

Who was King Asa in the Bible?

Asa was a descendant of David and the third king of the southern kingdom of Judah. He ruled for forty-one years (1 Kings 15:10) and “did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God” (2 Chronicles 14:2). The biblical account of Asa’s reign is detailed in 1 Kings 15 and 2 Chronicles 14-16.

Asa became king of Judah in the twentieth year of Jeroboam of Israel’s reign (Jeroboam was the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel after the kingdom divided). Asa’s father, Abijah, had done much evil in God’s sight and only ruled for three years. Asa’s grandfather, Rehoboam, had also done evil in God’s sight. But King Asa instituted reform; he removed the male shrine prostitutes, cut down Asherah poles, and even deposed his grandmother from her position as queen mother because of her involvement with Asherah worship (1 Kings 15:12-13; 2 Chronicles 14:3; 15:16). Asa also commanded his people to follow the Lord (2 Chronicles 14:4). First Kings 15:14 says, “Although he did not remove the high places, Asa’s heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life” (see also 2 Chronicles 15:17).

Judah was at peace with surrounding nations for ten years during Asa’s reign (2 Chronicles 14:1). Second Chronicles 15 describes a time when Azariah, a prophet, told Asa that, if he sought the Lord, God would be with him. This encouraged Asa to remove idols and to repair the altar at the Lord’s temple. He assembled the people together to sacrifice to the Lord: “They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul. All who would not seek the Lord, the God of Israel, were to be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman. They took an oath to the Lord with loud acclamation, with shouting and with trumpets and horns. All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought God

eagerly, and he was found by them. So the Lord gave them rest on every side” (2 Chronicles 15:12-15).

Asa built up the fortified cities, and Judah enjoyed a time of prosperity (2 Chronicles 14:6-7). When Zerah the Cushite marched out to make war against Judah, Asa called on God for aid. “The Lord struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled, and Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar. Such a great number of Cushites fell that they could not recover; they were crushed before the Lord and his forces. The men of Judah carried off a large amount of plunder” (2 Chronicles 14:12-13).

Unfortunately, in the thirty-fifth year of Asa’s reign, he made some mistakes. When King Baasha of Israel fortified Ramah so as to isolate the territory of Judah, Asa made a treaty with Ben-Hadad, king of Aram. The treaty was effective in stopping Israel, and the Judahites took supplies from Ramah and built up Geba and Mizpah, but the treaty with Aram was not pleasing to God (see 1 Kings 15:16-22; 2 Chronicles 16:1-10). Hanani, the seer, visited Asa and reminded him of the way God had conquered the Cushites. He chastised Asa for relying on Ben-Hadad instead of God. Rather than repent of his sin, however, Asa became angry; at the same time he began to oppress some of his people (2 Chronicles 16:10). For the remainder of Asa’s reign, his kingdom was at war.

In the thirty-ninth year of Asa’s reign, he got a severe foot disease, but he looked only to the physicians for help and not God (2 Chronicles 16:12). In the forty-first year of his reign, Asa died and was buried with great honor.

Despite a less-than-ideal end to his reign, Asa is considered a godly and good king. His son, Jehoshaphat, succeeded him and ruled for twenty-five years. Jehoshaphat was also a

godly ruler, following in his father's footsteps and seeking the Lord, yet he also made foolish alliances with those who did not follow the Lord (2 Chronicles 19:1-3; 20:31-33, 20:35-21:1). The life of King Asa is an example to all of us of how easy it is to drift away from the Lord. Asa began his reign with a strong commitment to God, but as years went by his dedication faltered, bringing unnecessary trouble.