

# CHAPTER 15

In this chapter we have an abstract of the history,

**I.** Of two of the kings of Judah, Abijam, the days of whose reign were few and evil (v. 1-8), and Asa, who reigned well and long (v. 9-24).

**II.** Of two of the kings of Israel, Nadab the son of Jeroboam, and Baasha the destroyer of Jeroboam's house (v. 25-34).

## <115>1 KINGS 15:1-8

### ABIJAM'S REIGN

We have here a short account of the short reign of Abijam the son of Rehoboam king of Judah. He makes a better figure, 2 Chronicles 13, where we have an account of his war with Jeroboam, the speech which he made before the armies engaged, and the wonderful victory he obtained by the help of God. There he is called *Abijah* — *My father is the Lord*, because no wickedness is there laid to his charge. But here, where we are told of his faults, *Jah*, the name of God, is, in disgrace to him, taken away from his name, and he is called *AbiJames* See <222>Jeremiah 22:24.

**I.** Few particulars are related concerning him.

**1.** Here began his reign in the beginning of Jeroboam's eighteenth year; for Rehoboam reigned but seventeen, <1121>1 Kings 14:21. Jeroboam indeed survived Rehoboam, but Rehoboam's Abijah lived to succeed him and to be a terror to Jeroboam, while Jeroboam's Abijah (whom we read of <1141>1 Kings 14:1) died before him.

**2.** He reigned scarcely three years, for he died before the end of Jeroboam's twentieth year, v. 9. Being made proud and secure by his great victory over Jeroboam (<4121>2 Chronicles 13:21), God cut him off, to make way for his son Asa, who would be a better man.

**3.** *His mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom, that is, Absalom, David's son, as I am the rather inclined to think because two*

other of Rehoboam's wives were his near relations (<sup><4118></sup>2 Chronicles 11:18), one the daughter of Jerimoth, David's son, and another the daughter of Eliab, David's brother. He took warning by his father not to marry strangers; yet thought it below him to marry his subjects, except they were of the royal family.

**4.** He carried on his father's wars with Jeroboam. As there was continual war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, not set battles (these were forbidden, <sup><4123></sup>1 Kings 12:24), but frequent encounters, especially upon the borders, one making incursions and reprisals on the other, so there was between Abijam and Jeroboam (v. 7), till Jeroboam, with a great army, invaded him, and then Abijam, not being forbidden to act in his own defence, routed him, and weakened him, so that he compelled him to be quiet during the rest of his reign, <sup><4430></sup>2 Chronicles 13:20.

**II.** But, in general, we are told,

**1.** That he was not like David, had no hearty affection for the ordinances of God, though, to serve his purpose against Jeroboam, he pleaded his possession of the temple and priesthood, as that upon which he valued himself, <sup><4430></sup>2 Chronicles 13:10-12. Many boast of their profession of godliness who are strangers to the power of it, and plead the truth of their religion who yet are not true to it. *His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God.* He seemed to have zeal, but he wanted sincerity; he began pretty well, but he fell off, and *walked in all the sins of his father*, followed his bad example, though he had seen the bad consequences of it. He that was all his days in war ought to have been so wise as to make and keep his peace with God, and not to make him his enemy, especially having found him so good a friend in his war with Jeroboam, <sup><4438></sup>2 Chronicles 13:18. *Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness,* <sup><2350></sup>Isaiah 26:10.

**2.** That yet it was for David's sake that he was advanced, and continued upon the throne; it was *for his sake* (v. 4, 5) that God thus *set up his son after him*; not for his own sake, nor for the sake of his father, in whose steps he trod, *but for the sake of David*, whose example he would not follow. Note, It aggravates the sin of a degenerate seed that they fare the better for the piety of their ancestors and owe their blessings to it, and yet will not imitate it. They stand upon that ground, and yet despise it, and

trample upon it, and unreasonably ridicule and oppose that which they enjoy the benefit of. The kingdom of Judah was supported,

(1.) That David might have a lamp, pursuant to the divine ordination of a lamp for his anointed, <sup><115></sup>Psalm 132:17.

(2.) That Jerusalem might be established, not only that the honours put upon it in David's and Solomon's time might be preserved to it, but that it might be reserved to the honours designed for it in after-times. The character here given of David is very great — *that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord*; but the exception is very remarkable — *save only in the matter of Uriah*, including both his murder and the debauching of his wife. That was a bad matter; it was a remaining blot upon his name, a bar in his escutcheon, and the reproach of it was not wiped away, though the guilt was. David was guilty of other faults, but they were nothing in comparison of that; yet even that being repented of, though it be mentioned for warning to others, did not prevail to throw him out of the covenant, nor to cut off the entail of the promise upon his seed.

## <sup><115></sup>1 KINGS 15:9-24

### ASA'S REIGN

We have here a short account of the reign of Asa; we shall find a more copious history of it 2 Chronicles 14, 15, and 16. Here is,

**I.** The length of it: *He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem*, v. 10. In the account we have of the kings of Judah we find the number of the good kings and the bad ones nearly equal; but then we may observe, to our comfort, that the reign of the good kings was generally long, but that of the bad kings short, the consideration of which will make the state of God's church not altogether so bad within that period as it appears at first sight. Length of days is in Wisdom's right hand. *Honour thy father*, much more thy heavenly Father, *that thy days may be long*.

**II.** The general good character of it (v. 11): *Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord*, and that is right indeed which is so in God's eyes; those are approved whom he commends. He did *as did David his father*, kept close to God, and to his instituted worship, was hearty and zealous

for that, which gave him this honourable character, that he was like David, though he was not a prophet, or psalmist, as David was. If we come up to the graces of those that have gone before us it will be our praise with God, though we come short of their gifts. Asa was like David, though he was neither such a conqueror nor such an author; for *his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days* (v. 14), that is, he was both cordial and constant in his religion. What he did for God he was sincere in, steady and uniform, and did it from a good principle, with a single eye to the glory of God.

**III.** The particular instances of Asa's piety. His times were times of reformation. For,

**1.** He removed that which was evil. There reformation begins; and a great deal of work of that kind his hand found to do. For, though it was but twenty years after the death of Solomon that he began to reign, yet very gross corruption had spread far and taken deep root. 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? Then he proceeded against idolatry: *He removed all the idols*, even those *that his father had made*, v. 12. His father having made them, he was the more concerned to remove them, that he might cut off the entail of the curse, and prevent the visiting of that iniquity upon him and his. Nay (which redounds much to his honour, and shows his heart was perfect with God), when he found idolatry in the court, he rooted it out thence, v. 13. When it appeared that Maachah his mother, or rather his grandmother (but called his *mother* because she had the educating of him in his childhood), had an idol in a grove, though she was his mother, his grandmother, — though, it is likely, she had a particular fondness for it, — though, being old, she could not live long to patronise it, — though she kept it for her own use only, yet he would by no means connive at her idolatry.

Reformation must begin at home. Bad practices will never be suppressed in the country while they are supported in the court. Asa, in every thing else, will honour and respect his mother; he loves her well, but he loves God better, and (like the Levite, <sup>(1633)</sup>Deuteronomy 33:9) readily forgets the relation when it comes in competition with his duty. If she be an idolater,

**(1.)** Her idol shall be destroyed, publicly exposed to contempt, defaced, and burnt to ashes *by the brook Kidron*, on which, it is probable, he strewed the ashes, in imitation of Moses (<sup>(1271)</sup>Exodus 32:20) and in token

of his detestation of idolatry and his indignation at it wherever he found it. Let no remains of a court-idol appear.

**(2.)** She shall be deposed, He removed her from being queen, or from the queen, that is, from conversing with his wife; he banished her from the court, and confined her to an obscure and private life. Those that have power are happy when thus they have hearts to use it well.

**2.** He re-established that which was good (v. 15): He *brought into the house of God the dedicated things* which he himself had vowed out of the spoils of the Ethiopians he had conquered, and which his father had vowed, but lived not to bring in pursuant to his vow. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well, not only cast away the idols of our iniquity, but dedicate ourselves and our all to God's honour and glory. When those who, in their infancy, were by baptism devoted to God, make it their own act and deed to join themselves to him and vigorously employ themselves in his service, this is bringing in the dedicated things which they and their fathers have dedicated: it is necessary justice — rendering to God the things that are his.

**VI.** The policy of his reign. He built cities himself, to encourage the increase of his people (v. 23) and to invite others to him by the conveniences of habitation; and he was very zealous to hinder Baasha from building Ramah, because he designed it for the cutting off of communication between his people and Jerusalem and to hinder those who in obedience to God would come to worship there. An enemy must by no means be suffered to fortify a frontier town.

**V.** The faults of his reign. In both the things for which he was praised he was found defective. The fairest characters are not without some *but* or other in them.

**1.** Did he take away the idols? That was well; *but the high places were not removed* (v. 14); therein his reformation fell short. He removed all images which were rivals with the true God or false representations of him; but the altars which were set up in high places, and to which those sacrifices were brought which should have been offered on the altar in the temple, those he suffered to stand, thinking there was no great harm in them, they having been used by good men before the temple was built, and being loth to disoblige the people, who had a kindness to them and were wedded to them both by custom and convenience; whereas in Judah and Benjamin, the

only tribes under Asa's government which lay so near Jerusalem and the altars there, there was less pretence for them than in those tribes which lay more remote. They were against the law, which obliged them to worship *at one place*, <sup><621></sup>Deuteronomy 12:11. They lessened men's esteem of the temple and the altars there, and were an open gap for idolatry to enter in at, while the people were so much addicted to it. It was not well that Asa, when his hand was in, did not remove these. *Nevertheless his heart was perfect with the Lord*. This affords us a comfortable note, That those may be found honest and upright with God, and be accepted of him, who yet, in some instances, come short of doing the good they might and should do. The perfection which is made the indispensable condition of the new covenant is not to be understood of sinlessness (then we were all undone), but sincerity.

**2.** Did he bring in the dedicated things? That was well; but he afterwards alienated the dedicated things, when he took the gold and silver out of the house of God and sent them as a bribe to Benhadad, to hire him to break his league with Baasha, and, by making an inroad upon his country, to give him a diversion from the building of Ramah, v. 18, 19. Here he sinned,

**(1.)** In tempting Benhadad to break his league, and so to violate the public faith. If he did wrong in doing it, as certainly he did, Asa did wrong in persuading him to do it.

**(2.)** In that he could not trust God, who had done so much for him, to free him out of this strait, without using such indirect means to help himself.

**(3.)** In taking the gold out of the treasury of the temple, which was not to be made use of but on extraordinary occasions. The project succeeded. Benhadad made a descent upon the land of Israel, which obliged Baasha to retire with his whole force from Ramah (v. 20, 21), which gave Asa a fair opportunity to demolish his works there, and the timber and stones served him for the building of some cities of his own, v. 22. But, though the design prospered, we find it was displeasing to God; and though Asa valued himself upon the policy of it, and promised himself that it would effectually secure his peace, he was told by the prophet that he had done foolishly, and that *thenceforth he should have wars*; see <sup><4467></sup>2 Chronicles 16:7-9.

**VI.** The troubles of his reign. For the most part he prospered; but,

**1.** Baasha king of Israel was a very troublesome neighbour to him. He reigned twenty-four years, and all his days had war, more or less, with Asa, v. 16. This was the effect of the division of the kingdoms, that they were continually vexing one another, and so weakened one another, which made them both an easier prey to the common enemy.

**2.** In his old age he was himself afflicted with the gout: He was *diseased in his feet*, which made him less fit for business and peevish towards those about him.

**VII.** The conclusion of his reign. The acts of it were more largely recorded in the common history (to which reference is here had, v. 23) than in this sacred one. He reigned long, but finished at last with honour, and left his throne to a successor no way inferior to him.

## <115>1 KINGS 15:25-34

### THE REIGNS OF NADAB AND BAASHA

We are now to take a view of the miserable state of Israel, while the kingdom of Judah was happy under Asa's good government. It was threatened that they should be as *a reed shaken in the water* (<1145>1 Kings 14:15), and so they were, when, during the single reign of Asa, the government of their kingdom was in six or seven different hands, as we find in this and the following chapter. Jeroboam was upon the throne in the beginning of his reign and Ahab at the end of it, and between them were Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, and Omri, undermining and destroying one another. This they got by deserting the house both of God and of David. Here we have,

**1.** The ruin and extirpation of the family of Jeroboam, according to the word of the Lord by Ahijah. His son Nadab succeeded him. If the death of his brother Abijah had had a due influence upon him to make him religious, and the honour done him at his death had engaged him to follow his good example, his reign might have been long and glorious; but he *walked in the way of his father* (v. 26), kept up the worship of his calves, and forbade his subjects to go up to Jerusalem to worship, *sinned and made Israel to sin*, and therefore God brought ruin upon him quickly, in the second year of his reign. He was besieging Gibbethon, a city which the Philistines had taken

from the Danites, and was endeavouring to re-take it; and there, in the midst of his army, did Baasha, with others, conspire against him and kill him, (v. 27), and so little interest had he in the affections of his people that his army did not only not avenge his death, but chose his murderer for his successor. Whether Baasha did it upon a personal pique against Nadab, or to be avenged on the house of Jeroboam for some affront received from them, or whether under pretence of freeing his country from the tyranny of a bad prince, or whether merely from a principle of ambition, to make way for himself to the throne, does not appear; but he *slew him and reigned in his stead*, v. 28. And the first thing he did when he came to the crown was to *cut off all the house of Jeroboam*, that he might the better secure himself and his own usurped government. He thought it not enough to imprison or banish them, but he destroyed them, left not only no males (as was foretold, <sup><1140></sup>1 Kings 14:10), but none that breathed. Herein he was barbarous, but God was righteous. Jeroboam's sin was punished (v. 30); for those that provoke God do it *to their own confusion*; see <sup><2479></sup>Jeremiah 7:19. Ahijah's prophecy was accomplished (v. 29); for no word of God shall fall to the ground. Divine threatenings are not bugbears.

**2.** The elevation of Baasha. He shall be tried awhile, as Jeroboam was. Twenty-four years he reigned (v. 33), but showed that it was not from any dislike to Jeroboam's sin that he destroyed his family, but from malice and ambition; for, when he had rooted out the sinner, he himself clave to the sin, and *walked in the way of Jeroboam* (v. 34), though he had seen the end of that way; so strangely was his heart hardened with the deceitfulness of sin.