in the ways of the previous generation. Good fathers did not necessarily mean good sons and evil fathers did not always produce evil sons. We learn the lesson that spirituality does not “run in the blood”. In the future day of reckoning at the judgement seat we must all give account. It will be a time of individual reckoning before God.

Four are considered revival kings and are all marked by reference to following David see 1 Kings 15 v 11, 11 Chron 17 v 3, 11 Chron 29 v 2 and 11 Chron 34 v 2.

The division that took place at the death of Solomon led to a weakened nation that spent much of its energy fighting each other rather than the enemy. We are told in the world that “unity is strength” yet sadly how divided is the Christian church. At the beginning it was not so “all that believed were together and had all things common” Acts 2 v 44.

FOUR CORNER STONES FOR REVIVAL – There are listed four basic principles that will guarantee that God will bless “If my people which are called by my name, shall **humble** themselves and **pray**, and **seek** my face, and **turn** from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 11 Chron 7 v 14. We will observe in our studies that these principles are found humility, prayer, seeking God’s face and turning from evil.

IMMEDIATE BACKGROUND – DEPARTURE Only 20 years had elapsed from the days of Solomon. How soon the people of God can turn away from him. When Moses was in the mount to receive the law in 40 days the nation turned away from God. It is interesting to note the conditions at the end of Solomon’s reign and it is clear that turning away from God had already commenced. We read in 1 Kings 4 v 26 “Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots” yet in Deut 17 v 16 God had clearly said “he shall not multiply horses”. It is also declared about Solomon in 1 Kings 11 v 1 “loved many strange women” v 3 “he had seven hundred wives” yet again the word of God is clear in Deut 17 v 17 “neither shall he multiply wives”. Such sin led to further transgression for Solomon not only did he multiply wives but we read “his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God” 1 Kings 11 v 4. Later in this same section we read v 7 “ Then

did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh ----- v 8 and likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods”. It appears that the basis had been laid in Solomon’s time that would inevitably take the people of God away from Him.

DIVISION – This took place at Solomon’s death 11 Chron 10.

CIVIL WAR – In the reign of Abijah immediately prior to the reign of Asa we read of a time when he fought with Jeroboam and in one battle five hundred thousand of Israel were slain. 11 Chron 13.

SAD ENDINGS – The faithful record of the word of God notes that many of the kings of Judah, even those revival kings, often have recorded failures in the later days of their life.

The three chapters from Chronicles give details of the life of King Asa. They seem to cover distinct periods and the number of years in each chapter is noted for us.

Ch 14 covers a period of 10 years we will consider this as **First Priorities**.

Ch 15 covers a period of 25 years we will consider this **Mid Life Activities**

Ch 16 covers a period of 6 years we will consider this **Later Frailties**.

FIRST PRIORITIES – CH. 14

- v 1 – 5** **Purification of the people**
- v 6 – 8** **Fortification of the cities**
- v 9 – 15** **Confrontation with the enemy**

Purification of the People. -After an overview of his life in 14 v 2 Asa is immediately at work and he “took away the altars of the strange gods” v 3. The idea is that he “beheaded” or rendered them without authority. While we might all agree that they had no authority in the first place it is clear that any idol can have control over the individual who puts that in first place in his or her life. Asa also “brake down” or crushed the idols. Not only were they to have no authority over the lives of the people of God they were to be removed totally. This was no putting away with a view to bringing back. It was complete.

If something or one is taking first place in my life in place of the Lord Jesus Christ I need to be equally ruthless.

Direction for the people – We noted in the opening remarks that there were four corner stones for revival. It is good to note that in v 4 that he “commanded Judah to seek the Lord”. Throughout the first two periods of the life of Asa there are references to seeking the Lord.

What good advice for us today. It was the cry of Isaiah to the people of God in his day “seek ye the Lord” Isa. 55 v 5.

Fortification of the Cities – Having removed the idols it is then important to make sure that we have proper defences to stop any attack of the enemy. This was next

priority for Asa. V 6 “he built fenced cities in Judah”. The fortification was to include “walls, and towers, gates, and bars”. The man who was ruthless with removing the idols will show himself sure in the placement of defence.

It is clear in scripture that the enemy for every Christian is Satan and he never leaves the believer alone. In the life of the Lord Jesus after the temptations in the wilderness we read “he departed from him **for a season**” Luke 4 v 13 he would return. Peter warns us “your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour” 1 Peter 5 v 8.

Our defence has nothing to do with the fortifications that Asa erected. We need to be able to defend ourselves with the word of God. This was how the Lord Jesus defended himself in the desert when Satan came “it is written” Luke 4 v 4

Confrontation with the enemy – v 9 in our chapter tells of the attack by Zerah the Ethiopian. Despite the large army that was at the disposal of Asa – some 580,000 men the army of the Ethiopians was 1 million. Humanly speaking there could be only one outcome so Asa “cried unto the Lord” v 11. This is another of the corner stones of revival – prayer. His prayer is an acknowledgement of his dependence on God “we rest on thee and in thy name we go”.

For us the lesson is the enemy will come. We have no ability to resist in our selves. We need a good knowledge of the word of God and ready access into the presence of God in prayer.

MID LIFE ACTIVITIES – CH 15

v 1 – 7 **The Revelation of the prophet**
v 8 – 15 & v 18 – 19 **The Response of the people**
v 16 – 17 **The removal of the Queen.**

The Revelation of the prophet – Azariah, whose name means God has helped, comes to meet Asa and in v 2 reveals firstly that God’s promises are conditional “The Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you”. We can think of other such scriptures e.g. “if ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land” Isa 1 v 19. We claim God’s promises but need to carefully submit to his word.

Secondly the prophet reveals the failure of the people v 3 “ for a long season ---- **without** the true God and **without** a teaching priest and **without** law”. Sadly it is so easy to get into the habit of thinking we can manage without God and his word. We learn the example of Joseph and Mary in Luke 2 going “a day’s journey” then taking “three days” to find him.

Thirdly the prophet will reveal the faithfulness of God in v 4 “when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord ----- he was found of them” Even when I stray from him God waits my return.

The Response of the people – How descriptive the words are
v 8 “put away” “renewed the altar”
v 9 “gathered all Judah and Benjamin”

- v 11 “they offered unto the Lord”
- v 12 “they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord”
- v 14 “they swore unto the Lord”
- v 15 “all Judah rejoiced”
- v 18 “He brought into the house of God”

Little explanation is needed but each is a step from being away from God to being and doing the things that please Him.

The Removal of the Queen – Maachah was really the grandmother of Asa. We are learning how deep rooted the idolatry was in the nation. If ch 14 records 10 years, and these were days of removing idols so also ch 15 covering a period of 25 years yet still spent in this aspect of recovery, v 8 “they put away the abominable idols”. We find not only how long this had taken but how it had affected right to the highest home in the land. There may be a lesson from this incident coming late in the reign of Asa. Did he fail to deal with the idols within his own household whilst removing them from the homes of others? Sadly there are precedents in the word of God where leaders were swift to deal with others but not so quick with their own. In 1 Samuel Eli had been quick to level accusations at Hannah but not so quick to deal with the actions of his own sons. Samuel also seemed to have difficulties within his own family yet he had judged the people of God.

LATER FRAILTIES – CH 16

- v 1 – 6 Asa and the enemy**
- v 7 – 10 Asa and the prophet**
- v 11 – 14 Asa and his disease**

Asa and the enemy – The king of Israel comes against Judah and Asa sends silver and gold to the king of Syria to come and help him in the battle. This was the actions of the same man who in ch 14 had said “we rest on thee and in thy name we go” v 11. He wins the day but what a cost.

Sad that at the end of such a remarkable life we should read of such failure. It was a sad mark of many of the kings of Judah. May God help us to begin well, go on well and finish well.

Asa and the prophet – When his fault is pointed out by Hanani we read that “Asa was wroth with the seer and put him in a prison house” v10. May God give us hearts that are responsive to his voice even when he speaks in correction to us. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for **correction** for instruction in righteousness” 11 Tim 3 v 16.

Asa and his disease – Our final picture is of a man diseased in his feet yet he “sought not to the Lord” v 12. His name means healer but he did not live up to his name. The man who early in life and also in mid years had sought the Lord now turns to the physicians who are unable to help. Sadly he is in this condition for 2 years until his death. We need to remember that even the physical circumstances of life need to be taken to God in prayer. There is no criticism of him going to the physicians but in his failure to seek the Lord.

