

KING ASA'S REFORM WORK

– *AUGUST 22. – 2 CHRONICLES 15:1-15. –*

KING SOLOMON'S GREAT-GRANDSON – ADVERSE INFLUENCE OF THE TEN-TRIBE KINGDOM – KING ASA'S OVERTHROW OF IDOLATRY – EGYPTIAN INVASION REPULSED – A GREAT NATIONAL REVIVAL – IDOLS OF BRONZE, WOOD, STONE, PEN AND INK – THE GOD OF THE CREEDS – NEED OF AN ASA TODAY – NEED OF ANOTHER SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT – HELP COMING THROUGH THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM.

**"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."
– James 4:8.**

ASA, king of Judah, was the great-grandson of King Solomon. The spirit of worldliness which occupied the latter part of Solomon's reign, and which led to the split-off of the ten tribes under Rehoboam his son, met with some measure of check during King Asa's reign. When the ten-tribe kingdom, called Israel, revolted and went into idolatry, the influence affected the kingdom of Judah to some extent. It became partially idolatrous. Images of Baal and groves for the practise of the licentious orgies of his worship grew in numbers in Judah, until King Asa's time. As a reformer, he set about the overthrow of all the idolatrous worship and the substitution of the true religion of the God of Israel, inaugurated by Moses and the Law Covenant. We know not the influence operating upon King Asa to take a course so different from that of his father and his grandfather, but perhaps he was learning lessons from the experiences of his people.

His first endeavors to obliterate idolatry seem to have been only partially effective. He next turned his attention to the

fortifying of his own country. Then came a great war with the Egyptian invader, Zerah, with an immense host, one million strong, with three hundred iron chariots. They came upon the kingdom of Judah from the south, and their numbers and reputed strength made them a terror. They sought for spoils.

Under these circumstances the Lord's message to King Asa, through Azariah the Prophet, was especially welcome. The Prophet pointed out the adversities of the ten tribes as being because they were without the true God, without the Law, without the teaching priests. They had gotten into an anarchous condition, with no peace to anybody; and yet the Lord had helped even them, in proportion as they at any time had turned to Him. God had always shown His willingness to let those who so desired be in harmony with Him, and to bless them. King Asa had manifested such a disposition; and now he had the encouraging message, "Be strong and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded."

This message encouraged the king to put away further the idolatries and to renew the altar of the Lord's House. As a consequence, he had the support of the most godly people of his own land; and, furthermore, there came to his support many from the ten-tribe kingdom who still respected God and His promises. They were glad to get away to a place where the great God was worshiped.

God blessed King Asa and his people in their repulse of the invasion of Zerah and his hosts. The spirit of reverence for God was greatly increased. The people were in a religious mood, and a great national awakening along religious lines followed. They entered into a covenant with the Lord that all opposed to God should be put to death. "And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought Him with their whole desire; and He was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about."

THE LESSON'S IMPORT TO US

We have a double interest in this lesson. First, it is a scrap of ancient history which reveals to us God's care over His people and His willingness to be found of them when they sought Him, even though they and their forefathers had for a time been disloyal. Second, applying the lesson to our day, we see the people everywhere in idolatry – not only the heathen, who worship before idols of bronze and wood and stone, but also the more civilized, who have set up creed idols. These latter, printed with ink upon paper, describe the character of God in terms equally repulsive with the idols of the heathen. The true God is little known, the God of love, "the God of all grace, the Father of all mercies," "from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift."

Our creed idols represent God as a great monster, a demon. They picture God as sitting down before the creation of the world and deliberately planning for the creation of our race, with foreknowledge and intention that nearly all should spend eternity in horrible torture at the hands of fire-proof devils. They picture the Church as the elect class, taken to Heaven, to look over the battlements of Heaven and witness the horrible sufferings of all the heathen and all the Jews, because they rejected Christ, and the sufferings also of nearly all of Christian lands, because they did not become saintly under the preaching of the Gospel.

These horrible idols are no longer respected by the more intelligent; but they are still recognized, bowed down to and worshiped by the masses. The true God is still proportionately rejected and unknown to the people. They are indeed told that He is a God of love, at the same time that they are told that He is roasting thousands of millions, and knew about their present sufferings and premeditated the same from before the foundation of the world. All talk about His Justice and His Love is thus discounted in advance; and the people, bound by ignorance and

superstition to these idols, which are centuries old, are suffering from their ignorance.

We need today an Asa to arise and, encouraged by the promises of God, to break in pieces the great creed idols of Christendom and to liberate the people from bondage to them. He should have the support of all the **[R5734 : page 222]** God-fearing people, as King Asa had. In proportion as the idols and their worship would cease, the repair of the true altar of God would progress, and many would rejoice to present their bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, in His service. (Romans 12:1,2.) Not by physical force, nor by cruelty, nor by literal axes, would these great creed idols be destroyed, but by the presentation of the Word of the living God. In proportion as the Bible comes to be rightly understood, the follies of the creeds and their unscripturalness will more and more be appreciated.

TRUE COVENANTERS, ALL OF US

The account of how the people of Judah and Benjamin, the most religious people of that time, bound themselves with an oath, or covenant, to God is very interesting. It reminds us of a similar religious movement in Scotland, in which some of God's people swore allegiance to Him to the best of their knowledge, and signed the covenant with their own blood.

The day has come for other covenanters to come forward and to enter into a covenant with God that they will be loyal to Him and to His Word, and that they will put away the creed idols. We have greater knowledge today **[R5734 : page 223]** than had the covenanters of Scotland; but Christian people need to have their spirit of full consecration, full devotion to God. We have much more knowledge than had the people of Judah, but we need to have their spirit for destroying the idols and entering into a covenant with the Lord to be faithful to Him. Such a company of consecrated ones, covenanters in the highest sense, enlightened as we have the

privilege of being enlightened today, would be a mighty force, a mighty power.

Many look sympathetically at such a statement, yet have not the courage of their convictions. They are timid, fearful and – shall we say it? – hypocritical. Many forget that, in joining any church, its creed is endorsed publicly; and that a private denial of it does not annul their obligations. Many forget the Master's words, "His servants ye are to whom ye render service."

Many say, "We do not believe the creeds; but they are popular, and we will support them." They do this because to take any other position would be to come into conflict with some of the wise and great and rich, who, although they do not believe the creeds themselves, seem interested in maintaining them as shackles upon the masses of the people. Under these conditions we are not to expect any general reform nor to think that those faithful to the Lord will be approved before men. We are, however, to expect that when Messiah's Kingdom shall be fully established the faithful ones will be His associates in the Kingdom, which will then take full control and fully overthrow the entire system of error which has bound the world of mankind with shackles of ignorance and superstition lo, these many years, and which has kept the people from God, in that they cannot love or from the heart obey the One who is represented to them as a merciless God and an all-powerful Adversary.

=====