

CHAPTER 14

The kingdom being divided into that of Judah and that of Israel, we must henceforward, in these books of Kings, expect and attend their separate history, the succession of their kings, and the affairs of their kingdoms, accounted for distinctly. In this chapter we have,

I. The prophecy of the destruction of Jeroboam's house (v. 7-16). The sickness of his child was the occasion of it (v. 1-6), and the death of his child the earnest of it (v. 17, 18), together with the conclusion of his reign (v. 19, 20).

II. The history of the declension and diminution of Rehoboam's house and kingdom (v. 21-28) and the conclusion of his reign (v. 29-31). In both we may read the mischievous consequences of sin and the calamities it brings on kingdoms and families.

<1144> 1 KINGS 14:1-6

ABIJAH'S SICKNESS

How Jeroboam persisted in his contempt of God and religion we read in the close of the foregoing chapter. Here we are told how God proceeded in his controversy with him; for when God judges he will overcome, and sinners shall either bend or break before him.

I. His child fell sick, v. 1. It is probable that he was his eldest son, and heir-apparent to the crown; for at his death all the kingdom went into mourning for him, 1 Kings 13. His dignity as a prince, his age as a young prince, and his interest in heaven as a pious prince, could not exempt him from sickness, dangerous sickness. Let none be secure of the continuance of their health, but improve it, while it continues, for the best purposes. Lord, *behold, he whom thou lovest*, thy favourite, he whom Israel loves, their darling, *is sick*. *At that time*, when Jeroboam prostituted the profaned the priesthood (<1133> 1 Kings 13:33), his child sickened. When sickness comes into our families we should enquire whether there be not some

particular sin harboured in our houses, which the affliction is sent to convince us of and reclaim us from.

II. He sent his wife in disguise to enquire of Ahijah the prophet *what should become of the child*, v. 2, 3. The sickness of his child touched him in a tender part. The withering of this branch of the family would, perhaps, be as sore an affliction to him as the withering of that branch of his body, ~~1110B~~ 1 Kings 13:4. Such is the force of natural affection; our children are ourselves but once removed. Now,

1. Jeroboam's great desire, under this affliction, is to know *what shall become of the child*, whether he will live or die.

(1.) It would have been more prudent if he had desired to know what means they should use for the recovery of the child, what they should give him, and what they should do to him; but by this instance, and those of Ahaziah (~~1100P~~ 2 Kings 1:2) and Benhadad (~~1108B~~ 2 Kings 8:8), it should seem they had then such a foolish notion of fatality as took them off from all use of means; for, if they were sure the patient would live, they thought means needless; if he would die, they thought them useless; not considering that duty is ours, events are God's, and that he that ordained the end ordained the means. Why should a prophet be desired to show that which a little time will show?

(2.) It would have been more pious if he had desired to know wherefore God contended with him, had begged the prophet's prayers, and cast away his idols from him; then the child might have been restored to him, as his hand was. But most people would rather be told their fortune than their faults or their duty.

2. That he might know the child's doom, he sent to Ahijah the prophet, who lived obscurely and neglected in Shiloh, blind through age, yet still blest with the visions of the Almighty, which need not bodily eyes, but are rather favoured by the want of them, the eyes of the mind being then most intent and least diverted. Jeroboam sent not to him for advice about the setting up of his calves, or the consecrating of his priests, but had recourse to him in his distress, when the gods he served could give him no relief. *Lord, in trouble have those visited thee* who before slighted thee. Some have by sickness been reminded of their forgotten ministers and praying friends. He sent to Ahijah, because he had *told him he should be king*, v. 2. "He was once the messenger of good tidings, surely he will be so again."

Those that by sin disqualify themselves for comfort, and yet expect their ministers, because they are good men, should speak peace and comfort to them, greatly wrong both themselves and their ministers.

3. He sent his wife to enquire of the prophet, because she could best put the question without naming names, or making any other description than this, “Sir, I have a son ill; will he recover or not?” The heart of her husband safely trusted in her that she would be faithful both in delivering the message and bringing him the answer; and it seems there were none of all his counsellors in whom he could repose such a confidence; otherwise the sick child could very ill spare her, for mothers are the best nurses, and it would have been much fitter for her to have staid at home to tend him than go to Shiloh to enquire what would become of him. If she go, she must be *incognito* — *in disguise*, must change her dress, cover her face, and go by another name, not only to conceal herself from her own court and the country through which she passed (as if it were below her quality to go upon such an errand, and what she had reason to be ashamed of, as Nicodemus that came to Jesus by night, whereas it is no disparagement to the greatest to attend God's prophets), but also to conceal herself from the prophet himself, that he might only answer her question concerning her son, and not enter upon the displeasing subject of her husband's defection. Thus some people love to prescribe to their ministers, limit them to smooth things, and care not for having the *whole counsel of God declared* to them, lest it prove to prophesy *no good concerning them, but evil*. But what a strange notion had Jeroboam of God's prophet when he believed that he could and would certainly tell what would *become of the child*, and yet either could not or would not discover who was the mother! Could he see into the thick darkness of futurity, and yet not see through the thin veil of this disguise? Did Jeroboam think the God of Israel like his calves, just what he pleased? *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.*

III. God gave Ahijah notice of the approach of Jeroboam's wife, and that she came in disguise, and full instructions what to say to her (v. 5), which enabled him, as she came in at the door, to call her by her name, to her great surprise, and so to discover to all about him who she was (v. 6): *Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, why feignest thou thyself to be another?* He had no regard,

1. To her rank. She was a queen, but what was that to him, who had a message to deliver to her immediately from God, before whom all the children of men stand upon the same level? Nor,
2. To her present. It was usual for those who consulted prophets to bring them tokens of respect, which they accepted, and yet were no hirelings. She brought him a handsome country present (v. 3), but he did not think himself obliged by that to give her any finer language than the nature of her message required. Nor,
3. To her industrious concealment of herself. It is a piece of civility not to take notice of those who desire not to be taken notice of; but the prophet was no courtier, nor gave flattering titles; plain dealing is best, and she shall know, at the first word, what she has to trust to: *I am sent to thee with heavy tidings*. Note, Those who think by their disguises to hide themselves from God will be wretchedly confounded when they find themselves disappointed in the day of discovery. Sinners now appear in the garb of saints, and are taken to be such; but how will they blush and tremble when they find themselves stripped of their false colours, and are called by their own name: “Go out, thou treacherous false-hearted hypocrite. *I never knew thee. Why feignest thou thyself to be another?*” Tidings of a portion with hypocrites will be heavy tidings. God will judge men according to what they are, not according to what they seem.

1 KINGS 14:7-20

THE RUIN OF JEROBOAM'S HOUSE FORETOLD

When those that set up idols, and keep them up, go to enquire of the Lord, he determines to answer them, not according to the pretensions of their enquiry, but *according to the multitude of their idols*, ^{<340>}Ezekiel 14:4. So Jeroboam is answered here.

I. The prophet anticipates the enquiry concerning the child, and foretels the ruin of Jeroboam's house for the wickedness of it. No one else durst have carried such a message: a servant would have smothered it, but his own wife cannot be suspected of ill-will to him.

1. God calls himself the *Lord God of Israel*. Though Israel had forsaken God, God had not cast them off, nor given them a bill of divorce for their whoredoms. He is Israel's God, and therefore will take vengeance on him who did them the greatest mischief he could do them, debauched them and drew them away from God.

2. He upbraids Jeroboam with the great favour he had bestowed upon him, in making him king, exalting him from among the people, the common people, to be prince over God's chosen Israel, and taking the kingdom *from the house of David*, to bestow it upon him. Whether we keep an account of God's mercies to us or no, he does, and will set even them in order before us, if we be ungrateful, to our greater confusion; otherwise he gives and upbraids not.

3. He charges him with his impiety and apostasy, and his idolatry particularly: *Thou hast done evil above all that were before thee*, v. 9. Saul, that was rejected, never worshipped idols; Solomon did it but occasionally, in his dotage, and never made Israel to sin. Jeroboam's calves, though pretended to be set up in honour of the God of Israel, that brought *them up out of Egypt*, yet are here called *other gods*, or *strange gods*, because in them he worshipped God as the heathen worshipped their strange gods, because by them he *changed the truth of God into a lie* and represented him as altogether different from what he is, and because many of the ignorant worshippers terminated their devotion in the image, and did not at all regard the God of Israel. Though they were calves of gold, the richness of the metal was so far from making them acceptable to God that they *provoked him to anger*, designedly affronted him, under colour of pleasing him. In doing this,

(1.) He had not set David before him (v. 8): *Thou hast not been as my servant David*, who, though he had his faults and some bad ones, yet never forsook the worship of God nor grew loose nor cold to that; his faithful adherence to that gained him this honourable character, that he *followed God with all his heart*, and herein he was proposed for an example to all his successors. Those did not do well that did not do like David.

(2.) He had not *set God before him*, but (v. 9), "*Thou hast cast me behind thy back*, my law, my fear; thou hast neglected me, forgotten me, and preferred thy policies before my precepts."

4. He foretels the utter ruin of Jeroboam's house, v. 10, 11. He thought, by his idolatry, to establish his government, and by that he not only lost it, but brought destruction upon his family, the universal destruction of all the males, whether shut up or left, married or unmarried.

(1.) Shameful destruction. They shall be taken away as dung, which is loathsome and which men are glad to be rid of. He worshipped dunghill-deities, and God removed his family as a great dunghill. Noble and royal families, if wicked, are no better in God's account.

(2.) Unusual destruction. Their very dead bodies should be meat for the dogs in the street, or the birds of prey in the field, v. 11. Thus evil pursues sinners. See this fulfilled, ^{<1153>}1 Kings 15:29.

5. He foretels the immediate death of the sick child, v. 12, 13.

(1.) In mercy to him, lest, if he live, he be infected with the sin, and so involved in the ruin, of his father's house. Observe the character given of him: *In him was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.* He had an affection for the true worship of God and disliked the worship of the calves. Note,

[1.] Those are good *in whom are good things towards the Lord God of Israel*, good inclinations, good intentions, good desires, towards him.

[2.] Where there is but *some* good thing of that kind it will be found: God, who seeks it, sees it be it ever so little and is pleased with it.

[3.] A little grace goes a great way with great people. It is so rare to find princes well affected to religion that, when they are so, they are worthy of double honour.

[4.] Pious dispositions are in a peculiar manner amiable and acceptable when they are found in those that are young. The divine image in miniature has a peculiar beauty and lustre in it.

[5.] Those that are good in bad times and places shine very brightly in the eyes of God. A good child *in the house of Jeroboam* is a miracle of divine grace: to be there untainted is like being in the fiery furnace unhurt, unsinged. Observe the care taken of him: he only, of all Jeroboam's family, shall die in honour, shall be buried, and shall be lamented as one that lived desired. Note, Those that are distinguished by divine grace shall be distinguished by divine providence. This hopeful child dies first of all the

family, for God often *takes those soonest whom he loves best*. Heaven is the fittest place for them; this earth is not worthy of them.

(2.) In wrath to the family.

[1.] It was a sign the family would be ruined when *he* was taken by whom it might have been reformed. The righteous are removed from the evil to come in this world, to the good to come in a better world. It is a bad omen to a family when the best in it are buried out of it; when what was valuable is picked out the rest is for the fire.

[2.] It was likewise a present affliction to the family and kingdom, by which both ought to have been bettered; and this aggravated the affliction to the poor mother that she should not reach home time enough to see her son alive: *When thy feet enter into the city, just then the child shall die*. This was to be a sign to her of the accomplishment of the rest of the threatenings, as ~~1~~ 1 Samuel 2:34.

6. He foretels the setting up of another family to rule over Israel, v. 14. This was fulfilled in Baasha of Issachar, who conspired against Nadab the son of Jeroboam, in the second year of his reign, murdered him and all his family. "*But what? Even now*. Why do I speak of it as a thing at a distance? It is at the door. It shall be done *even now*." Sometimes God makes quick work with sinners; he did so with the house of Jeroboam. It was not twenty-four years from his first elevation to the final extirpation of his family.

7. He foretels the judgments which should come upon the people of Israel for conforming to the worship which Jeroboam had established. *If the blind lead the blind*, both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall *fall into the ditch*. It is here foretold, v. 15,

(1.) That they should never be easy, nor rightly settled in their land, but continually *shaken like a reed in the water*. After they left the house of David, the government never continued long in one family, but one undermined and destroyed another, which must needs occasion great disorders and disturbances among the people.

(2.) That they should, ere long, be totally expelled out of their land, that good land, and given up to ruin, v. 16. This was fulfilled in the captivity of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria. Families and kingdoms are ruined by sin, ruined by the wickedness of the heads of them. *Jeroboam did sin, and*

made Israel to sin. If great men do wickedly, they involve many others both in the guilt and in the snare; multitudes *follow their pernicious ways.* They go to hell with a long train, and their condemnation will be the more intolerable, for they must answer, not only for their own sins, but for the sins which others have been drawn into and kept in by their influence.

II. Jeroboam's wife has nothing to say against the word of the Lord, but she goes home with a heavy heart to their house in *Tirzah*, a *sweet delightful place*, so the name signifies, famed for its beauty, ^{<2064>}Song of Solomon 6:4. But death, which will stain its beauty and embitter all its delights, cannot be shut out from it. Hither she came, and here we leave her attending the funeral of her son, and expecting the fate of her family.

1. *The child died* (v. 17), and justly did all Israel mourn, not only for the loss of so hopeful a prince, whom they were not worthy of, but because his death plucked up the flood-gates, and made a breach, at which an inundation of judgments broke in.

2. Jeroboam himself died soon after, v. 20. It is said (^{<4130>}2 Chronicles 13:20), *The Lord struck him* with some sore disease, so that he died miserably, when he had reigned twenty-two years, and left his crown to a son who lost it, and his life too, and all the lives of his family, within two years after. For a further account of him the reader is referred to the annals of his reign, drawn up by his own secretaries, or to the public records, like those in the Tower, called here, *The Book* or register, *of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel*, to which recourse might then be had; but, not being divinely inspired, these records are long since lost.

^{<1142>}1 KINGS 14:21-31

REHOBOAM'S DISGRACE AND DEATH

Judah's story and Israel's are intermixed in this book. Jeroboam out-lived Rehoboam, four or five years, yet his history is despatched first, that the account of Rehoboam's reign may be laid together; and a sad account it is.

I. Here is no good said of the king. All the account we have of him here is,

1. That he was forty-one years old when he began to reign, by which reckoning he was born in the last year of David, and had his education, and

the forming of his mind, in the best days of Solomon; yet he lived not up to these advantages. Solomon's defection at last did more to corrupt him than his wisdom and devotion had done to give him good principles.

2. That he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, *the city where God put his name*, where he had opportunity enough to know his duty, if he had but had a heart to do it.

3. That his mother was Naamah, an Ammonitess; this is twice mentioned, v. 21, 31. It was strange that David would marry his son Solomon to an Ammonitess (for it was done while he lived), but it is probable that Solomon was in love with her, because she was *Naamah*, a *beauty* (so it signifies), and his father was loth to cross him, but it proved to have a very bad influence upon posterity. Probably she was daughter to Shobi the Ammonite, who was kind to David (~~1077~~ 2 Samuel 17:27), and David was too willing to requite him by matching his son into his family. None can imagine how lasting and how fatal the consequences may be of being unequally yoked with unbelievers.

4. That he had continual war with Jeroboam (v. 30), which could not but be a perpetual uneasiness to him.

5. That when he had reigned but seventeen years he died, and left his throne to his son. His father, and grandfather, and grandson, that reigned well, reigned long, forty years apiece. But sin often shortens men's lives and comforts.

II. Here is much evil said of the subjects, both as to their character and their condition.

1. See here how wicked and profane they were. It is a most sad account that is here given of their apostasy from God, v. 22-24. Judah, the only professing people God had in the world, *did evil in his sight*, in contempt and defiance of him and the tokens of his special presence with them; *they provoked him to jealousy*, as the adulterous wife provokes her husband by breaking the marriage-covenant. Their fathers had been bad enough, especially in the times of the judges, but they did abominable things, *above all that their fathers had done*. The magnificence of their temple, the pomp of their priesthood, and all the secular advantages with which their religion was attended, could not prevail to keep them to it. Nothing less than the *pouring out of the Spirit from on high* will keep God's Israel in their

allegiance to him. The account here given of the wickedness of the Jews agrees with that which the apostle gives of the wickedness of the Gentile world (~~102~~Romans 1:21, 24), so that both *Jew and Gentile are alike under sin*, ~~103~~Romans 3:9.

(1.) They became *vain in their imaginations* concerning God, and *changed his glory into an image*, for they built themselves *high places, images, and groves* (v. 23), profaning God's name by affixing to it their images, and God's ordinances by serving their idols with them. They foolishly fancied that they exalted God when they worshipped him on high hills and pleased him when they worshipped him under the pleasant shadow of green trees.

(2.) They were given up to vile affections (as those idolaters ~~104~~Romans 1:26, 27), for there were *sodomites in the land* (v. 24), *men with men working that which is unseemly*, and not to be thought of, much less mentioned, without abhorrence and indignation. They dishonoured God by one sin and then God left them to dishonour themselves by another. They profaned the privileges of a holy nation, therefore God gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, to imitate the abominations of the accursed Canaanites; and herein the Lord was righteous. And, when they did *like those that were cast out*, how could they expect any other than to be cast out like them?

2. See here how weak and poor they were; and this was the consequence of the former. Sin exposes, impoverishes, and weakens any people. Shishak, king of Egypt, came against them, and so far, either by force or surrender, made himself master of Jerusalem itself that he took away the treasures both of the temple and of the exchequer, of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, which David and Solomon had amassed, v. 25, 26. These, it is likely, tempted him to make his descent; and, to save the rest, Rehoboam perhaps tamely surrendered them, as Ahab, ~~105~~1 Kings 20:4. He also took away the golden shields that were made but in his father's time, v. 26. These the king of Egypt carried off as trophies of his victory; and, instead of them, Rehoboam made brazen shields, which the life-guard carried before him when he went to church in state, v. 27, 28. This was an emblem of the diminution of his glory. Sin makes the gold become dim, changes the most fine gold, and turns it into brass. We commend Rehoboam for going to *the house of the Lord*, perhaps the oftener for the rebuke he had been under, and do not condemn him for going in pomp.

Great men should honour God with their honour, and then they are themselves most honoured by it.