

February 5

Scriptures: Read 2 Chronicles 25 & 26

Key Verse: “As long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.” (2 Chronicles 26:5b)

Overview

Amaziah, the son of Joash, did well in heeding the words of the unnamed man of God who came courageously to warn him. The man told him that if he went into the battle against Edom with the hired Ephraimite soldiers from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, he would surely lose, ‘for the Lord was not with Israel’ since they had forsaken Him (25:7). However, Amaziah’s asking them to join him in the first place showed the weakness of his faith in God. Judah’s army had been depleted, (probably due to their defeat by the Syrians when his father Joash was king, 24:24), but, as the Lord had proved in this battle against Edom and many times before, He can work miracles and give the victory when His people trust in Him.

Amaziah’s lack of faith in hiring the mercenaries brought disaster. Although he had paid them already, it was not really very much, since they were also to have received payment after the battle by sharing in the spoils of war. Upon being dismissed, they angrily returned to their homes. On their way, they pillaged several towns of Judah, killing 3,000 people and taking much spoil (25:13). They were determined to make up for the spoil which Amaziah had excluded them from receiving by not going into the battle.

What a grave and foolish mistake Amaziah made by worshipping the very idols of the Edomites which had proven to be powerless before the Lord God who went into the battle with Judah (25:14-15). The Lord is a jealous God who will not share His glory with others (Deuteronomy 6:14-15; Isaiah 42:8). Amaziah probably did this because he believed that the idols still had some power (although not as much as his God). By worshipping them, he hoped to appease their anger against Him, especially after the cruelty he had shown the Edomites (25:12). Amaziah did not have a “loyal heart” to God (25:2) because of these very beliefs.

It was likely the same unnamed prophet who again came boldly to Amaziah. This time the prophet rebuked him and prophesied his doom (25:15-16). Amaziah’s sin, however, had now hardened his heart, and he did not heed the prophet’s words. If people are loyal to God, they believe in Him as the only God and worship Him alone, and they also show respect to the spokesman of God.

The pride of Amaziah contributed to his downfall. He may well have taken the Edomite idols as trophies of his victory, but they became a snare to him. It is clear that his pride in the victory over Edom gave him the over-confidence to challenge Israel in battle, but now the wrath of God was upon him, and he was defeated. This was likely the reason for the conspiracy against him and his eventual death.

Amaziah’s sixteen-year-old son, Uzziah (variant spelling, “Azariah”, 2 Kings 14:21) was made king after him. Uzziah, like his father and grandfather, began his reign successfully and with the blessings of God upon him. Since “he sought the Lord, God made him prosper” (26:5, key verse) and rewarded him for his faithfulness. Uzziah heeded the admonitions of the prophet Zechariah

and won many military victories. The Philistines and Arabians (nomads in the area southeast of Judah), whom Jehoshaphat had subjugated (17:11) but who had rebelled against his son Jehoram (21:16), were finally brought back into subjection and forced to pay tribute to Judah (26:8). These victories took place because Uzziah “was marvelously helped [by the Lord] till he became strong” (26:15). His army was extremely well organized and had the most innovative equipment, which brought destruction on a larger scale (26:14-15).

Everything Uzziah did prospered, until he became puffed up with pride; this led him to sin against God. Had he forgotten that it was God and God alone who had made him strong? Yet, rather than giving God all the glory for his prosperity, “his heart was lifted up, to his destruction” (26:16). When he presumed the position of priest-king (a usual practice for the heathen monarchs), the Lord made him leprous for the rest of his life (cf. Numbers 12:10; 2 Kings 5:27). He had broken the Law of Moses and of God by entering the Holy Place of the Temple and burning incense, a place and a duty exclusively reserved for priests from the line of Aaron (Exodus 30:7-8; Numbers 3:10; 16:40). As a leper, Uzziah was excluded from even entering the outer courts of the Temple and could no longer carry on as acting king (Leviticus 13:45-46; Numbers 5:1-4). The office of priest-king was reserved by God for the Messiah, the Lord Jesus alone.

Prayer

Thank You O Lord, that even though some turn away from You, You do not turn away from Your people. We read that in the year Uzziah died, Isaiah saw You filling the Temple in Jerusalem. Fill our temples with Your presence. We seek You with all our hearts.