

## Blood Money: Asa

Lenten Midweek #2 – 03/01/23 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: 2 Chronicles 14:1-7; 16:1-13 Past. Keith Besel

### **Introduction**

✘ Last week we began our consideration of the good kings of Judah with a look at the great King David. Tonight we skip a few kings in Jesus' lineage, including Solomon, and continue with David's great-great-grandson, King Asa.

➔ In verse two our text we read, "Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God". This is in stark contrast to Rehoboam, Solomon's son, the grandfather of Asa. 2 Chronicles 12:14 tells us that Rehoboam "did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the LORD".

➔ You see, the kingdom of God's people had become divided into Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Though they should have been united, these two kingdoms were in constant conflict. On top of that, Egypt had come up from the south to make war with Judah. So during the time that Asa's father, Abijah was king, there was no rest; no peace in the land God had given them. 1 Kings 15:3 tells us that Abijah "walked in all the sins that his father (Rehoboam) did ... and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God".

✘ So Asa ascended to the throne in a very difficult time. Yet the first verse of our text begins by saying, "The land had rest for ten years". Asa told the people why in verse seven, because "We have sought [the LORD], and He has given us peace on every side". Those 10 years of peace must have seemed like an eternity for the Judeans after struggling so long to gain and retain the Promised Land.

➔ But let's be clear, as Asa said, peace did not come from Asa's strength or even his faithfulness. It was a gift from the Lord. Then after the 10 years of peace, an army of a million Ethiopians and Libyans came up against Judah. This was twice the size of Judah's army, yet King Asa cried to the LORD in chapter 14:11, "We rely on You," he said. And the LORD gave them a great victory.

### **I. After peace, Asa is challenged**

✘ However, after 35 years of ruling, Asa faced a new challenge. Israel, the Northern Kingdom, while in conflict with Judah, had not been confrontational to this point. But now they were gathering their military at the border. Baasha, the king of Israel, was building a fortress at Ramah, the border city. Chapter 16:1 tells us that the point of this was to "permit no one to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah". In other words, Baasha's goal was to put a roadblock to any travel or trade in and out of Judah.

➔ This was a problem because a major source of Judah's wealth was trade from the Mesopotamian region of the Tigris and Euphrates to the Northeast, and the Hittite region to the north that went through Judah to get to Egypt and Africa to the south. So, this was a major act of war, and Asa would not stand for it.

### **II. Asa used the temple money**

✘ Looking at it from a distance we might expect that a "good" king of Judah would turn to God for help in this crisis. I mean, hadn't the LORD decimated a million-man army of Ethiopians and Libyans already? Yes!

➔ Well, Asa did turn to the temple, the place of God's presence. But, did he go there to seek the Lord in prayer? Did he go to seek atonement for his sins? Did he go to hear the Word of God for direction? Any, and all of these would be what a faithful king would, and should do.

- ✘ But no! He went to raid God's house! 16:2 says, he "took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the LORD". This guy looted the very temple Solomon had built, on the land David bought.
  - ➔ He robbed God's house to bribe Ben-hadad of Syria. Now, Syria was neutral in the ongoing cold war, but Asa wanted to get Ben-hadad in Damascus to break his covenant of peace with the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
  - ➔ So basically, King Asa hired foreign mercenaries to distract Israel by attacking them from the north, forcing Israel to stop their military build-up on the southern border and go to protect Israel's northern region. In essence, Asa turned the temple treasury into blood money, buying off the lives of his enemies.
- ✘ And Asa got what he wanted. The Syrians attacked Israel; raiding her northern cities and forcing King Baasha to abandon Ramah. But even though Asa's evil plot worked, all was still not well in Judah.
  - ➔ This plot did not sit well with God, because instead of turning to the LORD for protection, Asa bought protection from a pagan king. When Hanani, the prophet came to call the king back to God, instead of repenting, Asa threw the prophet in prison! (v.10) Hanani told Asa that God would have given him victory over Israel and Syria if only the king had asked in faith. But sadly, in the last five years of his reign, King Asa grew even more hostile to the Word of God; inflicting his people with cruelties.
- ✘ So, as a physical sign of his rejection toward God, Asa suffered from a debilitating disease in his feet. Verse 16:12 says, "Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians". Talk about "adding insult to injury". Asa gave up his good practices of seeking God and relying upon Him for all that he and his people needed in body and soul, and he died with a big question mark regarding his eternal outcome.
  - ➔ And now, King Asa is an important example recorded in Scripture for all of us to learn. Yes, Asa's reign was good and prosperous. For 36 years it was a time of peace and faithfulness in Judah's history. And yet Asa was not the reason for that lasting peace. Apart from God he couldn't even survive a foot disease. So, we see here how easily success, peace, and rest can corrupt the heart of a King.
  - ➔ But look, the same can happen with us. Earthly success can become a stumbling block that leads us to trust in ourselves and our own resources when trouble comes, instead of God.

### **III. Asa's descendent gave His life for money**

- ✘ Why turn to God in times of trouble or difficulty? Because God will stop at nothing to provide rest and peace for His people. If we are to have the peace of God, we need someone much greater than an earthly king or ruler to acquire it. We need a king who can lead us into the paths of righteousness.
  - ➔ And guess what? We have just such a king; the One God promised to David as his son, who would reign forever. Isaiah told us that this king; this "Son" would be "the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).
- ✘ This Son; this descendant of Asa would come into the royal city and bring peace to His people. Matthew 8:17 tells us that first He would take our illnesses and bear our diseases.
  - ➔ And then on Palm Sunday, this "Son of David" and King of Israel came! He came into the temple during Holy Week. But unlike Asa, Jesus didn't come for the money! In fact, the last thing He wanted was for money to be an issue at all in the temple. Yet it had become that and more. The temple was more of a market for buying and selling animals for sacrifice than it was

a place for worship and prayer toward God. So Jesus turned over the tables and poured out the coins. This totally upset and angered the priests and elders who relied on that money to maintain their status. They had turned the house of God; the house of prayer, into “a den of robbers” (Mat. 21:13). So Jesus came to cleanse it of that corrupting influence,

- ✘ While this “Son of Asa” sat at the treasury with His disciples, Jesus’ focus was not on the wealthy men giving donations, but instead upon one poor widow. She had no power or pretense. Yet in giving all that she owned, which was nothing compared to the wealthy, Jesus said that she was the wealthiest tither of all. Jesus saw past the money and the treasures of the temple, to the real purpose of God’s holy house – forgiveness and peace with God Himself.

→ And yet the guardians of the temple treasury; the Jewish leaders were so easily tempted by silver and gold that they actually sought to use the treasury to do away with this One who had come as their rightful King. For a pittance; a mere thirty pieces of the temple’s silver, they bought the life of Jesus; this descendant of Asa.

→ The Pharisees payed Judas to break his covenant with his Lord, in order to give Him over to the pagan governor, Pontius Pilate. Oh, how the tables had turned! Judas even came to see the horror that his betrayal brought and he tried to return the money. But the Jews refused it. They knew that it was now blood money. They knew it would corrupt God’s temple, even though they and the rest of the perverted leaders in the temple had already done so.

- ✘ But in the end, man’s corruption and sin did not – and could not thwart God’s holy purposes. Jesus, the Son of David, had come and would be the King of Jerusalem; making it the city of peace.

→ Yes, the blood money from the temple treasury sent The King to be crucified, but it is that bloody sacrifice that bought redemption and forgiveness; that paid the price for eternal peace between us and our perfect God!

#### **IV. Asa’s descendent gives peace to His people.**

- ✘ Money cannot buy that peace. All of the money in the temple or in all of Jerusalem or in all of the world could never buy or bring that peace. Neither is the peace that you and I need, about making up with our hostile neighbor – as good as that is for us to try and achieve. No, the peace we need above all else; down into the core of our entire being, is peace with God; the One whom we have constantly pushed to the side; the One we have rebelled against every day and even turned our backs on at times.

→ And you and I friends; we can never earn or buy or obtain that peace by any of our efforts or thoughts or attempts. King Jesus is the only avenue; the only way. He’s the One who came to gain, and then give us the victory over sin and death...freely by His grace. It is His shed blood alone that brings us peace.

- ✘ And His peace does not last just ten or 35 years as it did with King Asa. Jesus’ gift of peace is for eternity! Hebrews, chapter four, tells us that in Christ Jesus, we have an eternal Sabbath rest as the people of God.

→ It is a peace that we already have, in part, through God’s grace in our Baptism; a peace that is ours in its fullest upon Christ’s return and our entrance before His heavenly throne. It is a peace upon which we can rely 100%, for it is the gift and promise of peace from God’s Son, the King of kings Himself...from Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen.