

CHAPTER 14

This chapter continues the history of the succession in the kingdoms both of Judah and Israel.

I. In the kingdom of Judah here is,

- 1.** The entire history (as much as is recorded in this book) of Amaziah's reign
 - (1.)** His good character (v. 1-4).
 - (2.)** The justice he executed on the murderers of his father (v. 5, 6).
 - (3.)** His victory over the Edomites (v. 7).
 - (4.)** His war with Joash, and his defeat in that war (v. 8-14).
 - (5.)** His fall, as last, by a conspiracy against him (v. 17-20).
- 2.** The beginning of the history of Azariah (v. 21, 22).

II. In the kingdom of Israel, the conclusion of the reign of Joash (v. 15, 16), and the entire history of Jeroboam his son, the second of that name (v. 23-29). How many great men are made to stand in a little compass in God's book!

<1241> 2 KINGS 14:1-7

THE REIGN OF AMAZIAH

Amaziah, the son and successor of Joash, is the king whom here we have an account of. Let us take a view of him,

I. In the temple; and there he acted, in some measure, well, like Joash, but not like David, v. 3. He began well, but did not persevere: He *did that which was right in the sight of the Lord*, kept up his attendance on God's altars and his attention to God's word, yet not like David. It is not enough to do that which our pious predecessors did, merely to keep up the usage, but we must do it *as* they did it, from the same principle of faith and devotion and with the same sincerity and resolution. It is here taken notice of, as before, that *the high places were not taken away*, v. 4. It is hard to get clear of those corruptions which, by long usage, have gained both prescription and a favourable opinion.

II. On the bench; and there we have him doing justice on the traitors that murdered his father, not as soon as ever he came to the crown, lest it should occasion some disturbance, but he prudently deferred it till *the kingdom was confirmed in his hand*, v. 5. To weaken a factious party gradually, when it is not safe to provoke, often proves the way to ruin it effectually. Justice strikes surely by striking slowly, and is often executed most prudently when it is not executed presently. Wisdom here is profitable to direct. Amaziah did thus,

1. According to the rule of the law, that ancient rule, that *he that sheds man's blood by man shall his blood be shed*. Never let traitors or murderers expect to come to their graves like other men. *Let them flee to the pit, and let no man stay them*.

2. Under the limitation of the law: *The children of the murderers he slew not*, because the law of Moses had expressly provided that *the children should not be put to death for the fathers*, v. 6. It is probable that this is taken notice of because there were those about him that advised him to that rigour, both in revenge (because the crime was extraordinary — the murder of a king) and in policy, that the children might not plot against him, in revenge of their father's death. But against these insinuations he opposed the express law of God (^{<18246>}Deuteronomy 24:16), which he was to judge by, and which he resolved to adhere to and trust God with the issue. God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, because every man is guilty before him and owes him a death; so that, if he require the life for the father's sin, he does not wrong, the sinner having forfeited it already by his own. But he does not allow earthly princes to do thus: the children, before them, are innocent, and therefore must not suffer as guilty.

III. In the field; and there we find him triumphing over the Edomites, v. 7. Edom had *revolted from under the hand of Judah* in Joram's time, ^{<1822>}2 Kings 8:22. Now he makes war upon them to bring them back to their allegiance, kills 10,000 and takes the chief city of Arabia the stony (called *Selah* — *a rock*), and gave it a new name. We shall find a larger account of this expedition, ^{<1825>}2 Chronicles 25:5, etc.

~~248~~ 2 KINGS 14:8-14

THE REIGN OF AMAZIAH

For several successions after the division of the kingdoms that of Judah suffered much by the *enmity* of Israel. After Asa's time, for several successions, it suffered more by the *friendship* of Israel, and by the alliance and affinity made with them. But now we meet with hostility between them again, which had not been for some ages before.

I. Amaziah, upon no provocation, and without showing any cause of quarrel, challenged Joash into the field (v. 8): “*Come, let us look one another in the face; let us try our strength in battle.*” Had he challenged him to a personal duel only, the error would have remained with himself, but each must bring all their forces into the field, and thousands of lives on both sides must be sacrificed to his capricious humour. Hereby he showed himself proud, presumptuous, and prodigal of blood. Some think that he intended to avenge the injury which the dismissed disgusted Israelites had lately done to his country, in their return (~~453~~ 2 Chronicles 25:13), and that he had also the vanity to think of subduing the kingdom of Israel, and reuniting it to Judah. *A fool's lips thus enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.* Those that challenge are chargeable with that beginning of strife, which is as the letting forth of water. He that is eager either to fight or to go to law may perhaps have enough of it quickly, and be the first that repents it.

II. Joash sent him a grave rebuke for his challenge, with advice to withdraw it, v. 9, 10.

1. He mortifies his pride, by comparing himself to a cedar, a stately tree, and Amaziah to a thistle, a sorry weed, telling him he was so far from fearing him that he despised him, and scorned as much to have any thing to do with him, or make any alliance with him, as the cedar would to match his daughter to a thistle. The ancient house of David he thinks not worthy to be named the same day with the house of Jehu, though an upstart. How may a humble man smile to hear two proud and scornful men set their wits on work to vilify and undervalue one another!

2. He foretels his fall: *A wild beast trode down the thistle*, and so put an end to his treaty with the cedar; so easily does Joash think his forces can crush Amaziah, and so unable does he think him to make any resistance.

3. He shows him the folly of his challenge: *“Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, a weak, unarmed, undisciplined body of men, and therefore thinkest thou canst carry all before thee and subdue the regular forces of Israel with as much ease. Thy heart has lifted thee up.”* See where the root of all sin lies; it is in the heart, thence it flows, and that must bear the blame. It is not Providence, the event, the occasion (whatever it is), that makes men proud, or secure, or discontented, or the like, but it is their own heart that does it. *“Thou art proud of the blow thou hast given to Edom, as if that had made thee formidable to all mankind.”* Those wretchedly deceive themselves that magnify their own performances, and, because they have been blessed with some little success and reputation, conclude themselves fit for any thing and no less sure of it.

4. He counsels him to be content with the honour he has won, and not to hazard that, by grasping at more that was out of his reach: *Why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt*, as fools often do, that will be meddling?

~~AMB~~ Proverbs 20:3. Many would have had wealth and honour enough if they had but known when they had enough. He warns him of the consequence, that it would be fatal not to himself only, but to his kingdom, which he ought to protect.

III. Amaziah persisted in his resolution, and the issue was bad; he had better have tarried at home, for Joash gave him such a look in the face as put him to confusion. Challengers commonly prove to be on the losing side.

1. His army was routed and dispersed, v. 12. Josephus says, When they were to engage they were struck with such terror that they did not strike a stroke, but every one made the best of his way.

2. He himself was taken prisoner by the king of Israel, and then had enough of *looking him in the face*. Amaziah's pedigree comes in here somewhat abruptly (*the son of Joash, the son of Ahaziah*), because perhaps he had gloried in the dignity of his ancestors, or because he now smarted for their iniquity.

3. The conqueror entered Jerusalem, which tamely opened to him, and yet he broke down their wall (and, as Josephus says, drove his chariot in triumph through the breach), in reproach to them, and that he might, when he pleased, take possession of the royal city.

4. He plundered Jerusalem, took away all that was valuable, and returned to Samaria, laden with spoils, v. 14. It was said of Joash that he did that which was *evil in the sight of the Lord*, and of Amaziah that he did *that which was right*; and yet Joash triumphs thus over Amaziah, and why so? Because God would show, in Amaziah's fate, that he resists the proud, or because, whatever they were otherwise, Joash had lately been respectful to one of God's prophets (^{<12134>}2 Kings 13:14), but Amaziah had been abusive to another (^{<142516>}2 Chronicles 25:16), and God will honour those who honour him in his prophets, but those who despise them, and him in them, shall be lightly esteemed.

^{<12415>}2 KINGS 14:15-22

THE DEATH OF JOASH, AMAZIAH, AND AZARIAH

Here are three kings brought to their graves in these few verses: —

1. Joash king of Israel, v. 15, 16. We attended his funeral once before, ^{<121312>}2 Kings 13:12, 13. But, because the historian had occasion to give a further account of his life and actions, he again mentions his death and burial.

2. Amaziah king of Judah. Fifteen years he survived his conqueror the king of Israel, v. 17. A man may live a great while after he has been shamed, may be thoroughly mortified (as Amaziah no doubt was) and yet not dead. His acts are said to be found written in his annals (v. 18), but not his might; for his cruelty when he was a conqueror over the Edomites, and his insolence when he challenged the king of Israel, showed him void of true courage. He was slain by his own subjects, who hated him for his maladministration (v. 19) and made Jerusalem too hot for him, the ignominious breach made in their walls being occasioned by his folly and presumption. He fled to Lachish. How long he continued concealed or sheltered there we are not told, but, at last, he was there murdered, v. 19. No further did the rage of the rebels extend, for they brought him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him there among his ancestors.

3. Azariah succeeded Amaziah, but not till twelve years after his father's death, for Amaziah died in the fifteenth year of Jeroboam (as appears by comparing v. 23 with v. 2), but Azariah did not begin his reign till the twenty-seventh of Jeroboam (^{<1215P>}2 Kings 15:1), for he was but four years old at the death of his father, so that, for twelve years, till he came to be sixteen, the government was in the hands of protectors. He reigned very long (^{<1215P>}2 Kings 15:2) and yet the account of his reign is here industriously huddled up, and broken off abruptly (v. 22): *He built Elath* (which had belonged to the Edomites, but, it is probable, was recovered by his father, v. 7), *after that the king slept with his fathers*, as if that had been all he did that was worth mentioning, or rather it is meant of king Amaziah: he built it soon after Amaziah died.

^{<1215P>}2 KINGS 14:23-29

REIGN OF JEROBOAM, KING OF ISRAEL

Here is an account of the reign of Jeroboam the second. I doubt it is an indication of the affection and adherence of the house of Jehu to the sins of *Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin*, that they called an heir-apparent to the crown by his name, thinking that an honourable name which in the book of God is infamous and stigmatized as much as any.

I. His reign was long, the longest of all the reigns of the kings of Israel: *He reigned forty-one years*; yet his contemporary Azariah, the king of Judah, reigned longer, even fifty-two years. This Jeroboam reigned just as long as Asa had done (^{<1115P>}1 Kings 15:10), yet one did that which was good and the other that which was evil. We cannot measure men's characters by the length of their lives or by their outward prosperity. *There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.*

II. His character was the same with that of the rest of those kings: *He did that which was evil* (v. 24), for *he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam*; he kept up the worship of the calves, and never left that, thinking there was no harm in it, because it had been the way of all his ancestors and predecessors. But a sin is never the less evil in God's sight, whatever it is in ours, for its being an ancient usage; and a frivolous plea it will be against doing good, that we have been accustomed to do evil.

III. Yet he prospered more than most of them, for though, in that one thing, he did evil in the sight of the Lord, yet it is likely, in other respects, there was some good found in him and therefore God owned him,

1. By prophecy. He raised up Jonah the son of Amittai, a Galilean (so much were those mistaken that said, *Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet,* ~~John~~ John 7:52), and by him intimated the purposes of his favour to Israel, notwithstanding their provocations, encouraged him and his kingdom to take up arms for the recovery of their ancient possessions, and (which would contribute not a little to their success) assured them of victory. It is a sign that God has not cast off his people if he continue faithful ministers among them; when Elisha, who strengthened the hands of Joash, was removed, Jonah was sent to encourage his son. Happy is the land that has a succession of prophets running parallel with a succession of princes, that the word of the Lord may endure for ever. Of this Jonah we read much in that little book of scripture that bears his name. It is probable that it was when he was a young man, and fit for such an expedition, that God sent him to Nineveh, and that it was when he had yet been but a little conversant with the visions of God that he flew off and fretted as he did; and, if so, this is an undoubted evidence of the forgiveness of his faults and follies, that he was afterwards employed as a messenger of mercy to Israel. A commission amounts to a pardon, and he that had himself found mercy, notwithstanding his provocations, could the better encourage them with the hope of mercy notwithstanding theirs. Some that have been foolish and passionate, and have gone about their work very awkwardly at first, yet afterwards have proved useful and eminent. Men must not be thrown away for every fault.

2. By providence. The event was *according to the word of the Lord*: his arms were successful; he *restored the coast of Israel*, recovered those frontier-towns and countries that lay from Hamath in the north to the sea of the plain, (that is, the sea of Sodom) in the south, all which the Syrians had possessed themselves of, v. 25. Two reasons are here given why God blessed them with those victories: —

(1.) Because their distress was very great, which made them the objects of his compassion, v. 26. Though he saw not any signs of their repentance and formation, yet *he saw their affliction, that it was very bitter*. Those that lived in those countries which the enemies were masters of were miserably oppressed and enslaved, and could call nothing their own; the rest, we may

suppose, were much impoverished by the frequent incursions the enemy made upon them to plunder them, and continually terrified by their threatenings, so that *there was none shut up or left*, both towns and countries were laid waste and stripped of their wealth, and no helper appeared. To this extremity were they reduced, in many parts of the country, in the beginning of Jeroboam's reign, when God, in mere pity to them, heard the cry of their affliction (for no mention is made here of the cry of their prayers), and wrought this deliverance for them by the hand of Jeroboam. Let those whose case is pitiable take comfort from the divine pity; we read of God's bowels of mercy (^{<2615>}Isaiah 63:15; ^{<2617>}Jeremiah 31:20) and that he is full of compassion, ^{<1815>}Psalm 86:15.

(2.) Because the decree had not yet gone forth for their utter destruction; he had not as yet said *he would blot out the name of Israel* (v. 27), and because he had not said it he would not do it. If this be understood of the dispersion of the ten tribes, he did say it and do it, for that name still remains under heaven in the *gospel Israel*, and will to the end of time; and because they, at present, bore that name which was to have this lasting honour, he showed them this favour, as well as for the sake of the ancient honour of that name, ^{<1213>}2 Kings 13:23.

IV. Here is the conclusion of Jeroboam's reign. We read (v. 28) of his might, and how he warred, but (v. 29) he *slept with his fathers*; for the mightiest must yield to death, and there is no discharge in that war. Many prophets there had been in Israel, a constant succession of them in every age, but none of the prophets had left any of their prophecies in writing till those of this age began to do it, and their prophecies are part of the canon of scripture. It was in the reign of this Jeroboam that *Hosea* (who continued very long a prophet) began to prophesy, and he was the first that wrote his prophecies; therefore the word of the Lord by him is called *the beginning of the word of the Lord*, ^{<3012>}Hosea 1:2. Then *that part of the word of the Lord* began to be written. At the same time *Amos* prophesied, and wrote his prophecy, soon afterwards *Micah*, and then *Isaiah*, in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Thus God never left himself without witness, but, in the darkest and most degenerate ages of the church, raised up some to be burning and shining lights in it to their own age by their preaching and living, and a few by their writings to reflect light upon us on whom the ends of the world have come.