

39 2Chronicles 14-15

Last week we ended with Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, who, unlike his father Rehoboam, sought the Lord and was blessed during his reign over God's people.

Jeroboam, the king of the tribes of the North, known as Israel, as in distinction to the southern kingdom of Judah, ruled by Abijah, planned to attack the southern kingdom. And in God's grace the Lord gave Jeroboam the opportunity to humble himself and realign himself to Judah. But Jeroboam decided to war against Judah.

As we saw last week .. **2 Chronicles 13:15-18** ¹⁵ Then the men of Judah raised a war cry, and when the men of Judah raised the war cry, then it was that God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. ¹⁶ When the sons of Israel fled before Judah, God gave them into their hand. ¹⁷ Abijah and his people defeated them with a great slaughter, so that 500,000 chosen men of Israel fell slain. ¹⁸ Thus the sons of Israel were subdued at that time, and the sons of Judah conquered because they trusted in the LORD, the God of their fathers.

And so it was that because of the salt covenant that God made with David that the kingdom was meant to reside in the hands of David's descendants and on the throne of Jerusalem.

When God lays out the rules they are meant to be followed.

And so, all of the days of Abijah come to an end and he dies and his son Asa will now rule over Judah.

2 Chronicles 14:1-5 ^{NAU} So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David, and his son Asa became king in his place. The land was undisturbed for ten years during his days. ² Asa did good and right in the sight of the LORD his God, ³ for he removed the foreign altars and high places, tore down the *sacred* pillars, cut down the Asherim, ⁴ and commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment. ⁵ He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. And the kingdom was undisturbed under him.

If you read this closely you'll notice something very interesting about Abijah and his son Asa.

According to verse 2 what was attributed to Asa?

He did good and right in the sight of the Lord his God.

If you go back to the beginning of chapter 13, particularly verses 10-11, what are we told about Abijah?

2 Chronicles 13:10-11 ¹⁰ "But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the sons of Aaron are ministering to the LORD as priests, and the Levites attend to their work. ¹¹ "Every morning and evening they burn to the LORD burnt offerings and fragrant incense, and the showbread is *set* on the clean table, and the golden lampstand with its lamps is *ready* to light every evening; for we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but you have forsaken Him.

This is in context to Abijah acknowledging that Jeroboam has actually removed the priests of God and replaced them with priests like that of the pagans.

2 Chronicles 13:9 ⁹ "Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the peoples of *other* lands? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams, even he may become a priest of *what are* no gods.

And so, it is very apparent that Abijah has done those things that continue the worship of the one true God. But unlike his son Asa, of whom we are told he did good and right in the sight of the Lord, no such mention is made of Abijah doing good and right in the sight of the Lord.

Why the distinction?

2 Chronicles 14:2-5 ² Asa did good and right in the sight of the LORD his God, ³ for he removed the foreign altars and high places, tore down the *sacred* pillars, cut down the Asherim, ⁴ and commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment. ⁵ He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. And the kingdom was undisturbed under him.

If Asa had to remove from Judah the foreign altars, the high places, the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherim, which is a Phoenician goddess, how could Abijah then say to Jeroboam that they have not forsaken the Lord?

Again, the context makes it clear. Technically Judah had not forsaken the Lord's command to continue the sacrificial system with the priests that God had set up to serve in the temple, unlike what Jeroboam had done.

What Abijah had failed to mention is that while they continued the worship system that God had set up, he either looked the other way, or simply ignored the other pagan practices that were going on in Judah.

If he had done what Asa was doing it is very likely that God would have said of Abijah that he did right in the sight of the Lord. Instead, that designation of him is conspicuously missing.

So, what Asa does is to go beyond just obeying part of the law related to the outward worship of God in the sacrificial system, but he obeys the entire law that also includes such details as, you will have no other gods before Me.

Asa realizes that partial obedience is not really to honor God the way in which He desires to be honored.

From a political standpoint how might this affect his rule among many in Judah?

It may not have made him very popular but his eyes were not on the polls of men but on the power of God. And so, he could say along with Joshua, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.

How does this same problem of partial obedience creep up in the church today especially when many a leader says that we are serving the Lord as we go forth with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Many are in fact acknowledging the gospel of Jesus Christ as their confessions of faith state it on their web pages. But many of those same leaders, though they may not shout it from the roof tops, are subtly adopting the false teachings of the pagans in the form of New Age teachings, user friendly approaches to church, and in some cases are adopting teachings of the Roman Catholic church.

On the one hand they can, like Abijah, say **2 Chronicles 13:10** ¹⁰
"But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken Him;

And yet it is quite clear that like Abijah the Lord could not say of him or of many leaders today, he did right in the sight of the Lord.

It's very easy to acknowledge the truth of who God is and yet not take that truth to its final outcome by not simply saying yes to certain aspects of the truth but also saying no to those things that dishonor God.

And in the final analysis it's usually a political reason as to why a leader will not say "no" to such abominations.

Those reasons usually involve such things as wanting to be liked by everybody; wanting to continue to have influence in their circle of friends and often times it involves the reality that if you don't give the people what they want and tickle their ears with what they want to hear they may leave your church and the money dries up.

Like Abijah, it's one thing to say that we follow the Lord, it's another thing for the Lord Himself to say of you that he did right in the sight of the Lord.

What side do you want to fall on? is what we need to ask ourselves. We can be religious and yet not please God and if you think Abijah is the only one to fall into that trap try a N.T. church by the name of Pergamum.

Revelation 2:12-16 ¹² "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: ¹³ 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit *acts of* immorality. ¹⁵ 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

Those in Pergamum did not deny the faith and yet they did teach those things that could cause God's people to stumble. And the Lord holds no punches when He says that unless they repent He will come quickly and make war against them with the sword of His mouth.

Another church that seemed to be zealous for the Lord was Ephesus.

Revelation 2:1-5 ^{NAU} "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ² 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them *to be* false; ³ and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. ⁴ 'But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent.

It certainly looks as though the Ephesians were zealous for God and that they would not tolerate evil and have not grown weary but simply being zealous for God does not always equate with loving God.

How is that possible?

Being zealous for God is a good thing, but our zealousness still needs to be in the context of the loving the Lord with all our heart, souls and minds.

What invariably happens to the gospel of Jesus Christ when our love for the Lord grows cold or our teachings include things that cause God's people to stumble?

Invariably the gospel is tainted and its message of truth that includes sin and a need for a Savior turns to a message of how to win friends and influence people. It becomes a message that strips the power of the gospel with an altered message that is meant to simply appeal to the widest audience possible by watering down the truth of God's word.

And so, Jesus Christ is no longer a rock of offense but a throw pillow to be trampled by anyone who doesn't like the message of the cross.

And if you don't think there are "Christians" out there who feel that way let me just remind you that there are many in the "Church" who have said some amazing things about Christ and His word who claim they are Christian.

Let me give you just a couple of quotes from a man who still identifies himself as a Christian but certainly does not endorse the biblical Jesus.

"Moreover, an atonement theology that says God sacrifices his own son in place of humans who needed to be punished for their sins might make some Christians love Jesus, but it is an obscene picture of God. It is almost heavenly child abuse, and may infect our imagination at more earthly levels as well. I do not want to express my faith through a theology that pictures God demanding blood sacrifices in order to be reconciled to us."

John Dominic Crossman

"My point, once again, is not that those ancient people told literal stories and we are now smart enough to take them symbolically, but that they told them symbolically and we are now dumb enough to take them literally."

— John Dominic Crossan, *Who Is Jesus? Answers to Your Questions About the Historical Jesus*

From the web site goodreads.com we read the world's perspective on people like John Dominic Crossman.

"John Dominic Crossman is generally regarded as the leading historical Jesus scholar in the world. He is the author of several best selling books, including *The Historical Jesus*, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, *The Birth of Christianity*, and *Who Killed Jesus?* He lives in Clermont, Florida."

From the Wikipedia website we read this of John Crossman, again seen by the world as the leading scholar on the life of Jesus.

Crossan maintains the Gospels were never intended to be taken literally by their authors. He argues that the meaning of the story is the real issue, not whether a particular story about Jesus is history or parable. He proposes that it is historically probable that, like all but one known victim of crucifixion, Jesus' body was scavenged by animals rather than being placed in a tomb.^[4] Crossman believes in [vision hypothesis](#) "resurrection" by faith but holds that bodily resuscitation was never contemplated by early Christians.

John Crossman is not a Christian and doesn't pretend to be an orthodox Christian. Rather he is a false teacher who has borrowed the Word of God and then declared it is not God's word to further his view that religion, especially the Christian religion, is a device

of zealots who are not willing to admit to fictional stories when they see them. And yet, when you see stories of the life of Jesus on channels like the History Channel, Discovery Channel or National Geographic channel, all of which have “unbiased documentaries” regarding the life of Christ, it is people like John Dominic Crossman who will actually show up to be the expert on the subject.

But trust me there are many “Evangelicals” who acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior who, by their lax attitude regarding the word of God, in essence deny the power of the gospel even though they can quote John 3:16 and many others.

Asa didn't simply acknowledge the truth by talking about it, he acknowledged the truth with his actions. In that sense the truth that faith without works is dead, is very true.

Therefore, as **2 Chronicles 14:3-5** notes ³ “...he removed the foreign altars and high places, tore down the *sacred* pillars, cut down the Asherim, ⁴ and commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment. ⁵ He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. And the kingdom was undisturbed under him.

As a result the Lord blessed Asa and yet Asa did not entirely remove all of the abominations from the land at once. In chapter 15 Asa is visited by a prophet of God and told this.

2 Chronicles 15:1-2 ^{NAU} Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded, ² and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the LORD is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.

2 Chronicles 15:7 ⁷ "But you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work."

2 Chronicles 15:8-19 ⁸ Now when Asa heard these words and the prophecy which Azariah the son of Oded the prophet spoke, he took courage and removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. He then restored the altar of the LORD which was in front of the porch of the LORD. ⁹ He gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who resided with them, for many defected to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with

him. ¹⁰ So they assembled at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign. ¹¹ They sacrificed to the LORD that day 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep from the spoil they had brought. ¹² They entered into the covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and soul; ¹³ and whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman. ¹⁴ Moreover, they made an oath to the LORD with a loud voice, with shouting, with trumpets and with horns. ¹⁵ All Judah rejoiced concerning the oath, for they had sworn with their whole heart and had sought Him earnestly, and He let them find Him. So the LORD gave them rest on every side. ¹⁶ He also removed Maacah, the mother of King Asa, from the *position of* queen mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah, and Asa cut down her horrid image, crushed *it* and burned *it* at the brook Kidron. ¹⁷ But the high places were not removed from Israel; nevertheless Asa's heart was blameless all his days. ¹⁸ He brought into the house of God the dedicated things of his father and his own dedicated things: silver and gold and utensils. ¹⁹ And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.

We'll pick up here next time.