

2 Chronicles Chapter 14

Verses 14:1 – 16:14: The reign of Asa (ca. 911 to 870 B.C.; compare 1 Kings 15:9-24).

Verses 1-2: (1 Kings 15:11), says that Asa did as his forefather David had done, honoring God while building the kingdom (verses 6-8). Times of peace were used for strengthening.

2 Chronicles 14:1 "So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years."

The history of the southern kingdom is a study in contrasts: for instance, the first two kings were basically bad kings who had moments of goodness; the next two kings were basically good kings who had moments of badness.

The city of David was in Jerusalem. The son of Abijah was Asa. He was a good king, who reigned 41 years in Judah. Asa was strong in his belief of worship of the One True God. He was greatly opposed to idolatry. He even removed his grandmother as queen mother, because she had an idol. The first ten years of his reign was a time of peace.

Verses 2-3: When "Asa" took the throne of Judah after his father (Abijah), died. He determined to do "that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God". During his 41 year reign (910-869 B.C.), he sought to restore the ways of David (1 Kings 15:9-24).

2 Chronicles 14:2 "And Asa did [that which was] good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God:"

Asa was Rehoboam's grandson, and came to the throne when a young man. The two preceding reigns had favored idolatry. But the young king had a will of his own, and inaugurated a religious revolution, with which and its happy results this passage deals.

Happy they that walk by this rule. That do not only that which is right in their own eyes, or in the eyes of the world, but which is so in God's eyes. Asa saw that God's eye was always upon him, and therefore he kept his eye always upon God. Studied to approve himself to him, and endeavored in all things to please him.

He burned the idols he could find, and worshipped the True God. He restored the worship in the temple in its proper way.

Verses 3-8: During this time of peace "on every side", Asa worked hard to institute major reforms: he cleansed the kingdom of idolatry; he commanded Judah to "seek the Lord" and "to

do the law”; he constructed “fenced cities” to protect the people from mighty men of valor. This was not a time of revival; this was simply reformation during a time of peace.

Asa removed elements of false worship that had accumulated over the years of Solomon, Rehoboam, and Abijah (compare 1 Kings 15:12-13). Apparently, he did not remove all the high places or, once removed, they reappeared (compare 15:17; 1 Kings 15:14). His son Jehoshaphat later had to remove them (compare 2 Chron. 17:6), although not completely (compare 20:33). This was done in an effort to comply with (Deut. 12:2-3).

2 Chronicles 14:3 "For he took away the altars of the strange [gods], and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves:"

Or of a strange people. Of the Zidonians, Ammonites, and Moabites, which had remained from the times of Solomon, and which he built for his wives (1 Kings 11:7).

"And the high places": Built for idols. For as for those on which the true God was worshipped, they were not removed in his days (1 Kings 15:14).

"And brake down the images": Or statues, or pillars, erected to the honor of idols, and on which the images of them were placed.

"And cut down the groves": In the midst of which they stood. For “groves” (see the note on Judges 3:6-7).

It seemed that Asa's father had allowed the worship of idols along with the worship of Jehovah. The favorite place for this false worship was in the groves and the high places. The strange gods here, are speaking of false gods that strangers had brought into Judah. He established the temple as the place of worship for Judah.

2 Chronicles 14:4 "And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment."

To pray to him, and him only, and attend his worship and service. This he did by a public edict.

"And to do the law and the commandment": To observe all the laws of God, moral, ceremonial, and civil.

The keeping of the law that God had given them, was what made them different from the countries around them. God had given the twelve tribes His law to live by on the way to the Promised Land. Every time they wandered away from the law, they fell. God's blessings on them were conditional on if they kept His law and commandments.

2 Chronicles 14:5 "Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him."

Scripture records here that Asa “took away ... high places”, yet the parallel account in (1 Kings 15:14), states that he did not remove the high places. This may be a matter of chronology: at the beginning of his reign, Asa did remove the high places, but then they gradually re-emerged in Judah over the span of his reign.

The images could have been anything they could see with their physical eyes. God is a Spirit. If you can see something or someone, with your physical eyes, it is not God. Whatever these were, they were idols. Asa tore them down.

2 Chronicles 14:6 "And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest."

For his defense against the kingdom of Israel and other nations, as Rehoboam had done before him. And which might have been demolished by Shishak king of Egypt, when he took them (2 Chron. 11:5).

"For the land had rest": According to the Targum, the land of Israel rested, and gave no disturbance to the kingdom of Judah, not having recovered the blow given them by Abijah. But it is rather to be understood of the land of Judah. Which, as it did not attempt the reduction of the ten tribes, so it was neither attacked by them, nor any other enemy.

"And he had no war in those years": In the ten years mentioned (2 Chron. 14:1). Neither with Israel nor any other nation.

"Because the Lord had given him rest": That he might be at leisure to do the above things. All rest is from the Lord, civil, spiritual, and eternal.

They could turn all of their energies to building, because there was no war. God had poured out His blessing upon them, because they were obeying His law and commandments.

2 Chronicles 14:7 "Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about [them] walls, and towers, gates, and bars, [while] the land [is] yet before us; because we have sought the LORD our God, we have sought [him], and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered."

To the nobles and principal men of the kingdom.

"Let us build these cities": Which he, no doubt, particularly mentioned by name, and pointed at. That is, repair and fortify them, and put them into a better condition of defense.

"And make about them walls and towers, gates and bars": Which are always made to fortified places, to protect the inhabitants, and keep out an enemy.

"While the land is yet before us": In our power, no enemy in it, nor any to hinder or molest.

"Because we have sought the Lord our God, we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side": Had set up his pure worship, reformed abuses in it, and removed idolatry from it. And closely attended to the service of the sanctuary, which was well pleasing to God. The happy effect of which they experienced, rest from all their enemies round about them. In this context, the word "rest" carries the sense of peace.

"So that they built, and prospered": They began, and went on, and finished, there being nothing to hinder them.

One of the major reasons the other countries left them alone, was possibly because they heard what God had done to Jeroboam and his men, when they came against them. True Peace and rest comes only from God. Notice, Asa was aware the peace was here, because they sought the LORD with all their hearts.

2 Chronicles 14:8 "And Asa had an army [of men] that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these [were] mighty men of valor."

Asa had an army of 580,000 compared to Abijah's 400,000 (2 Chron. 13:3).

This has jumped to a time after the 10 years of peace. This happened after the cities were finished. Asa had a very large army of 300,000 men of Judah. He also had 280,000 of the tribe of Benjamin. These were mighty men, because their strength was in their LORD.

Verses 9-15: A major threat developed from Zerah, the Ethiopian, probably on behalf of the Egyptian Pharaoh, who was attempting to regain control as Shishak had during the days of Rehoboam (compare 2 Chron. 12:7-8; ca. 901 – 900 B.C.).

For much of Israel' history, the Ethiopians were regarded as powerful warriors; therefore, their defeat demonstrated the mighty power of God. God not only defended Judah, but also helped Asa conquer "all the cities about Gerar", located near the Egyptian border.

2 Chronicles 14:9 "And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with a host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah."

"Mareshah": Located about 8 miles southeast of Gath and 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Rehoboam had earlier reinforced this city (2 Chron. 11:8).

The Ethiopian army was 1,000,000 strong. The Ethiopian, Zerah, was known as a Cushite. Most scholars believe this army included many Egyptians who were mercenaries. The chariots were a trademark of Egyptian armies.

2 Chronicles 14:10 "Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah."

Notwithstanding he brought so great an army with him.

"And they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah": Where the Ethiopians were. He did not stay till they got further into his country, but marched against them when on the frontiers of it. And chose the valley to pitch in, as being more to the advantage of his smaller army (see Judges 1:17).

This Zephathah appears to be a long, deep valley near Philistia. Mareshah was a town of Judah near this valley. It is important to note the Ethiopians came against Judah.

2 Chronicles 14:11 "And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, [it is] nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou [art] our God; let not man prevail against thee."

Asa's appeal to God centered on God's omnipotence and reputation.

Asa's early trust in "God" is emphasized here. The battle against Zerah the Ethiopian is not recorded (in 1 Kings). Biblical Ethiopia (ancient Cush), is the modern Sudan.

This is a beautiful request of God from Asa. Asa and Judah cannot fail, because they have placed themselves in the hands of God. They knew they were outnumbered, but with God, one and God is a majority. This war was against God as much as it was against Asa and Judah. God would intervene.

2 Chronicles 14:12 "So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled." The glory for winning this battle was to be given to the LORD. He delivered Asa and Judah, and caused the Ethiopians to run in fear.

With consternation and terror; they were thrown into a panic.

"And the Ethiopians fled": Before them, just as Jeroboam and Israel had, as related in the preceding chapter (2 Chron. 13:15).

Verses 13-15: "Spoil": It appears that this great horde was a nomadic people who moved with all their possessions and had set up their camp near Gerar. The spoils of Judah's victory were immense.

2 Chronicles 14:13 "And Asa and the people that [were] with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host; and they carried away very much spoil."

“Gerar”: Approximately 8 miles south of Gaza on the Mediterranean coast. Egypt does not appear on the scene again for over 150 years (compare 2 Kings 17:4).

Asa and his men were the hands that the LORD used to win the battle, but it was the LORD who won the battle for Asa. Gerar is a Philistine city. It was Asa and his men who spoiled the Ethiopians and took many treasures home with them.

2 Chronicles 14:14 "And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of the LORD came upon them: and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them."

The cities of the Philistines, who were auxiliaries and confederates with these Ethiopians. And colonies from them, according to Theodoret, and who says, about Eleuthero-polis was a place, called in his time, Geraron Saton.

"For the fear of the Lord came upon them": So that they had no power to defend themselves, and oppose the men of Judah.

"And they spoiled all the cities": Of the goods and substance that were in them.

"For there was exceeding much spoil in them": Great wealth and riches of one kind or another.

It appears these Philistines had thrown in with these Ethiopians. They all lost together, and Asa spoiled all of the Philistine towns and cities near Gerar. It appears there was very little resistance from the Ethiopians, or the Philistines. The fear of the LORD had overcome them.

2 Chronicles 14:15 "They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem."

The people that dwelt in tents for the sake of the pasturage of their cattle; the Nomad Arabs, so called from dwelling in tents.

"And carried away sheep": Which those Arabs were feeding in Palestine, and which this great army brought with them for their support.

"And camels in abundance": Which is another circumstance proving them to be Arabs, who abounded with camels.

"And returned to Jerusalem": With their spoil, and with great joy

These were the tents of the invading army. This possibly had all of their back-up equipment. It was also full of animals possibly, to feed the million men that had come to fight. They would have no more need of these things. Asa and the men of Judah, took them as spoil of the battle.

2 Chronicles Chapter 14 Questions

1. Where was Abijah buried?
2. Who reigned in his stead?
3. What kind of king was Asa?
4. What did he do to his grandmother, that lets us know he was sincere in his belief in God?
5. Where were the favorite places to worship false gods?
6. What were the strange gods, in verse 3, speaking of?
7. What made Judah different from the heathen countries?
8. Who had God given His law to?
9. How was God's blessings conditional?
10. What can an image be?
11. If you can see something, or someone, with your physical eyes, it is not _____.
12. Why could they turn all of their energies to building?
13. Why had the lands around them left them alone?
14. How many from Judah were in Asa's army?
15. How many from Benjamin were in Asa's army?
16. How large was the Ethiopian army?
17. Where did they meet in battle?
18. Who smote the Ethiopians?
19. How far did Asa pursue them?
20. When they were overthrown, what did Asa do?
21. Where else did Asa spoil?
22. What did he take from the camp of the invading army?
23. Why were there so many animals there?