

Who was King Amaziah in the Bible?

Amaziah was a king of the southern kingdom of Judah from 796 to 767 BC. He succeeded his father, King Joash, who was originally a righteous king but turned aside later in life and was assassinated by his own officials (2 Kings 12:20-21). One of Amaziah's first acts was to bring justice upon the murderers of his father (2 Kings 14:5).

The Bible summarizes Amaziah's reign thus: "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not as his father David had done" (2 Kings 14:3). One of Amaziah's failings was that, while he led the people of Judah in worshiping the Lord, he failed to remove the high places where people continued to sacrifice and burn incense in violation of God's instruction to offer sacrifices in Jerusalem (verse 4; cf. Deuteronomy 12:13-14). Amaziah later conquered the Edomites and foolishly brought back their gods and sacrificed to them. This idolatry resulted in an unnamed prophet coming to Amaziah and rebuking him. Amaziah insolently resisted the prophet's words, saying to him, "Since when have I made you the king's counselor?" (2 Chronicles 25:16, NLT). The prophet was not to be intimidated, however. He told King Amaziah, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel" (verse 16).

Amaziah's defeat of the Edomites had made him overconfident, so he sent a challenge to King Jehoash of Israel to meet him in battle (2 Kings 14:8; 2 Chronicles 25:17). Jehoash recognized Amaziah's arrogance and refused the challenge, knowing that he could easily defeat the smaller territory of Judah (2 Kings 14:9-10; 2 Chronicles 25:18-19). But Amaziah would not back down, and so Jehoash attacked, defeating the army of Judah and capturing Amaziah. Amaziah was taken to Jerusalem where Jehoash plundered the temple before returning to Samaria (2 Kings 14:14; 2 Chronicles 25:24).

After Jehoash died, Amaziah lived another 15 years. It is unknown whether he returned to rule in Jerusalem, but, in any case, the men of Judah were conspiring against him, causing him to flee to Lachish in southwestern Judah. But the assassins sent after Amaziah found him and killed him. "He was brought back by horse and was buried with his ancestors in the City of Judah" (2 Chronicles 25:28). Amaziah could have had a long, successful reign had he continued following the Lord, but his story became another cautionary tale of the fate of the kings who turned aside to idolatry.