

*Two father-son kings, both relatively righteous, started their reigns well, stumbled badly, and ended in disappointment for all. In their tenures Judah began a steep slide into apostasy, yet God remained faithful in executing justice, granting peace, and restoring hope. You can trust him with your disappointments.*

**Introduction** – Have you ever sensed God was messing with you?

## **I. Coveting Kings**

### **A. Judah’s king Amaziah, son of Joash (vv. 14:1-22)**

The account of king Amaziah of Judah highlights his rash, prideful, and overconfident heart that led to his disastrous military campaign against his brother-nation Israel. Amaziah’s defeat at the hand of king Jehoash of Israel led to Judah’s army being routed, Amaziah’s capture, Jerusalem attacked and breached, and the looting of costly national treasures from the palace and temple. Amaziah is an example of a covetous leader and eventually defeated warmonger, suffering assassination at the end of a reign that started well and ended in disaster. Weighing his sins against his righteous deeds, it seems Amaziah was formally and politically loyal to the law of God, but he really had no heartfelt love for the LORD. When such a person is tempted, for example with coveting a grander kingdom to rule, nothing prevents a slide into disaster.

### **B. Judah’s king Azariah, son of Amaziah (vv. 15:1-7)**

2 Kings records little detail regarding the reign of Azariah/Uzziah of Judah. The story of God striking him with leprosy is an important lesson told in a parallel account (2 Chr 26:16-23). Azariah is an ambitious builder and administrator who reigns in civil peace for more than half a century. But when he covets and usurps the priestly duty of burning altar incense in the temple, God strikes him with leprosy. And even in death Azariah’s bones don’t find rest, as they are buried separately from the rest of his forefathers because of the leprosy had he suffered.

## **II. Covenant Sins**

### **A. Do not tolerate “high places” in order to keep the peace (vv. 14:4; 15:4)**

Both kings Amaziah and his son Azariah committed this sin. High places were open-air hilltop platforms or shrines in the land where the people sacrificed and made offerings to the LORD and sometimes to other gods (1 Kgs 3:2; 14:23; 15:11, 14; 22:43; 2 Kgs 12:2-3). Remember king Solomon’s heart was eventually led astray to worship other gods at the high places. High places posed a problem that temples should have solved. In the ancient world, temples were houses of a particular god, where the god was thought to dwell. History tells us even after the Solomonic temple was constructed in Jerusalem, the high places continued to be popular albeit unauthorized worship locations. Deuteronomy considered the pagan high places worthy of immediate destruction, and the Israelite high places tolerable only until Israel built the tabernacle/temple (Dt 12:2-7, 13-14). Offering sacrifice at the high places became forbidden worship because it spurned God’s presence in his chosen temple.

### **B. Do not take by unauthorized force in order to unite for peace (vv. 14:7-14)**

God did not authorize force between Judah and Israel because they were brother nations, both belonging by covenant to the LORD. After tasting success in battle against a weaker Edom, Amaziah picked a fight against a stronger king, Jehoash of Israel. So their armies squared off on a plain 15 miles from Jerusalem, and it didn’t end well. Judah’s king was captured, his troops all fled to their

homes, and Israel broke down a 600-foot section of Jerusalem's wall, walking away with hostages and looted treasure from the palace and the temple.

**C. Do not usurp a right in order to misuse/abuse the peace (v. 15:5; cf. 2 Chr 26:16-23)**

According to 2 Chronicles 26:16-21, after many years of success, blessing, and civil peace, Azariah became arrogant and usurped the priestly privileges of burning incense on the temple altar. God's law says the office and duties of king and priest must be separated (Ex 30:7-8; Num 16:40; 18:7). Only in Jesus Christ, our true, ultimate, and final prophet, priest, and king, would these offices be united in a single human being (Heb 1:1-2; 7:17; 9:11-12). Thus king Azariah profaned the temple since he was not a member of the priesthood. It wasn't his right to perform the job of a priest.

**III. Covenant Proverbs**

**A. Sow an imitated life, reap an imitated death (vv. 14:3, 19-20; cf. 12:20-21)**

When the author of Kings writes that a king "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD," there is a technical meaning being communicated. This evaluation is a description of covenant faithfulness/loyalty. Amaziah of Judah was (somewhat) loyal to the LORD God of Israel. Compared to his forefather king David, the standard by which all of Judah's kings were measured, Amaziah fell short (2 Chr 25:2, 14-16). But compared to his father Joash, Amaziah kept the covenant obligations of the Mosaic law (Dt 24:16) in all the things. He basically imitated his father's level of faithfulness. Notice what that got him! Assassinated by a conspiracy—just like dad.

**B. Justice makes peace, often poetically (vv. 15:5a; cf. Lev 13:46)**

Don't miss how God's justice is so often perfectly, ironically fitting—what we call poetic justice. King Azariah presided over an era of peace. But when he disturbed that peace, God effectively removed him from office to restore the peace. Although a leader in God's OT church, Azariah grasped for a particular role he had no right to possess. Instead of attaining ceremonial holiness, God struck him with leprosy rendering him ritually unclean. Judah's lead pastor wanted authority to do all that he pleased in the LORD's house, but the leaders who legitimately held that authority confined him the rest of his days to a quarantined house in a forced retirement.

**C. Disappointment with God does not hinder restoration from God (vv. 14:21-22; 15:5b)**

If you try to be a peacemaker, and God's doesn't seem to give peace, won't that be disappointing? Yes and no. Yes, because in this life you will have trouble. Life can be disappointing, filled with tribulation. No, because in disappointment Jesus says "take heart" we can have peace in him (Jn 16:32-33). Look at what God did in Judah during those dark, disappointing days. Elath, a town of Solomon's era of peace, was reclaimed and rebuilt. Azariah's son Jotham carried on God's leadership work. Judah was not without a son of David on the throne. Neither is the church. Neither is this congregation. Judah needed to look beyond Azariah's successor to the anointed son of David as their leader, Jesus the Messiah. Only in that divine-human person who is the perfect king and leader would their disappointment with fallible human leaders be framed by the God who restores.

**Conclusion** – Disappointment with our human fallible leaders is not necessarily a sin. But it is sin when we expect them to be our saviors. And leaders do not necessarily sin when they disappoint themselves. But they do sin when they expect to imitate Jesus perfectly. All of us need to expect disappointment one way or another. However, if we all look by faith to Jesus as our perfect leader—our savior worthy of imitation in his leading us out of covenant sins, as he forgives, cleanses, and renews us through his death for sin and resurrection for life—we have no reason to be disappointed with God. He graciously gives us Elaths (reminders of former peace) and Jothams (promises of future peace). In Christ our leader we inherit lasting, deep-down, satisfying peace. In him is no disappointment. Amen.