

2 Chronicles Chapter 16

2 Chronicles 16:1 "In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah."

“Six and thirtieth year”: Since Baasha (ca. 909 – 886 B.C.), died in the 26th year of Asa’s reign (compare 1 Kings 15:33), this could not mean that they were at war 10 years later. However, if the time reference was to the 35th year since the kingdom was divided, then the year is ca. 896 B.C. in the 14th year of Baasha’s reign and the 16th of Asa’s reign. This manner of reckoning was generally followed in the book of the record of the kings of Judah and Israel, the public annals of that time, from which the inspired writer drew his account (compare verse 11). This could be a cause for the defections of people from Israel to Judah as described in (2 Chron. 15:9; compare 1 Kings 15:16-17).

“Ramah”: This frontier town was on the high road about 6 miles north of Jerusalem. Because of the topography and fortification of that city, this would effectively block all traffic into Jerusalem from the north (compare 1 Kings 15:16-22).

Baasha was unhappy about the number of his people relocating to Judah, so he built the fortified city “Ramah”, about five miles north of Jerusalem. A fortified city was used to help protect a border. It usually included a large, thick wall and several towers.

Asa was a good king, who did right in the sight of the LORD. Jerusalem was in the hands of Judah, but the immediate surrounding territory such as this Ramah, belonged to Benjamin. It appears from this, that Ramah had been taken away from Benjamin by Israel. Baasha was the grandson of Jeroboam, and was just as evil as he had been. His intent in building up Ramah, was to stop traffic in or out of Judah.

Verses 2-6: Asa sinfully resorted to trusting in a pagan king, Ben-hadad, for protection against the king of Israel in contrast to:

- (1) Abijah (2 Chron. 13:2-20); and
- (2) Even earlier to his own battle against Egypt (2 Chron. 14:9:15), when they both trusted wholly in the Lord (see note on 1 Kings 15:18).

2 Chronicles 16:2 "Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,"

Ironically, Asa repeated the sin of Rehoboam and used “silver and gold out of the treasuries” of the temple to ensure protection for the “king of Syria”.

2 Chronicles 16:3 "[There is] a league between me and thee, as [there was] between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me."

“My father ... thy father”: A previously unmentioned treaty between Abijah (ca. 913 – 911 B.C.), and Tabrimmon (ca. 912 – 890 B.C.).

There was not the amount of gold and silver that there had been in the temple before. The temple had been robbed of much of its treasure in the last war. There seemed to be some however, and Asa sent this to make peace with Ben-hadad at Damascus in Syria. A league that must be bought with silver and gold is not permanent. The loyalty of Syria seemed to be with the highest bidder, whoever that might be.

2 Chronicles 16:4 "And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali."

“Ijon ... cities”: Along with the other cities mentioned, these were located north and east of the Sea of Galilee.

2 Chronicles 16:5 "And it came to pass, when Baasha heard [it], that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease."

These unexpected hostilities of his Syrian ally interrupted Baasha's fortifications at Ramah, and his death, happening soon after, prevented his resuming them.

"And it came to pass": "When Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah (1 Kings 15:21).

"And let his work cease": Baasha (like Jeroboam; 1 Kings 14:17), fixed his seat of government at Tirzah in the center of the Northern Kingdom in order to be able to watch Syria as well as Judah. The Chronicler takes no interest in the home of Baasha.

This attack on the other cities of Israel was to get Baasha out of Ramah, so that Asa could take it back. Ben-hadad made an agreement with Asa and helped Asa get his land back. Baasha had to go home and protect his own cities from destruction. He had no time to try to take Asa's cities.

2 Chronicles 16:6 "Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah."

“Geba ... Mizpah”: Located two miles north northeast and two miles east of Ramah respectively.

It appears that Baasha had left in such a hurry, he left his building materials behind. Asa built Ramah up, and then built Geba and Mizpah as fortresses to ward off another attack from Judah's enemies.

Verses 7-12: Apparently, Asa forgot the lessons he had learned earlier in his reign (14:9-13; 15:2). Since he did not heed the warning of the prophet but became angry instead, it is not so surprising that he didn't rely on the Lord when he was sick.

2 Chronicles 16:7 "And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand."

"Hanani": God used this prophet to rebuke Asa:

- (1) For his wicked appropriation of temple treasures devoted to God to purchase power; and
- (2) For his faithless dependence on a pagan king instead of the Lord, in contrast to before when opposed by Egypt (2 Chron. 14:9-15).

"The host of the king of Syria escaped": Asa forfeited by this sin the opportunity of gaining victory not only over Israel, but also Aram, or Syria. This could have been a greater victory than over the Ethiopians, which would have deprived Syria of any future successful attacks on Judah. Though God had delivered them when they were outnumbered (13:3; 14:9), the king showed his own spiritual decline both in lack of trust and in his treatment of the prophet of God who spoke truth (verse 10).

Because "Asa" hired an Aramean king to relieve the pressures put on his northern frontier by the Israelite king Baasha (verses 1-6), he is rebuked by God's prophet. For his breach of trust Asa is faced with judgment (verse 9). The episode marked a turning point in Asa's spiritual decline, during which he persecuted the godly "Hanani". Asa was to die in shame (verses 12-15).

God did not want His people looking for help from the heathen kings. He was their help. Hanani, the seer was the father of Jehu. God had intended to give the Syrians into the hands of Judah. Now Asa had stopped that by making an alliance.

2 Chronicles 16:8 "Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand."

They were no less than 1,000,000 men, and three hundred chariots (2 Chron. 14:9). The Lubim were the Libyans, a people near Egypt, that dwelt in Africa. According to an Arabic writer, they were the Nubians:

"Yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand": And with equal ease could and would have delivered the Syrian army unto him, had he as then trusted in the Lord.

God was reminding Asa that it was not important how large the army was that came against Judah. God had been with them before, when they had been greatly outnumbered, and would have been with them again. They needed to cry out to God, not to the Syrians. God was their very present help. They did not need earthly help.

2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of [them] whose heart [is] perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."

"Behalf of them ... heart ... perfect toward him" (see note on 15:2).

"Thou shalt have wars": Divine judgement on the king's faithfulness.

God was disappointed and angry with the decision they had made without consulting Him. If their hearts had been right with God, He would have protected them from all of their foes. They were placing their faith in the arm of man, instead of in their LORD. He would allow the wars to come upon them, to teach them where their true source of help was.

Verses 10-12: During Asa's last 6 years, he uncharacteristically exhibited the ungodly behavior of:

- (1) Anger at truth (verse 10);
- (2) Oppression of God's prophet and people (verse 10); and
- (3) Seeking man not God (verse 12).

2 Chronicles 16:10 "Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for [he was] in a rage with him because of this [thing]. And Asa oppressed [some] of the people the same time."

For this faithful reproof of him, which was another instance of his sin and folly.

"And put him in a prison house": In a very strait place, in which he could not turn himself, what we call "little ease". Some say it was the stocks, others a wooden framework he put him into.

"For he was in a rage with him because of this thing": His passion rose very high, and to which he gave way, and was his infirmity. Thus, instead of turning to God in repentance, he disdained the admonition of the prophet, and punished him. As the wicked do when they are told of their faults.

"And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time": By fines and imprisonments, such as perhaps expressed their disapprobation of his league with the king of Syria, and of his ill usage of the prophet.

Asa did not want to believe what the seer had said. He classified him as a false prophet, and threw him in prison. The people who Asa oppressed had probably agreed with the seer. Their oppression was for not siding in with their king.

2 Chronicles 16:11 "And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they [are] written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel."

"The book of the kings of Judah and Israel": The mention in that verse of his "might" or "prowess," and of "the cities that he built," confirms the account in (2 Chron. 14), concerning his defensive measures and the invasion of Zerah.

1 Kings 15:23 "The rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet".

We did read a great deal about Asa (in the book of Kings, chapter 15), in the Bible. This is possibly speaking of some additional record books.

2 Chronicles 16:12 "And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease [was] exceeding [great]: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians."

"Thirty and ninth year": Ca. 872 B.C. He died because of what may have been severe gangrene.

This is a help to all of us who have an illness in our body. God wants to be consulted about every aspect of our lives. This indicates, had Asa prayed to God, he would have been healed. We see in this that Asa depended more in the flesh of mankind, than he did in the One who was Creator of that flesh. God created us, so He is perfectly capable of helping His creation in their troubles.

2 Chronicles 16:13 "And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign."

"One and fortieth year" (ca. 870 B.C.; see 1 Kings 15:10).

Asa made some mistakes, as we all do, but over-all he was thought of as a good king. He did restore worship in Judah, and he did destroy the idols. His weakness lay in the fact that he trusted strong earthly leaders.

2 Chronicles 16:14 "And they buried him in his own sepulchers, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and divers kinds [of spices] prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him."

"Great burning": Due to the longevity of his reign and his notable accomplishments, Asa was honored by the people in their memorial of his death. Cremation was rarely used by the Hebrews

(compare 21:19; 1 Sam. 31:13; Amos 6:10). Later, Jehoram was not honored by fire (21:19), because of his shameful reign.

It appears that he prepared a room where he could be buried in his bed. It was very much like the mausoleums of our day. He was not in a coffin, but in his bed in a sealed room. The "burning" was possibly the spices and perfumes to cover the odor of the decaying body.

2 Chronicles Chapter 16 Questions

1. Who came against Judah to build Ramah?
2. _____ was the grandson of Jeroboam.
3. What did Asa take out of the temple, to give to the king of Syria?
4. Why was he to give him the things of the temple?
5. Who had there been a league between before, that caused Asa to want this league?
6. Who was king of Syria?
7. Where was he staying?
8. What did Ben-hadad do on the behalf of Asa?
9. What did Baasha immediately do?
10. What did Asa do with the building materials, that Baasha left in Ramah?
11. What were Geba and Mizpah?
12. What was the name of the seer that came to Asa?
13. What message did he bring Asa from God?
14. Hanani was the father of _____.
15. What victory did God remind Asa of?
16. Who is God constantly watching to help?
17. What punishment would come to Asa for this mistake?
18. What did Asa do with the seer?
19. Why did he do the same thing to some of the people?

20. Where are more of the acts of Asa written?
21. What disease did Asa have in his 39th year as king?
22. Who did he seek for help?
23. When did Asa die?
24. What was he buried in?
25. What was the "burning" spoken of in verse 14?