

Amaziah was a king with a lot of promise. He started out doing what was right in the sight of God but eventually became proud and lost his way. He made the foolish and critical mistake of forsaking the LORD and following the gods that he had taken from a defeated enemy. He apparently did not consider how powerless these gods were since they could not protect their previous owners.

1 Amaziah was twenty and five years old *when* he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.

Amaziah became king of Judah after the assassination of his father Joash by his own servants. Joash had been a good king while his mentor, Johoiada the priest, was alive. After Johoiada's death, Joash allowed the princes of Judah to lead him away from the LORD. When Jehoiaada's son, Zechariah, tried to call the king and the nation to repentance, Joash had him stoned. Soon after, Joash's own servants conspired together and killed him in revenge for Zechariah's death (2 Chr. 24). Joash's premature death had Amaziah taking the throne at a relatively young age.

2 And he did *that which* was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart.

In the parallel passage in 2 Kings 14, the righteousness of Amaziah's reign is put into perspective, contrasting it against David's reign (2 Kings 14:3 "And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did"). It appears that Amaziah followed his own father's example rather than that of his more famous (and blessed by God) ancestor, David. Although David had his problems and committed some great sins, he never turned away from serving the LORD. Amaziah, however, apparently did not have a heart for the LORD and later in this chapter we will see that the time came when he began worshiping other gods (v. 14).

Verses 3-4: Amaziah showed restraint in seeking justice for his father's murderers. In obedience to the Mosaic Law, only the men that actually committed the crime were executed and he did not seek vengeance on their children.

5 Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of *their* fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin: and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice *men, able* to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield. 6 He hired also an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver.

Amaziah began assembling an army from the men of Judah in order to go to war against Edom. He was only able to assemble a roster of 300,000 men, so he hired 100,000 mercenary soldiers from the northern kingdom of Israel for the price of 100 talents of silver (around 4 tons). This weight in silver would have an approximate value of \$8.3 million today.

7 But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the LORD *is* not with Israel, *to wit, with* all the children of Ephraim. 8 But if thou wilt go, do *it*, be strong for the battle: God shall make thee fall before the enemy: for God hath power to help, and to cast down.

At this time Israel had forsaken the LORD and the land was filled with sin. The LORD sends a prophet to warn Amaziah that he will not prosper if he goes to war with soldiers from Israel because God would not bless Israelite soldiers with a victory. These soldiers would be a liability in battle because the LORD would be against them, so Amaziah would suffer a great defeat if he chose to ignore this warning. The LORD was able to give them victory or defeat, so it was in Amaziah's best interests to do things the LORD's way.

9 And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this.

"And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?"

– Apparently it was not possible to demand the return of the money that Amaziah had paid out for these mercenary soldiers from Israel. He was understandably concerned that this large sum of money was now gone with nothing to show for it if he sent the mercenaries home.

"And the man of God answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this" – The prophet instructs Amaziah to put his trust in the LORD rather than in the money or the mercenary soldiers that it paid for. The help of LORD in battle would be of immensely more benefit than the money or the mercenaries.

Verse 10: Amaziah sends the mercenary army home, who are insulted and infuriated by the fact that they would not be allowed to fight and take part in the spoils of war. They will take revenge on various cities of Judah on their way back home to Israel (v. 13).

11 And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley of salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand.

"And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people" – Despite having sent 25 percent of his army home, Amaziah found the courage and strength to lead his people into battle. He was likely encouraged by the words from the LORD that the prophet spake but his actions after the battle made it obvious that his trust wasn't completely in the LORD and Him alone (v. 14, 20).

"and went to the valley of salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand" – The "children of Seir" were the Edomites, who lived in Mt. Seir. Amaziah led his army into battle and the LORD gave them victory, killing 10,000 enemy soldiers.

12 And *other* ten thousand *left* alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they all were broken in pieces.

“And other ten thousand left alive did the children of Judah carry away captive” – They also captured alive 10,000 enemy soldiers in addition to the 10,000 that were slain in battle.

“and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they all were broken in pieces” – These 10,000 captive enemy soldiers were thrown off a cliff in a manner of execution that was common in that day, particularly among the pagan nations.

13 But the soldiers of the army which Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, and smote three thousand of them, and took much spoil.

The mercenary soldiers, who were angry at being sent home without the opportunity to fight, blamed Amaziah and the nation of Judah for sending them home empty handed so they attacked and spoiled many of the Judean cities that they passed on their way back to Israel. As a result, 3,000 men of Judah lost their lives.

14 Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up *to be* his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them.

Even though God gave Amaziah the victory over the Edomites, Amaziah made a foolish and crucial mistake. Along with the other spoil taken from the enemy, he also brought home the idols that the Edomites served and began to worship them. The LORD became angry that Amaziah had turned away from Him and sent a prophet to ask why Amaziah wanted to serve the gods that couldn't save the Edomites instead of the true God that had given him the victory. When Amaziah stubbornly would not listen to the prophet, the LORD decided to destroy him by leading him to challenge Joash, the king of Israel, in battle. Joash urged Amaziah to abandon this idea since it would only lead to the downfall of Amaziah and Judah (vs. 15-19).

20 But Amaziah would not hear; for it *came* of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of *their enemies*, because they sought after the gods of Edom.

The LORD used Amaziah's stubbornness as a tool of judgment against him because he had forsaken the LORD and began to worship the gods of Edom. The LORD had similarly hardened the heart of Pharaoh against the word of the LORD spoken by Moses (**Ex. 9:12** “*And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses*”). Just as God had hardened Pharaoh's heart so that the LORD would be glorified in Pharaoh, God also hardened Amaziah's heart so that he would choose a self-destructive path.

Verses 21-23: Amaziah meets Joash, the king of Israel, in battle and is soundly defeated. Joash captures Amaziah and brings him to Jerusalem where Joash breaks open a 600 ft. wide gap in the wall around the city, perhaps to make it easier for his army to loot Jerusalem. Another possibility may be that Joash wanted to teach Amaziah a lesson.

24 And *he took* all the gold and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.

Amaziah's war with Israel was costly. Not only did it leave Jerusalem vulnerable to future attacks because of the large hole in the city wall, all the gold and silver found in the city, including in the house of God and the king's treasure house, was taken. Joash also took hostages back to Samaria, perhaps in order to extort more money from Amaziah and Jerusalem.

Verses 25-26: Apparently Joash released Amaziah before returning to Samaria, because we are told that Amaziah outlives Joash by 15 years, during which time he remained the king of Judah.

27 Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there.

“Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD” – The fact that the author sets the time of the conspiracy against Amaziah as being after he had turned from the LORD seems to indicate that it was a consequence of his sin of forsaking the LORD.

“they made a conspiracy [treason; unlawful alliance] against him in Jerusalem” – Just as the LORD influenced Amaziah to pursue the ill-fated battle against King Joash and Israel, the LORD apparently moved certain people to conspire to assassinate Amaziah. These people must have lost confidence in their king after the humiliating defeat to Israel and believed Judah would be better off without Amaziah as king.

“and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there” – Amaziah flees for his life to Lachish but assassins are sent after him, where they are able to find and kill him. His body is brought back to Jerusalem and buried in the family burial plots (v. 28). The LORD held the king of Judah to a high standard and the sin of forsaking the LORD carried a high price due to the king's influence over the nation and the fact that he should have known better.