

# CHAPTER 28

This chapter is the history of the reign of Ahaz the son of Jotham; a bad reign it was, and which helped to augment the fierce anger of the Lord. We have here,

- I.** His great wickedness (v. 1-4).
- II.** The trouble he brought himself into by it (v. 5-8).
- III.** The reproof which God sent by a prophet to the army of Israel for trampling upon their brethren of Judah, and the obedient ear they gave to that reproof (v. 9-15).
- IV.** The many calamities that followed to Ahaz and his people (v. 16-21).
- V.** The continuance of his idolatry notwithstanding (v. 22-25), and so his story ends (v. 26, 27).

## <430> 2 CHRONICLES 28:1-5

### THE WICKEDNESS OF AHAZ

Never surely had a man greater opportunity of doing well than Ahaz had, finding things in a good posture, the kingdom rich and strong and religion established; and yet here we have him in these few verses,

**1.** Wretchedly corrupted and debauched. He had had a good education given him and a good example set him: but parents cannot give grace to their children. All the instructions he had were lost upon him: *He did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord* (v. 1), nay, he did a great deal that was wrong, a wrong to God, to his own soul, and to his people; he walked in the way of the revolted Israelites and the devoted Canaanites, made molten images and worshipped them, contrary to the second commandment; nay, he made them for Baalim, contrary to the first commandment. he forsook the temple of the Lord and sacrificed and burnt incense on the hills, as if they would place him nearer heaven, and under every green tree, as if they would signify the protection and influence of heaven by their shade and dropping. To complete his wickedness, as one

perfectly divested of all natural affection as well as religion and perfectly devoted to the service and interest of the great enemy of mankind, he *burnt his children in the fire to Moloch* (v. 3), not thinking it enough to dedicate them to that infernal fiend by causing them to pass through the fire. See what an absolute sway the prince of the power of the air bears among the children of disobedience.

**2.** Wretchedly spoiled and made a prey of. When he forsook God, and at a vast expense put himself under the protection of false gods, God, who of right was his God, delivered him into the hands of his enemies, v. 5.

**(1.)** The Syrians insulted him and triumphed over him, beat him in the field and carried away a great many of his people into captivity.

**(2.)** The king of Israel, though an idolater too, was made a scourge to him, and *smote him with a great slaughter*. The people suffered by these judgments: their blood was shed, their country wasted, their families ruined; for when they had a good king, though *they did corruptly* (~~1471P~~ 2 Chronicles 27:2), yet then his goodness sheltered them; but now that they had a bad one all the defence had departed from them and an inundation of judgments broke in upon them. Those that knew not their happiness in the foregoing reign were taught to value it by the miseries of this reign.

## ~~14816~~ 2 CHRONICLES 28:6-15

### THE KING OF ISRAEL DEFEATS AHAZ

We have here,

**I.** Treacherous Judah under the rebukes of God's providence, and they are very severe. Never was such bloody work made among them since they were a kingdom, and by Israelites too. Ahaz walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and the king of Israel was the instrument God made use of for his punishment. It is just with God to make those our plagues whom we make our patterns or make ourselves partners with in sin. A war broke out between Judah and Israel, in which Judah was worsted. For,

**1.** There was a great slaughter of men in the field of battle. Vast numbers (120,000 men, and valiant men too at other times) were slain (v. 6) and some of the first rank, the king's son for one. He had sacrificed some of

this sons to Moloch; justly therefore is this sacrificed to the divine vengeance. Here is another that was *next the king*, his friend, the prime-minister of state, or perhaps next him in the battle, so that the king himself had a narrow escape, v. 7. The kingdom of Israel was not strong at this time, and yet strong enough to bring this great destruction upon Judah. But certainly so many men, great men, stout men, could not have been cut off in one day if they had not been strangely dispirited both by the consciousness of their own guilt and by the righteous hand of God upon them. Even valiant men were numbered *as sheep for the slaughter*, and became an easy prey to the enemy *because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers*, and he had therefore forsaken them.

**2.** There was a great captivity of *women and children*, v. 8. When the army in the field was routed, the cities, and towns, and country villages, were all easily stripped, the inhabitants taken for slaves, and their wealth for a prey.

**II.** Even victorious Israel under the rebuke of God's word for the bad principle they had gone upon in making war with Judah and the bad use they had made of their success, and the good effect of this rebuke. Here is,

**1.** The message which God sent them by a prophet, who went out to meet them, not to applaud their valour or congratulate them on their victory, though they returned laden with spoils and triumphs, but in God's name to tell them of their faults and warn them of the judgments of God.

**(1.)** He told them how they came by this victory of which they were so proud. It was not because God favoured them, or that they had merited it at his hand, but *because he was wroth with Judah*, and made them the rod of his indignation. *Not for your righteousness*, be it known to you, but *for their wickedness* (<sup><B></sup>Deuteronomy 9:5) *they are broken off*; therefore *be not you high-minded, but fear lest God also spare not you*, <sup><S></sup>Romans 11:20, 21.

**(2.)** He charged them with the abuse of the power God had given them over their brethren. Those understand not what victory is who think it gives them authority to do what they will, and that the longest sword is the clearest claim to lives and estates (*Jusque datum sceleri — might is right*); no, as it is impolitic not to use a victory, so it is impious to abuse it. The conquerors are here reprov'd,

[1.] For the cruelty of the slaughter they had made in the field. They had indeed *shed the blood of war in war*; we suppose that to be lawful, but it turned into sin to them, because they did it from a bad principle of enmity to their brethren and after a bad manner, with a barbarous fury, *a rage reaching up to heaven*, that is, that cried to God for vengeance against such bloody men, that delighted in military execution. Those that serve God's justice, if they do it with rage and a spirit of revenge, make themselves obnoxious to it, and forfeit the honour of acting for him; *for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*.

[2.] For the imperious treatment they gave their prisoners. “*You now purpose to keep them under*, to use them or sell them as slaves, though they are your brethren and free-born Israelites.” God takes notice of what men purpose, as well as of what they say and do.

(3.) He reminded them of their own sins, by which they also were obnoxious to the wrath of God: *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? v. 10*. He appeals to their own consciences, and to the notorious evidence of the thing. “Though you are now made the instruments of correcting Judah for sin, yet do not think that you are therefore innocent yourselves; no, you also are guilty before God.” This is intended as a check,

[1.] To their triumph in their success. “You are sinners, and it ill becomes sinners to be proud; you have carried the day now, but be not secure, the wheel may ere long return upon yourselves, for, if judgment begin thus with those that have *the house of God* among them, what shall be the end of such as worship the calves?”

[2.] To their severity towards their brethren. “You have now got them under, but you ought to show mercy to them, for you yourselves are undone if you do not find mercy with God. It ill becomes sinners to be cruel. You have transgressions enough to answer for already, and need not add this to the rest.”

(4.) He commanded them to release the prisoners, and to send them home again carefully (v. 11); “for you having sinned, *the fierce wrath of God is upon you*, and there is no other way of escaping it than by showing mercy.”

2. The resolution of the princes thereupon not to detain the prisoners. They *stood up against those that came from the war*, though flushed with

victory, and told them plainly that they should not bring their captives into Samaria, v. 12, 13. They had sin enough already to answer for, and would have nothing done to add to their trespass. In this they discovered an obedient regard to the word of God by his prophet and a tender compassion towards their brethren, which was wrought in them by the tender mercy of God; for he regarded the affliction of this poor people, and hears their cry, and *made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captive*, ~~1964~~ Psalm 106:44, 46.

**3.** The compliance of the soldiers with the resolutions of the princes in this matter, and the dismissal of the captives thereupon.

**(1.)** The armed men, though being armed they might be force have maintained their title to what they got by the sword, acquiesced, and left their captives and the spoil to the disposal of *the princes* (v. 14), and herein they showed more truly heroic bravery than they did in taking them. It is a great honour for any man to yield to the authority of reason and religion against his interest.

**(2.)** The princes very generously sent home the poor captives well accommodated, v. 15. Those that hope to find mercy with God must learn hence with what tenderness to carry themselves towards those that lie at their mercy. It is strange that these princes, who in this instance discovered such a deference to the word of God, and such an influence upon the people, had not so much grace as, in obedience to the calls of God by so many prophets, to root idolatry out of their kingdom, which, soon after this, was the ruin of it.

## ~~1966~~ 2 CHRONICLES 28:16-27

### THE DEATH OF AHAZ

Here is,

**I.** The great distress which the kingdom of Ahaz was reduced to for his sin. In general,

**1.** *The Lord brought Judah low*, v. 19. They had lately been very high in wealth and power; but God found means to bring them down, and make them as despicable as they had been formidable. Those that will not humble

themselves under the word of God will justly be humbled by his judgments. Iniquity *brings men low*, <sup><1966></sup>Psalm 106:43.

**2.** Ahaz made Judah naked. As his sin debased them, so it exposed them. It made them naked to their shame; for it exposed them to contempt, as a man unclothed. It made them naked to their danger; for it exposed them to assaults, as a man unarmed, <sup><1925></sup>Exodus 32:25. Sin strips men. In particular, the Edomites, to be revenged for Amaziah's cruel treatment of them (<sup><4252></sup>2 Chronicles 25:12), smote Judah, and carried off many captives, v. 17. The Philistines also insulted them, took and kept possession of several cities and villages that lay near them (v. 18), and so they were revenged for the incursions which Uzziah had made upon them, <sup><4016></sup>2 Chronicles 26:6. And, to show that it was purely the sin of Ahaz that brought the Philistines upon his country, in the very year that he died the prophet Isaiah foretold the destruction of the Philistines by his son, <sup><2343></sup>Isaiah 14:28, 29.

**II.** The addition which Ahaz made both to the national distress and the national guilt.

**1.** He added to the distress, by making court to strange kings, in hopes they would relieve him. When the Edomites and Philistines were vexatious to him, *he sent to the kings of Assyria to help him* (v. 16); for he found his own kingdom weakened and made naked, and he could not put any confidence in God, and therefore was at a vast expense to get an interest in the king of Assyria. He pillaged the house of God, and the king's house, and squeezed the princes for money to hire these foreign forces into his service, v. 21. Though he had conformed to the idolatry of the heathen nations, his neighbours, they did not value him for that, nor love him the better, nor did his compliance, by which he lost God, gain them, nor could he make any interest in them, but with his money. It is often found that wicked men themselves have no real affection for those that revolt to them, nor do they care to do them a kindness. A degenerate branch is looked upon, on all sides, as *an abominable branch*, <sup><2349></sup>Isaiah 14:19. But what did Ahaz get by the king of Assyria? Why, *he came to him*, but *he distressed him*, and *strengthened him not* (v. 20), *helped him not*, v. 21. The forces of the Assyrian quartered upon his country, and so impoverished and weakened it; they grew insolent and imperious, and created him a great deal of vexation, like a broken reed, which not only fails, but pierces the hand.

2. He added to the guilt, by making court to strange gods, in hopes they would relieve him. In his distress, instead of repenting of his idolatry, which he had reason enough to see the folly of, *he trespassed yet more* (v. 22), was more mad than ever upon his idols. A brand of infamy is here set upon him for it: *This is that king Ahaz*, that wretched man, who was the scandal of the house of David and the curse and plague of his generation. Note, Those are wicked and vile indeed that are made worse by their afflictions, instead of being made better by them, who *in their distress trespass yet more*, have their corruptions exasperated by that which should mollify them, and their hearts more *fully set in them to do evil*. Let us see what his trespass was.

(1.) He abused the house of God; for he *cut in pieces the vessels* of it, that the priests might not perform the service of the temple, or not as it should be performed, for want of vessels; and, at length, he *shut up the doors*, that the people might not attend it, v. 24. This was worse than the worst of the kings before him had done.

(2.) He confronted the altar of God, for he *made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem*; so that, as the prophet speaks, they were like *heaps in the furrows of the fields*, <sup><3121></sup>Hosea 12:11. And in the cities of Judah, either by his power or by his purse, perhaps by both, he erected high places for the people to burn incense to what idols they pleased, as if on purpose to *provoke the God of his fathers*, v. 25.

(3.) He cast off God himself; for he *sacrificed to the gods of Damascus* (v. 23), not because he loved them, for he thought they smote him; but because he feared them, thinking that they helped his enemies, and that, if he could bring them into his interest, they would help him. Foolish man! It was his own God that smote him and strengthened the Syrians against him, not the gods of Damascus; had he sacrificed to him, and to him only, he would have helped him. But no marvel that men's affections and devotions are misplaced when they mistake the author of their trouble and their help. And what comes of it? The gods of Syria befriend Ahaz no more than the kings of Assyria did; they were *the ruin of him and of all Israel*. This sin provoked God to bring judgments upon them, to cut him off in the midst of his days, when he was but thirty-six years old; and it debauched the people so that the reformation of the next reign could not prevail to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, but they retained that root of bitterness till the captivity in Babylon plucked it up.

The chapter concludes with the conclusion of the reign of Ahaz, v. 26, 27. For aught that appears, he died impenitent, and therefore died inglorious; for he was not buried *in the sepulchres of the kings*. Justly was he thought unworthy to be laid among them who was so unlike them — to be buried with kings who had used his kingly power for the destruction of the church and not for its protection or edification.