

Lessons from the Hebrew Kings #4: Getting Ready for Great Trials

Last time we looked at the story of king Asa as he was invaded by a million Ethiopians, and how he and the people called upon, and received, a great deliverance from God.

Today we will back up to 14:1-7, the previous 10-year period in which Asa and Judah enjoyed peace. It says Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord (14:2). We can learn from what happened during that time, and apply it to our own lives. What should we do when everything is going (relatively) well, to make sure that we are not caught unprepared in the evil day? We sometimes live too optimistically, and think that good times will necessarily continue indefinitely. This can be true as individuals, employees, churches, or countries.

Prov. 30:25 – “The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in summer.”

Prov. 27:12 – “A prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.”

Prov. 27:23-4 – “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever; and doth the crown endure to every generation?”

What are the steps Asa took, and how could that apply to us?

1. **Clear out anything that is evil:** He did away with heathen practices of idolatry (high places and altars of strange gods, broke down the images and cut down the groves) 2 Chr. 14:3 and 5

We must examine ourselves and see if we have allowed anything into our lives that is unclean or idolatrous. What are we watching on the TV or internet? What is on our bookshelves, and in our minds?

Ac. 19:19 – “Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

Rom. 12:2 – “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

How can we know what is in our hearts that needs cleansing? Listen to our mouths – Mt. 12:33-37

2. **Consecration and obedience:** Asa commanded Judah to seek the Lord and to do the law and the commandments (14:4)

This is not a step to be taken after the step above, but at the same time. It is not a matter merely of throwing away trashy items, but cutting away the attraction they have had in our hearts. You could throw away a stash of pornography but still have unclean spirits in your life that are driving and motivating you.

We must set our hearts toward the Lord, and seek him, asking him to reveal himself to us, and to expose everything in our hearts that is in any way displeasing to him. If we seek him, he will be found.

In Asa's day, “doing the commandments” simply meant obedience to the law of Moses. We are now no longer in bondage to that law which could never save us, but are living under “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” that has made us free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). Now any one who thinks that frees us to live in sin or disobedience does not know the truth, but what is our obedience? Not the keeping of OT laws and regulations, but living in the Spirit and allowing him to work his holiness in us.

Jesus gave us many statements on obedience:

Mt. 6:21 – “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

Mic. 6:8 – “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

Lk. 6:46 – “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

Jn. 14:15, 21-24 – “If ye love me, keep my commandments. ... He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ... If a man love me, he will keep my words: ... He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings ...” See also Jn. 15:10, 14

This then begs the question, what are Jesus' commandments?

Jn. 15:12 – "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

Jn. 15:17 – "These things I command you, that ye love one another." (also 13:34-35)

But to be more general, we are to keep everything Jesus taught in the gospels (especially the "sermon on the mount"). We should be living in those gospels, not to come up with a "checklist" of Jesus' commands, but to be conforming to the spirit of those teachings, to abide in the Vine, to become LIKE him.

If we call ourselves Christians but make no serious attempt to obey him and to be like him, then we are deluding ourselves, and are "taking (bearing) the name of the Lord in vain".

1 Jn. 1:6 – "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth"

1 Jn. 2:3-6 – "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ... He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

If we are not doing what we see in the Word, we may find out too late that we are some of the five "foolish virgins" of Mt. 25, to whom Jesus at his coming will say, "I know you not".

3. **Practical preparations:** Asa built fenced cities in Judah. We also should be taking practical steps to prepare for the future. We don't know exactly what is coming, but it is pretty hard to miss that hard times may be coming. That is why there is currently a surge in gun-buying, largely by first-time gun-buyers. People who never felt a strong need or desire for weapons are suddenly buying. It is not because they want to hunt or target shoot, but because the wackos are wanting to get rid of police departments and empty the prisons. People are genuinely and justifiably afraid for their lives, especially in large Democrat-run cities.

Practical preparations could include

- getting out of debt
- keeping a significant store of cash, canned goods, water, ammo, etc.
- having a generator and non-electric sources of heat and fresh water
- establishing multiple methods of contact with family and friends (are you relying of fakebook?)
- stopping listening to the mainstream "news" media – they are enemies of the country, and of Christianity.
- removing your children from Marxist indoctrination in the public schools and universities

Spiritual preparations can include

- fasting
- prayer
- living in the Word (Bible)
- living in communion with God
- dispassionate, critical self-examination, to see whether we are really in the faith, or mere pretenders

Jesus lived ready. He never had to say, "Wow, this is a hard and unexpected case. Let me go fast and pray before I deal with this." He lived prayed-up.

One last thing to bear in mind is that the Ethiopian invasion was not a judgment for anything done in those 10 years of peace. During that time it appears that Asa did everything right. Nevertheless, God allowed it to come upon them. As a result he was glorified in the victory, and taught Asa and the Judeans (and us) a valuable lesson in faith and trust in our onnipotent God.

This lesson and almost all previous, including audio recordings, can be found at <https://hnslack.wixsite.com/mysite>, now made readable on cell phones.