

December 21

Scriptures: Read 2 Kings 15 & 16

Key Verse: “He did what was right in the sight of the Lord.” (2 Kings 15:3)

Overview

While reading of the many Israelite kings who did evil in the sight of the Lord, it is refreshing to read of the kings of Judah that did right in His sight. Among those was Joash, who began to reign when he was only seven and brought a revival to the Southern Kingdom (11:21; 12:2). Then there was his son Amaziah, Amaziah’s son Azariah (15:3; alternate name is “Uzziah”), and Azariah’s son Jotham (15:34). They did what was right, yet still fell short of the righteousness of their forefather David, with whom the kings of Judah are often compared. (14:3).

Sadly, after so many generations of doing right in the sight of the Lord, Jotham’s son Ahaz “did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God, as his father David had done” (16:2). It was at that time that Judah was threatened by the alliance of Syria and Israel. Ahaz reached the epitome of wickedness when he “made his son pass through the fire”. This means he sacrificed his son to a god, probably a Canaanite deity, in an attempt to gain the help of this god in his warfare with Syria and Israel (like Mesha of Moab, 13:1). This abomination was one of the reasons God has judged the Canaanites and ordered them exterminated. Ahaz corrupted the worship of God through syncretism — combining it with idolatrous practices — even within the Temple of the Lord. He mutilated the sacred objects of the Temple and replaced the bronze altar with a new one patterned after an impressive pagan altar he had seen in Damascus while visiting the powerful Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser.

The kings of Israel were all wicked and idolatrous. Judah had a lasting dynasty of the house of David, just as the Lord had promised. But Israel had a number of different dynasties, many assassinations, and constant usurpers of the throne. The political situation was always in turmoil with much civil strife and external problems. The Lord had told Jeroboam, the first king of Israel after the kingdom was divided, that if he was obedient to Him, He would create for him a lasting dynasty (11:38). Unfortunately, he deliberately and presumptuously disobeyed God and started making problems for Israel. This same Jeroboam is the one with whom the kings of Israel are compared (15:9, 18, 24, 28). He was the first in a line of many that sinned and caused Israel to sin.

In chapter 15, we see a fulfillment of the prophecy of the Lord: Jehu had thoroughly executed God’s plan of judgment upon Ahab’s family. He eradicated Baalism from Israel but did not obey God’s laws, continuing to allow the calf-worship of Jeroboam. God therefore told him that his dynasty would only continue to the fourth generation (10:30). Just as God had spoken, Zachariah, Jehu’s great-grandson, was the last of his line to sit on the throne of Israel, for he was conspired against and murdered after a reign of only six months (15:8-12).

In the judgment of God for Israel’s sins, the rising superpower of Assyria began to exert itself in the world. They conquered the northern part of Israel and even took some Israelites away as captives (15:29), just as Moses had warned would happen for Israel’s disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:64). But the worst was yet to come, for Israel was unrepentant.

Prayer

Lord, we see that the sins of the parents are visited on the children. Help us to so live that our children will be blessed of You.