

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August**

**A Lamp in Jerusalem**

**1 Kings 15:1-24**

### **Abijah King of Judah**

**15** In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijah became king of Judah, <sup>2</sup> and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother's name was Maakah daughter of Abishalom.

<sup>3</sup> He committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been. <sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong. <sup>5</sup> For David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not failed to keep any of the LORD's commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.

<sup>6</sup> There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam throughout Abijah's lifetime. <sup>7</sup> As for the other events of Abijah's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. <sup>8</sup> And Abijah rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. And Asa his son succeeded him as king.

### **Asa King of Judah**

<sup>9</sup> In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of Judah, <sup>10</sup> and he reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years. His grandmother's name was Maakah daughter of Abishalom.

<sup>11</sup> Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done. <sup>12</sup> He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his ancestors had made. <sup>13</sup> He even deposed his grandmother Maakah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for the worship of Asherah. Asa cut it down and burned it in the Kidron Valley. <sup>14</sup> Although he did not remove the high places, Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life. <sup>15</sup> He brought into the temple of the LORD the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated.

<sup>16</sup> There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their reigns. <sup>17</sup> Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah.

<sup>18</sup> Asa then took all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the LORD's temple and of his own palace. He entrusted it to his officials and sent them to Ben-Hadad son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, the king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. <sup>19</sup> "Let there be a treaty between me and you," he said, "as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you a gift of silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me."

<sup>20</sup> Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maakah and all Kinnereth in addition to Naphtali. <sup>21</sup> When Baasha heard this, he stopped building Ramah and withdrew to Tirzah. <sup>22</sup> Then King Asa issued an order to all Judah—no one was exempt—and they carried away from Ramah the stones and timber Baasha had been using there. With them King Asa built up Geba in Benjamin, and also Mizpah.

<sup>23</sup> As for all the other events of Asa's reign, all his achievements, all he did and the cities he built, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? In his old age, however, his feet became diseased. <sup>24</sup> Then Asa rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the city of his father David. And Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king.

## **Romans 1:18-27**

### **God's Wrath Against Sinful Humanity**

<sup>18</sup> The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup> since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his

eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. <sup>25</sup> They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

<sup>26</sup> Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. <sup>27</sup> In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

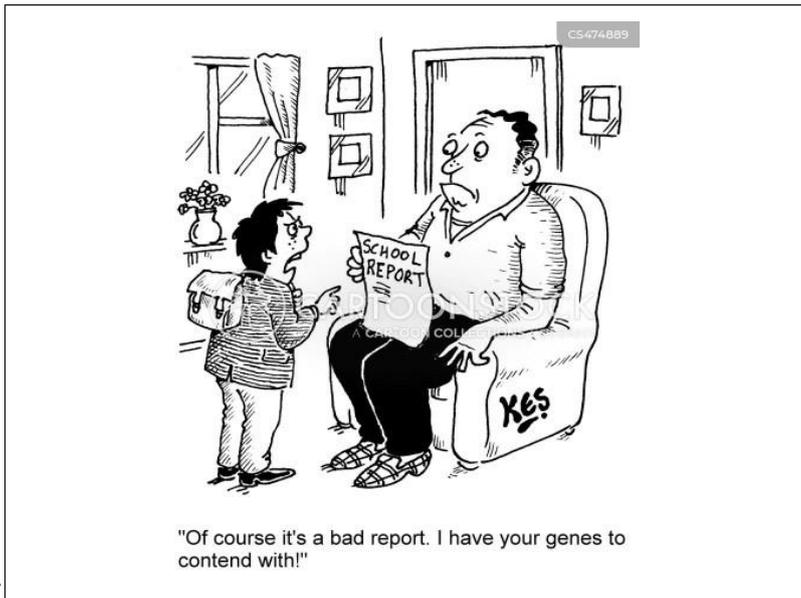
## Sermon: A Lamp in Jerusalem

[Turn your Bibles to 1 Kings 15 – pray before we begin]

### Intro/Context (1 King 15:1-2)

They say *'the apple doesn't fall far from the tree'*

[Slide 1]



They say *'like father, like son'*

But do we have to repeat the mistakes of our parents?

Do our genes necessarily dictate how we behave?

Don't we have a choice in how we behave?

Don't we have a choice about which role models we follow?

(pause)

We **pick up** the story in **1 Kings 15** – and let's just get the **context**

[Slide 2-Map]



We are dealing with the **Southern Kingdom of Israel** – which consists of **2 tribes** – **Judah** and **Benjamin** – the Southern Kingdom is also known simply as Judah

Last week we looked at the **behaviour of King Rehoboam**. He was the **first King of Judah** – once the Kingdom of Israel was divided into North and South.

Rehoboam's worship of God was **corrupt** and he allowed the **worship of other foreign false gods and idols**.

Did King Rehoboam have to be like that?

Who were his role models?

Well - King **Rehoboam's father** was King **Solomon** – who – as we said last week had **700 wives and 300 concubines** – most of whom were **foreign wives who worshipped foreign gods** and corrupted Solomon's worship of God.

Whereas King Rehoboam's grandfather, King **David**, never worshipped any foreign gods and faithfully worshipped the one true God of Israel.

If only King Rehoboam had followed the worship practices of his grandfather, King **David**.

We finished chapter 14 last week with **Rehoboam dying** and being succeeded by his son Abijah (aka Abijam)

I wonder which role model Abijah will follow - as we hit **chapter 15 and verse 1**

At the time Abijah became King of Judah – we're also told who is the current King in the **Northern Kingdom** – who is Jeroboam.

This can become confusing unless we realise that the writer from now on – until the end of the book – is going to **give us parallel histories** of the Kings of both kingdoms – and hops from one kingdom to the other – and always telling us who's ruling in the north and south at any given time.

We're told in v2 – that **Abijah only reigned 3 years** (which doesn't bode well)

And we're given his **mother's name as Maakah** – which will become important as we'll see.

The question is will Abijah (aka Abijam) be a bad king or a good king?

(pause)

### Bad King, Good King

#### King Abijah (1 Kings 15:3, 6-8)

Immediately we get the answer in v3

**Abijah committed all the sins his father [Rehoboam] had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been.**

**Abijah unfortunately followed his father's bad example** – instead of the good example of his great-grandfather, David.

The summary of Abijah's reign is brief – see vv6-8

There was **constant war** between the Northern Kingdom ruled by Jeroboam and the Southern Kingdom ruled first by Rehoboam and then his son Abijah. Then after his short 3-year reign, Abijah died and was **succeeded by his son, Asa**.

Application:

It's worth asking ourselves – whose example are we following – and are they modelling godly behaviour?

And it's also worth asking ourselves – what legacy and model are we leaving for the next generation? Are we setting a godly model to follow?

(pause)

### King Asa (1 Kings 15:9-24)

Now we turn our attention to **King Asa**.

Will he be a bad king or a good king?

[Slide 3-Asa]

**King Asa's reforms**

- Reigned 41 years
- Did what was right in the eyes of the Lord
- Removed shrine prostitutes
- Removed idols from the land
- Deposed his grandmother for false worship



As Asa becomes King in v9 – we're **told** in verse 10 he **reigned a long time 41 years** – which **sounds positive** already

And even better still – in **v11** - we find out **Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord**

AND Asa followed the example of his great great grandfather, David!

And we see **Asa made** some **major worship reforms**:

V12 – he **got rid of male** (and possible female) **shrine prostitutes** from the land – and got rid of all idols that his ancestors had made

V13 – And to show he was fair-dinkum – **Asa** even sorted out the false worship in his own royal household – and **deposed his own grandmother** [[Maakah mentioned in v2](#)] for making a repulsive image of the false goddess, Asherah. **Asa** made no exceptions or concessions for his family – everyone had to follow God’s commands! How would it be if the minister of the church parked in the ‘disabled spot’ or ‘no parking spot’ in the carpark? What message does that give?

### Application

Are we fair dinkum about our worship of God – are we prepared to get rid of the idols in our lives – that are taking our focus off worshipping God and are we **making Him our priority?**

Are we prepared to dump the behaviour in our lives that is contrary to God’s word?

The number one complaint non-Christian’s have about Christians - is their hypocritical behaviour? **Mahatma Gandhi** famously said “If it weren’t for Christians, I’d be a Christian” he said this after being refused entry into a church in Calcutta because he was not white and not a high-caste Indian!

(pause)

Because of King Asa’s return to faithful and proper worship – we see God’s hand upon the reign of King Asa in vv16 to 24

[Slide 4-Asa’s Reign]

**King Asa’s reign**



- War with Baasha of Israel
- Baasha prevents anyone leaving Judah by fortifying Ramah
- Asa pays Ben-Hadad of Aram to cause diversion in North
- Then Asa and people of Judah plunder Baasha’s building materials and fortify around Jerusalem
- Asa succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat

- There was a **war between King Asa and King Baasha of Israel** [*and don't panic that we don't know anything about King Baasha of Israel – we'll find out about him later in this chapter – which we'll read about next week*]
- **Baasha prevents anyone leaving Judah by fortifying the city of Ramah on the border of the Southern and Northern Kingdom** – this **effectively blocked the main route from the Southern Kingdom of Judah to the Northern Kingdom of Israel** – **and also blocked main route west to the coast; basically isolating Judah.**
- So - Asa does a deal with King Ben-Hadad of Aram [*Aram is to the north of the Northern Kingdom – in modern day Syria*] – **Asa pays Ben-Hadad a lot of silver and gold - to cause a diversion in the Northern part of the Northern Kingdom** – **so Baasha has to abandon his building projects at Ramah**
- **Meanwhile Asa and the people of Judah plunder Baasha's building materials and use these materials to fortify the cities of Geba and Mizpah around Jerusalem** – **to strengthen their border with the Northern Kingdom**
- Then **after 41 years, Asa is succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat**

We shouldn't overlook a couple of negatives in Asa's reign though – **he did bribe Ben-Hadad of Aram and encouraged Ben-Hadad to break his existing treaty with Baasha of Israel, in order to help Asa.**

The **Bible** always shows us warts and all – and we're meant to learn from the warts!  
 Nevertheless, what a comparison between Abijah (a bad king) and his son, Asa (a good king).

Like last week – we could say – well **this was all 3000 years ago** – it's got very little to do with us today?

But remember, God is the same today, yesterday and forever.

**He does not approve of ungodly behaviour – whether it's 3000 years ago or whether it's today!**

To see what God thinks of ungodly behaviour – [let's turn to our NT reading](#) – from Romans 1:18-27

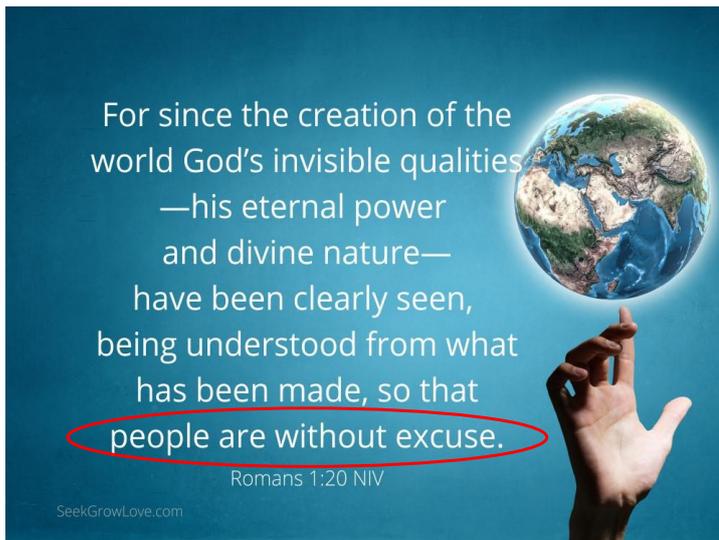
**People are without excuse** (Romans 1:18-27)

And the **Apostle Paul tells us in v18** that -

**God's wrath (or anger) is against ALL godlessness and wickedness – and against those who suppress the truth by their wickedness.**

Paul goes on to say that people are without any excuse (end of v20)

[Slide 5-Without excuse]



**Because – God has revealed [\[aka general revelation\]](#) His invisible qualities and His eternal power and divine nature to us – through His creation (v19)**

**What Paul means is – as we look around us – it's **obvious** that there is a **Divine creator** who created everything and controls everything.**

**Creation** is not an **accident** and not a **coincidence**.

Paul goes on to say that God has revealed enough of who He is - so that - **people can know Him (v21) & have a relationship with Him – & worship Him as the one true God.**

But (still in v21) instead of glorifying God and giving Him thanks – people's hearts were foolish – even though they thought they were wise (v22) – and foolishly they **replaced worshipping the immortal God with the worship of mortal beings and birds, animals and reptiles.**

And **God is a polite God** – if we thumb our nose at Him – then Paul says (v24) – **God gives people over to the sinful desires of their hearts** – and to sinful desires such as sexual impurity which Rehoboam's reign was full of – and Paul says people even abandon the truth of God for lies (v25) – by worshipping and serving created things (idols and images) rather than worshipping the Creator!

Paul says this giving over to their sinful desires culminated in shameful and unnatural sexual relations (vv26-27).

If we think about it - even though Paul wrote this 2000 years ago – **He could have easily written it about the world we live in today!**

We're living in nation where many people worship idols (including themselves) and where there is gross sexual immorality!

But Paul's point is – whether it's **3000 or 2000 years ago or today**

**People are without excuse** – we have the evidence of God all around us – we have God's Word and God's commandments in our hot little hands – we cannot claim ignorance

**God's anger (wrath) will pour out on this sin and rebellion.**

What a mess our nation – our world – is in?

(pause)

**God's Grace – a Lamp in Jerusalem** (1 Kings 15:4-5)

**Praise God** – as always – **He is a gracious God**

In amongst 1 Kings 15:1-24 – there is a light in the dark tunnel of sin

Look at 1 Kings 15 - v4

[Slide 6a-Lamp]

It says: *Nevertheless, for David's sake the LORD his God gave him [Abijah] a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son [Asa] to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong.*

In amongst the sins of King Abijah – we see **God gives a lamp in Jerusalem**

In Jewish culture – a **lamp given by God** – is symbolic of the family line continuing – it's like the family line's lamp keeps burning – so if the lamp goes out – the family line is finished.

**God offers grace** and He says - **Abijah's family line (lamp) will keep burning with a son (who is Asa).**

Why does God offer grace here?

We're told – **FOR THE SAKE of David** –

**God had promised King David** (back in 2 Samuel 7) that **His Kingdom would last forever**.

**And God NEVER breaks His promises**

V5 goes on to explain – why David found favour with God – and it's because David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands all the days of his life- with one exception given though – **David sinned with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed. Although we know from 2 Samuel and earlier in 1 Kings – David – just like us - **was far from sinless** – yet we also know David had a heart for God – and always repented when confronted or convicted of his sin – **Psalm 51 is a good example of sincere and heartfelt repentance.****

So, it's fair to say - the **Kingdom of Judah survives** – not just because of David's faithfulness to God – but also more importantly because of God's faithfulness to David and to His promises.

Don't we pray for God's promises to come about when we pray in the Lord's Prayer: *Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

(pause)

But there's another point to God's promise of a lamp in Jerusalem.

By allowing the lamp of the family line of Judah to continue burning - with Asa and the following kings of Judah – ultimately the family line of Judah leads to Jesus being born from this family line.

[Slide 6b-Jesus - light of the world]

And Jesus is the ultimate lamp – He even describes Himself as: the Light of the World (John 8:12) – the light - who calls people to come out of the darkness of their sin and rebellion against God – and come into His light – and - be forgiven of their sins. The forgiveness he offers – meant He had to sacrifice Himself on a cruel Roman cross – and take our punishment for our sin off us and on to Him.

This was only possible – because He is the perfect sinless King – unlike all the Kings we've mentioned in the Old Testament so far.

And because He's perfect – having a relationship with Him – means we get infused with His righteousness – and we're right with God and approved by God – and justified – 'just as if' we'd never sinned.

On top of that - because He didn't stay dead – but rose again 3 days after His death – He offers resurrection and eternal life in Heaven – for all who believe.

That's God's grace to us – a free gift –that we didn't earn or deserve!

Surely that deserves a response – doesn't it?

**Our Response (1 Kings 15:11-14)**

[Slide 7-heading-Response]

Clearly our first response needs to be: 'Thank You, Jesus'

But perhaps we can do more than that?

You see - **King Asa** slowed the decline of the Kingdom of Judah by returning to proper worship of God – and by removing the worship of idols and false gods.

What about us in our nation – in **Australia** - can we slow the decline in Christianity?

The number of Christians in Australia is **down to 43% of the population** and falling.

How can WE slow the decline?

I'd like to **suggest 3 things** which would make a difference:

[Slide 7a-legacy]

1. **1<sup>st</sup>** – **let's leave** the next generation a legacy – by **keeping the lamp** in our family **burning** – by keeping the light for Jesus going in our family - by modelling our love of Jesus and shining the light of Jesus– by sharing the Gospel with all who will listen. Remember - **Jesus has the keys to the doors of Heaven and Hell** (Rev 1:18; 3:7).

[Slide 7b-persevere]

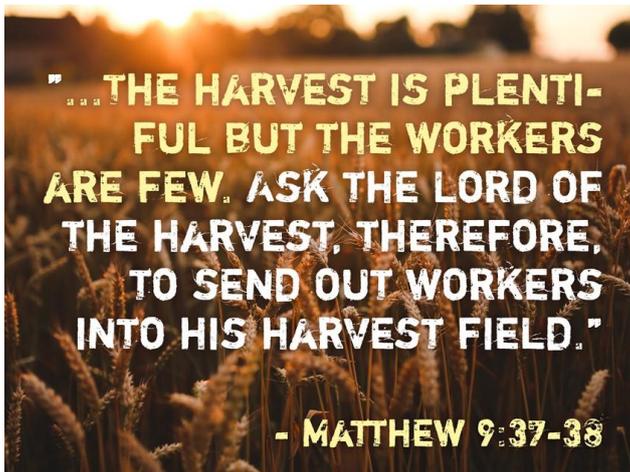
2. **2<sup>nd</sup>** -**let's persevere** in our **obedience to God's Word** – and **get rid of the idols in our lives** – so people can see – **we are fair dinkum** - and we love and obey Jesus.

[Slide 7c-revival]

3. **3<sup>rd</sup>** - Nothing short of a revival will halt the decline of Christianity in our nation and will bring more people to follow Jesus. We need to be praying for a revival – just as Jesus tells His disciples to do in Matthew 9:37-38 - and **we'll finish with this**:

[Slide 8-Harvest]

Jesus says: *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*



Let's pray...

*Father God, thank you for always keeping your promises.*

*Thank you that you kept the family line of Judah going – by sending your Son, Jesus, the perfect priest and King, and the perfect sacrifice to forgive us our sins. Help us to leave a legacy of following, knowing and loving Jesus. Help us to persevere in obedience to your commands; and help us to be faithful in prayer; praying to you, the Lord of the Harvest, to send our workers in your harvest field to spread the Gospel. In Jesus name. Amen.*

### **Benediction (Revelation 3:11)**

<sup>11</sup>I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.