

CHAPTER 22

This chapter finishes the history of Ahab's reign. It was promised in the close of the foregoing chapter that the ruin of his house should not come in his days, but his days were soon at an end. His war with the Syrians at Ramoth-Gilead is that which we have an account of in this chapter.

I. His preparations for that war. He consulted,

1. His privy-council (v. 1-3).
2. Jehoshaphat (v. 4).
3. His prophets.
 - (1.) His own, who encouraged him to go on this expedition (v. 5, 6), Zedekiah particularly (v. 11, 12).
 - (2.) A prophet of the Lord, Micaiah, who was desired to come by Jehoshaphat (v. 7, 8), sent for (v. 9, 10-13, 14), upbraided Ahab with his confidence in the false prophets (v. 15), but foretold his fall in this expedition (v. 16-18), and gave him an account how he came to be thus imposed upon by his prophets (v. 19-23). He is abused by Zedekiah (v. 24, 25), and imprisoned by Ahab (v. 26-28).

II. The battle itself, in which,

1. Jehoshaphat is exposed. But,
2. Ahab is slain (v. 29-40). In the close of the chapter we have a short account,
 - (1.) Of the good reign of Jehoshaphat king of Judah (v. 41-50).
 - (2.) Of the wicked reign of Ahaziah king of Israel (v. 51-53).

1 KINGS 22:1-14

JEHOSHAPHAT'S LEAGUE WITH AHAB

Though Ahab continued under guilt and wrath, and the dominion of the lusts to which he had sold himself, yet, as a reward for his professions of repentance and humiliation, though the time drew near when he should descend into battle and perish, yet we have him blessed with a three years'

peace (v. 1) and an honourable visit made him by Jehoshaphat king of Judah, v. 2. The Jews have a fabulous conceit, that when Ahab humbled himself for his sin, and lay in sackcloth, he sent for Jehoshaphat to come to him, to chastise him; and that he staid with him for some time, and gave him so many stripes every day. This is a groundless tradition. He came now, it is probable, to consult him about the affairs of their kingdoms. It is strange that so great a man as Jehoshaphat would pay so much respect to a kingdom revolted from the house of David, and that so good a man should show so much kindness to a king revolted from the worship of God. But, though he was a godly man, his temper was too easy, which betrayed him into snares and inconveniences. The Syrians durst not give Ahab any disturbance. But,

I. Ahab here meditates a war against the Syrians, and advises concerning it with those about him, v. 3. The king of Syria gave him the provocation; when he lay at his mercy, he promised to restore him his cities (~~1~~1 Kings 20:34), and Ahab foolishly took his word, when he ought not to have dismissed him till the cities were put into his possession. But now he knows by experience, what he ought before to have considered, that as the kisses, so the promises, *of an enemy are deceitful*, and there is no confidence to be put in leagues extorted by distress. Benhadad is one of those princes that think themselves bound by their word no further and no longer than it is for their interest. Whether any other cities were restored we do not find, but Ramoth-Gilead was not, a considerable city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan, a Levites' city, and one of the cities of refuge. Ahab blames himself, and his people, that they did not bestir themselves to recover it out of the hands of the Syrians, and to chastise Ben-hadad's violation of his league; and resolves to let that ungrateful perfidious prince know that as he had given him peace he could give him trouble. Ahab has a good cause, yet succeeds not. Equity is not to be judged of by prosperity.

II. He engages Jehoshaphat, and draws him in, to join with him in this expedition, for the recovery of Ramoth-Gilead, v. 4. And here I do not wonder that Ahab should desire the assistance of so pious and prosperous a neighbour. Even bad men have often coveted the friendship of the good. It is desirable to have an interest in those that have an interest in heaven, and to have those with us that have God with them. But it is strange that Jehoshaphat will go so entirely into Ahab's interests as to say, *I am as thou*

art, and my people as thy people. I hope not; Jehoshaphat and his people are not so wicked and corrupt as Ahab and his people. Too great a complaisance to evildoers has brought many good people, through unwariness, into a dangerous fellowship with *the unfruitful works of darkness*. Jehoshaphat had like to have paid dearly for his compliment when, in battle, he was taken for Ahab. Yet some observe that in joining with Israel against Syria he atoned for his father's fault in joining with Syria against Israel, ^{<1159>}1 Kings 15:19, 20.

III. At the special instance and request of Jehoshaphat, he asks counsel of the prophets concerning this expedition. Ahab thought it enough to consult with his statesmen, but Jehoshaphat moves that they should *enquire of the word of the Lord*, v. 5. Note,

- 1.** Whithersoever a good man goes he desires to take God along with him, and will acknowledge him in all his ways, ask leave of him, and look up to him for success.
- 2.** Whithersoever a good man goes he ought to take his religion along with him, and not be ashamed to own it, no, not when he is with those who have no kindness for it. Jehoshaphat has not left behind him, at Jerusalem, his affection, his veneration, for *the word of the Lord*, but both avows it and endeavours to introduce it into Ahab's court. If Ahab drew him into his wars, he will draw Ahab into his devotions.

IV. Ahab's 400 prophets, the standing regiment he had of them (*prophets of the groves* they called them), agreed to encourage him in this expedition and to assure him of success, v. 6. He put the question to them with a seeming fairness: *Shall I go or shall I forbear?* But they knew which way his inclination was and designed only to humour the two kings. To please Jehoshaphat, they made use of the name *Jehovah*: He shall *deliver it into the hand of the king*; they stole the word from the true prophets (^{<2230>}Jeremiah 23:30) and spoke their language. To please Ahab they said, *Go up*. They had indeed probabilities on their side: Ahab had, not long since, beaten the Syrians twice; he had now a good cause, and was much strengthened by his alliance with Jehoshaphat. But they pretended to speak by prophecy, not by rational conjecture, by divine, not human, foresight: "Thou shalt certainly recover Ramoth-Gilead." Zedekiah, a leading man among these prophets, in imitation of the true prophets, illustrated his false prophecy with a sign, v. 11. He made himself a pair of iron horns,

representing the two kings, and their honour and power (both of which were signified by horns, exaltation and force), and with these the Syrians must be pushed. All the prophets agreed, as one man, that Ahab should return from this expedition a conqueror, v. 12. Unity is not always the mark of a true church and a true ministry. Here were 400 men that prophesied with one mind and one mouth, and yet all in an error.

V. Jehoshaphat cannot relish this sort of preaching; it is not like what he was used to. The false prophets cannot so mimic the true but that he who had spiritual senses exercised could discern the fallacy, and therefore he enquired for a *prophet of the Lord besides*, v. 7. He is too much of a courtier to say any thing by way of reflection on the king's chaplains, but he waits to see a *prophet of the Lord*, intimating that he could not look upon these to be so. They *seemed to be somewhat* (whatever they were, it made no matter to him), but, in conference, they *added nothing to him*, they gave him no satisfaction, ~~4116~~ Galatians 2:6. One faithful prophet of the Lord was worth them all.

VI. Ahab has another, but one he hates, Micaiah by name, and, to please Jehoshaphat, he is willing to have him sent for, v. 8-10. Ahab owned that they might *enquire of the Lord by him*, that he was a true prophet, and one that knew God's mind. And yet,

1. He hated him, and was not ashamed to own to the king of Judah that he did so, and to give this for a reason. He *doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil*. And whose fault was that? If Ahab had done well, he would have heard nothing but good from heaven; if he do ill, he may thank himself for all the uneasiness which the reproofs and threats of God's word gave him. Note, Those are wretchedly hardened in sin, and are ripening apace for ruin, who hate God's ministers because they deal plainly with them and faithfully warn them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and reckon those their enemies that *tell them the truth*.

2. He had (it should seem) imprisoned him; for, when he committed him (v. 26), he bade the officer carry him back, namely, to the place whence he came. We may suppose that this was he that reproved him for his clemency to Ben-hadad (~~4118~~ 1 Kings 20:38, etc.) and for so doing was cast into prison, where he had lain these three years. This was the reason why Ahab knew where to find him so readily, v. 9. But his imprisonment had not excluded him for divine visits: the spirit of prophecy continued with him

there. He was bound, but *the word of the Lord was not*. Nor did it in the least abate his courage, nor make him less confident or faithful in delivering his message. Jehoshaphat gave too gentle a reproof to Ahab for expressing his indignation against a faithful prophet: *Let not the king say so*, v. 8. He should have said, “Thou art unjust to the prophet, unkind to thyself, and puttest an affront upon his Lord and thine, in saying so.” Such sinners as Ahab must be rebuked sharply. However he so far yielded to the reproof that, for fear of provoking Jehoshaphat to break off from his alliance with him, he orders Micaiah to be sent for with all speed, v. 9. The two kings sat each in their robes and chairs of state, in the gate of Samaria, ready to receive this poor prophet, and to hear what he had to say; for many will give God's word the hearing that will not lend it an obedient ear. They were attended with a crowd of flattering prophets, that could not think of prophesying any thing but what was very sweet and very smooth to two such glorious princes now in confederacy. Those that love to be flattered shall not want flatterers.

VII. Micaiah is pressed by the officer that fetches him to follow the cry, v. 13. That officer was unworthy the name of an Israelite who pretended to prescribe to a prophet; but he thought him altogether such a one as the rest, who studied to please men and not God. He told Micaiah how unanimous the other prophets were in foretelling the king's good success, how agreeable it was to the king, intimating that it was his interest to say as they said — he might thereby gain, not only enlargement, but preferment. Those that dote upon worldly things themselves think every body else should do so too, and true or false, right or wrong, speak and act for their secular interest only. He intimated likewise that it would be to no purpose to contradict such a numerous and unanimous vote; he would be ridiculed, as affecting a foolish singularity, if he should. But Micaiah, who knows better things, protests, and backs his protestation with an oath, that he will deliver his message from God with all faithfulness, whether it be pleasing or displeasing to his prince (v. 14): “*What the Lord saith to me, that will I speak*, without addition, diminution, or alteration.” This was nobly resolved, and as became one who had his eye to a greater King than either of these, arrayed with brighter robes, and sitting on a higher throne.

MICAIAH'S PREDICTION

Here Micaiah does well, but, as is common, suffers ill for so doing.

I. We are told how faithfully he delivered his message, as one that was more solicitous to please God than to humour either the great or the many. In three ways he delivers his message, and all displeasing to Ahab: —

1. He spoke as the rest of the prophets had spoken, but ironically: *Go, and prosper*, v. 15. Ahab put the same question to him that he had put to his own prophets (*Shall we go, or shall we forbear?*) seeming desirous to know God's mind, when, like Balaam, he was strongly bent to do his own, which Micaiah plainly took notice of when he bade him go, but with such an air and pronounciation as plainly showed he spoke it by way of derision; as if he had said, “I know you are determined to go, and I hear your own prophets are unanimous in assuring you of success; go then and take what follows. They say, *The Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king*; but I do not tell thee that *thus saith the Lord*; no, he saith otherwise.” Note, Those deserve to be bantered that love to be flattered; and it is just with God to give up those to their own counsels that give up themselves to their own lusts. <21109> Ecclesiastes 11:9. In answer to this Ahab adjured him to tell him the truth, and not to jest with him (v. 16), as if he sincerely desired to know both what God would have him to do and what he would do with him, yet intending to represent the prophet as a perverse ill-humoured man, that would not tell him the truth till he was thus put to his oath, or adjured to do it.

2. Being thus pressed, he plainly foretold that the king would be cut off in this expedition, and his army scattered, v. 17. He saw them in a vision, or in a dream, dispersed upon the mountains, as sheep that had no one to guide them. *Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered*, <3817> Zechariah 13:7. This intimates,

(1.) That Israel should be deprived of their king, who was their shepherd. God took notice of it, *These have no master*.

(2.) That they would be obliged to retire *re infecta* — *without accomplishing their object*. He does not foresee any great slaughter in the

army, but that they should make a dishonorable retreat. *Let them return every man to his house in peace*, put into disorder indeed for the present, but no great losers by the death of their king; he shall fall in war, but they shall go home in peace. Thus Micaiah, in his prophecy, testified what he had seen and heard (let them take it how they pleased), while the others prophesied merely *out of their own hearts*; see ²⁴³³Jeremiah 23:28. “The prophet that has a dream let him tell that, and so quote his authority; *and he that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully*, and not his own; for *what is the chaff to the wheat?*” Now Ahab finds himself aggrieved, turns to Jehoshaphat, and appeals to him whether Micaiah had not manifestly a spite against him, v. 18. Those that bear malice to others are generally willing to believe that others bear malice to them, though they have no cause for it, and therefore to put the worst constructions upon all they say. What evil did Micaiah prophesy to Ahab in telling him that, if he proceeded in this expedition, it would be fatal to him, while he might choose whether he would proceed in it or no? The greatest kindness we can do to one that is going a dangerous way is to tell him of his danger.

3. He informed the king how it was that all his prophets encouraged him to proceed, that God permitted Satan by them to deceive him into his ruin, and he by vision knew of it; it was represented to him, and he represented it to Ahab, that the God of heaven had determined he should fall at Ramoth-Gilead (v. 19, 20), that the favour he had wickedly shown to Benhadad might be punished by him and his Syrians, and that he being in some doubt whether he should go to Ramoth-Gilead or no, and resolving to be advised by his prophets, they should persuade him to it and prevail (v. 21, 22); and hence it was that they encouraged him with so much assurance (v. 23); it was a lie from the father of lies, but by divine permission. This matter is here represented after the manner of men. We are not to imagine that God is ever put upon new counsels, or is ever at a loss for means whereby to effect his purposes, nor that he needs to consult with angels, or any creature, about the methods he should take, nor that he is the author of sin or the cause of any man's either telling or believing a lie; but, besides what was intended by this with reference to Ahab himself, it is to teach us,

(1.) That God is a great king above all kings, and has a throne above all the thrones of earthly princes. “You have your thrones,” said Micaiah to these two kings, “and you think you may do what you will, and we must all say as you would have us; but *I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne*, and

every man's judgment proceeding from him, and therefore I must say as he says; he is not a man, as you are.”

(2.) That he is continually attended and served by an innumerable company of angels, those heavenly hosts, who stand by him, ready to go where he sends them and to do what he bids them, messengers of mercy *on his right hand*, of wrath *on his left hand*.

(3.) That he not only takes cognizance of, but presides over, all the affairs of this lower world, and overrules them *according to the counsel of his own will*. The rise and fall of princes, the issues of war, and all the great affairs of state, which are the subject of the consultations of wise and great men, are no more above God's direction than the meanest concerns of the poorest cottages are below his notice.

(4.) That God has many ways of bringing about his own counsels, particularly concerning the fall of sinners when they are ripe for ruin; he can do it either in this manner or in that manner.

(5.) That there are malicious and lying spirits which go about continually seeking to devour, and, in order to that, seeking to deceive, and especially to put lies into the mouths of prophets, by them to entice many to their destruction.

(6.) It is not without the divine permission that the devil deceives men, and even thereby God serves his own purposes. *With him are strength and wisdom, the deceived and the deceivers are his*, ^{<18216>}Job 12:16. When he pleases, for the punishment of those who receive not the truth in the love of it, he not only *lets Satan loose to deceive them* (^{<6107>}Revelation 20:7, 8), but *gives men up to strong delusions to believe him*, ^{<51211>}2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12.

(7.) Those are manifestly marked for ruin that are thus given up. God has certainly *spoken evil concerning those* whom he had given up to be imposed upon by lying prophets. Thus Micaiah gave Ahab fair warning, not only of the danger of proceeding in this war, but of the danger of believing those that encouraged him to proceed. Thus we are warned to *beware of false prophets*, and to try the spirits; the lying spirit never deceives so fatally as *in the mouth of prophets*.

II. We are told how he was abused for delivering his message thus faithfully, thus plainly, in a way so very proper both to convince and to affect.

1. Zedekiah, a wicked prophet, impudently insulted him in the face of the court, *smote him on the cheek*, to reproach him, to silence him and stop his mouth, and to express his indignation at him (thus was our blessed Saviour abused, ^{<166>}Matthew 26:67, that Judge of Israel, ^{<361>}Micah 5:1); and as if he not only had the spirit of the Lord, but the monopoly of this Spirit, that he might not go without his leave, he asks, *Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak to thee?* v. 24. The false prophets were always the worst enemies the true prophets had, and not only stirred up the government against them, but were themselves abusive to them, as Zedekiah here. To strike within the verge of the court, especially in the king's presence, is looked upon by our law as a high misdemeanour; yet this wicked prophet gives this abuse to a prophet of the Lord, and is not reprimanded nor bound to his good behaviour for it. Ahab was pleased with it, and Jehoshaphat had not courage to appear for the injured prophet, pretending it was out of his jurisdiction; but Micaiah, though he returns not his blow (God's prophets are not strikers nor persecutors, dare not avenge themselves, render blow for blow, or be in any way accessory to the breach of the peace), yet, since he boasted so much of the Spirit, as those commonly do that know least of his operations, he leaves him to be convinced of his error by the event: *Thou shalt know when thou hidest thyself in an inner chamber*, v. 25. It is likely Zedekiah went with Ahab to the battle, and took his horns of iron with him to encourage the soldiers, to see with pleasure the accomplishment of his prophecy, and return in triumph with the king; but, the army being routed, he fled among the rest from the sword of the enemy, sheltered himself as Ben-hadad had done in *a chamber within a chamber* (^{<128>}1 Kings 20:30), lest he should perish, as he knew he deserved to do, with those whom he had deluded, as Balaam did (^{<938>}Numbers 31:8), and lest the blind prophet should *fall into the ditch* with the blinded prince whom he had misled. Note, Those that will not have their mistakes rectified in time by the word of God will be undeceived, when it is too late, by the judgments of God.

2. Ahab, that wicked king, committed him to prison (v. 27), not only ordered him to be taken into custody, or remitted to the prison whence he came, but to be fed with bread and water, coarse bread and puddle-water, till he should return, not doubting but that he should return a conqueror,

and then he would put him to death for a false prophet (v. 27) — hard usage for one that would have prevented his ruin! But by this it appeared that God had *determined to destroy him*, as ^{<1425>}2 Chronicles 25:16. How confident is Ahab of success. He doubts not but he shall return in peace, forgetting what he himself had reminded Ben-hadad of, *Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast*; but there was little likelihood of his coming home in peace when he left one of God's prophets behind him in prison. Micaiah put it upon the issue, and called all the people to be witnesses that he did so: “*If thou return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me*, v. 28. Let me incur the reproach and punishment of a false prophet, if the king come home alive.” He ran no hazard by this appeal, for he knew whom he had believed; he that is terrible to the kings of the earth, and treads upon princes as mortar, will rather let thousands of them fall to the ground than one jot or tittle of his own word; he will not fail to *confirm the word of his servants*, ^{<23405>}Isaiah 44:26.

^{<11229>}1 KINGS 22:29-40

AHAB'S DEATH

The matter in contest between God's prophet and Ahab's prophets is here soon determined, and it is made to appear which was in the right. Here,

I. The two kings march with their forces to Ramoth-Gilead, v. 29. That the king of Israel, who hated God's prophet, should so far disbelieve his admonition as to persist in his resolution, notwithstanding, is not strange; but that Jehoshaphat, that pious prince, who had desired to enquire by a *prophet of the Lord*, as disrelishing and discrediting Ahab's prophets, should yet proceed, after so fair a warning, is matter of astonishment. But by the easiness of his temper he was carried away with the delusion (as Barnabas was with the dissimulation, ^{<4423>}Galatians 2:13) of his friends. He gave too much heed to Ahab's prophets, because they pretended to speak from God too, and in his country he had never been imposed upon by such cheats. He was ready to give his opinion with the majority, and to conclude that it was 400 to one but they should succeed. Micaiah had not forbidden them to go; nay, at first, he said, *Go, and prosper*. If it came to the worst, it was only Ahab's fall that was foretold, and therefore Jehoshaphat hoped he might safely venture.

II. Ahab adopts a contrivance by which he hopes to secure himself and expose his friend (v. 30): “*I will disguise myself*, and go in the habit of a common soldier, but let *Jehoshaphat put on his robes*, to appear in the dress of a general.” He pretended thereby to do honour to Jehoshaphat, and to compliment him with the sole command of the army in this action. He shall direct and give orders, and Ahab will serve as a soldier under him. But he intended,

1. To make a liar of a good prophet. Thus he hoped to elude the danger, and so to defeat the threatening, as if, by disguising himself, he could escape the divine cognizance and the judgments that pursued him.

2. To make a fool of a good king, whom he did not cordially love, because he was one that adhered to God and so condemned his apostasy. He knew that if any perished it must be the shepherd (so Micaiah had foretold); and perhaps he had intimation of the charge the enemy had to fight chiefly *against the king of Israel*, and therefore basely intended to betray Jehoshaphat to the danger, that he might secure himself. Ahab was marked for ruin; one would not have been in his coat for a great sum; yet he will over-persuade this godly king to muster for him. See what those get that join in affinity with vicious men, whose consciences are debauched, and who are lost to every thing that is honourable. How can it be expected that he should be true to his friend that has been false to his God?

III. Jehoshaphat, having more piety than policy, put himself into the post of honour, though it was the post of danger, and was thereby brought into the peril of his life, but God graciously delivered him. The king of Syria charged his captains to level their force, not against the king of Judah, for with him he had no quarrel, but against the king of Israel only (v. 31), to aim at his person, as if against him he had a particular enmity. Now Ahab was justly repaid for sparing Ben-hadad, who, as the seed of the serpent commonly do, stung the bosom in which he was fostered and saved from perishing. Some think that he designed only to have him taken prisoner, that he might now give him as honourable a treatment as he had formerly received from him. Whatever was the reason, this charge the officers received, and endeavoured to oblige their prince in this matter; for, seeing Jehoshaphat in his royal habit, they took him for the king of Israel, and surrounded him. Now,

1. By his danger God let him know that he was displeased with him for joining in confederacy with Ahab. Jehoshaphat had said, in compliment to Ahab (v. 4), *I am as thou art*; and now he was indeed taken for him. Those that associate with evil doers are in danger of sharing in their plagues.

2. By his deliverance God let him know that, though he was displeased with him, yet he had not deserted him. Some of the captains that knew him perceived their mistake, and so retired from the pursuit of him; but it is said (⁻¹⁴⁸³⁻2 Chronicles 18:31) that *God moved them* (for he has all hearts in his hand) *to depart from him*. To him he cried out, not in cowardice, but devotion, and from him his relief came: Ahab was in no care to succour him. God is a friend that will not fail us when other friends do.

IV. Ahab receives his mortal wound in the battle, notwithstanding his endeavours to secure himself in the habit of a private sentinel. Let no man think to hide himself from God's judgment, no, not in masquerade. *Thy hand shall find out all thy enemies*, whatever disguise they are in, v. 34. The Syrian that shot him little thought of doing such a piece of service to God and his king; for he *drew a bow at a venture*, not aiming particularly at any man, yet God so directed the arrow that,

1. He hit the right person, the man that was marked for destruction, whom, if they had taken alive, as was designed, perhaps Ben-hadad would have spared. Those cannot escape with life whom God hath doomed to death.

2. He hit him in the right place, *between the joints of the harness*, the only place about him where this arrow of death could find entrance. No armour is of proof against the darts of divine vengeance. Case the criminal in steel, and it is all one, *he that made him can make his sword to approach him*. That which to us seems altogether casual is done by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God.

V. The army is dispersed by the enemy and sent home by the king. Either Jehoshaphat or Ahab ordered the retreat of the sheep, when the shepherd was smitten: *Every man to his city*, for it is to no purpose to attempt any thing more, v. 36. Ahab himself lived long enough to see that part of Micaiah's prophecy accomplished that all Israel should be scattered *upon the mountains of Gilead* (v. 17), and perhaps with his dying lips did himself give orders for it; for though he would be carried out of the army, to have his wounds dressed (v. 34), yet he would be *held up in his chariot*, to see if his army were victorious. But, when he saw the battle increase against

them, his spirits sunk, and he died, but his death was so lingering that he had time to feel himself die; and we may well imagine with what horror he now reflected upon the wickedness he had committed, the warnings he had slighted, Baal's altars, Naboth's vineyard, Micaiah's imprisonment. Now he sees himself flattered into his own ruin, and Zedekiah's horns of iron pushing, not the Syrians, but himself, into destruction. Thus is he *brought to the king of terrors without hope in his death.*

VI. The royal corpse is brought to Samaria and buried there (v. 37), and hither are brought the bloody chariot and bloody armour in which he died, v. 38. One particular circumstance is taken notice of, because there was in it the accomplishment of a prophecy, that when they brought the chariot to the pool of Samaria, to be washed, the dogs (and swine, says the Septuagint) gathered about it, and, as is usual, *licked the blood*, or, as some think, the water in which it was washed, with which the blood was mingled: the dogs made no difference between royal blood and other blood. Now Naboth's blood was avenged (^{<1219>}1 Kings 21:19), and that word of David, as well as Elijah's word, was fulfilled (^{<13823>}Psalm 68:23), *That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thy enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same.* The dogs licking the guilty blood was perhaps designed to represent the terrors that prey upon the guilty soul after death.

Lastly, The story of Ahab is here concluded in the usual form, v. 39, 40. Among his works mention is made of an ivory house which he built, so called because many parts of it were inlaid with ivory; perhaps it was intended to vie with the stately palace of the kings of Judah, which Solomon built.

^{<1224>}1 KINGS 22:41-53

JHOSHAPHAT'S DEATH

Here is,

I. A short account of the reign of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, of which we shall have a much fuller narrative in the book of Chronicles, and of the greatness and goodness of that prince, neither of which was lessened or sullied by any thing but his intimacy with the house of Ahab, which, upon several accounts, was a diminution to him. His confederacy with Ahab in

war we have already found dangerous to him, and his confederacy with Ahaziah his son in trade sped no better. He offered to go partner with him in a fleet of merchant-ships, that should fetch gold from Ophir, as Solomon's navy did, v. 49. See ^{<40B>}2 Chronicles 20:35, 36. But, while they were preparing to set sail, they were exceedingly damaged and disabled by a storm (*broken at Ezion-geber*), which a prophet gave Jehoshaphat to understand was a rebuke to him for his league with wicked Ahaziah (^{<40B>}2 Chronicles 20:37); and therefore, as we are told here (v. 49), when Ahaziah desired a second time to be a partner with him, or, if that could not be obtained, that he might but send his servants with some effects of board Jehoshaphat's ships, he refused: *Jehoshaphat would not*. The rod of God, expounded by the word of God, had effectually broken him off from his confederacy with that ungodly unhappy prince. Better buy wisdom dear than be without it; but experience is therefore said to be the mistress of fools because those are fools that will not learn till they are taught by experience, and particularly till they are taught the danger of associating with wicked people. Now Jehoshaphat's reign appears here to have been none of the longest, but one of the best.

1. It was none of the longest, for he reigned but twenty-five years (v. 42), but then it was in the prime of his time, between thirty-five and sixty, and these twenty-five, added to his father's happy forty-one, give us a grateful idea of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah, and of religion in it, for a great while, even when things were very bad, upon all accounts, in the kingdom of Israel. If Jehoshaphat reigned not so long as his father, to balance this he had not those blemishes on the latter end of his reign that his father had (^{<40B>}2 Chronicles 16:9, 10, 12), and it is better for a man that has been in reputation for wisdom and honour to die in the midst of it than to outlive it.

2. Yet it was one of the best, both in respect of piety and prosperity.

(1.) He did well: He *did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord* (v. 43), observed the commands of his God, and trod in the steps of his good father; and he persevered therein: He *turned not aside from it*. Yet every man's character has some *but* or other, so had his; the *high places were not taken away*, no not out of Judah and Benjamin, though those tribes lay so near Jerusalem that they might easily bring their offerings and incense to the altar there, and could not pretend, as some other of the tribes, the inconveniency of lying remote. But old corruptions are with difficulty

rooted out, especially when they have formerly had the patronage of those that were good, as the high places had of Samuel, Solomon, and some others.

(2.) His affairs did well. He prevented the mischiefs which had attended their wars with the kingdom of Israel, establishing a lasting peace (v. 44), which would have been a greater blessing if he had contented himself with a peace, and not carried it on to an affinity with Israel; he put a deputy, or viceroy, in Edom, so that the kingdom was tributary to him (v. 47), and therein the prophecy concerning Esau and Jacob was fulfilled, that *the elder should serve the younger*. And, in general, mention is made of his might and his wars, v. 45. He pleased God, and God blessed him with strength and success. His death is spoken of (v. 50), to shut up his story, yet, in the history of the kings of Israel, we find mention of him afterwards, ~~2~~ 2 Kings 3:7.

II. The beginning of the story of Ahaziah the son of Ahab, v. 51-53. His reign was very short, not two years. Some sinners God makes quick work with. It is a very bad character that is here given him. He not only kept up Jeroboam's idolatry, but the worship of Baal likewise; though he had heard of the ruin of Jeroboam's family, and had seen his own father drawn into destruction by the prophets of Baal, who had often been proved false prophets, yet he received no instruction, took no warning, but followed the example of his wicked father and the counsel of his more wicked mother Jezebel, who was still living. Miserable are the children that not only derive a stock of corruption from their parents, but are thus taught by them to trade with it; and unhappy, most unhappy parents, are those that help to damn their children's souls.