

## February 6

**Scriptures:** Read 2 Chronicles 27 & 28

**Key Verse:** “So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.” (2 Chronicles 27:6)

### Overview

Jotham must have learned from his father’s mistake; he did not sin by entering the unauthorized Temple area, as his father Uzziah had done. Though Jotham was loyal to the Lord, the people of Judah “still acted corruptly”. They were not loyal to the Lord God alone. Idolatry was always a problem for the children of Israel ever since they disobeyed the Lord by not wiping out or driving out all the idolatrous Canaanites who occupied the land when they first entered it. These people became a snare to them, just as Moses had forewarned (Deuteronomy 20:16-18; Judges 1).

Jotham was successful because “he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.” His mind and heart were fixed on the Lord and he was determined to obey His commandments, and so the Lord blessed him. The inspired writer desired his readers to have a good understanding that serving the Lord faithfully leads to blessing, but forsaking Him leads to disaster. Sadly, Jotham’s son Ahaz was unlike his father, living a life which led to disaster. He was the most wicked and corrupt king that ever ruled over Judah. He reintroduced Baal worship and filled the whole country with idols, leading Judah into terrible sins. Ahaz even offered some of his children as human sacrifices in the valley of Hinnom. It was because of these same abominations that God had judged the Canaanites to be exterminated and had given the land they occupied to Israel. This atrocity was punishable by death in the Law of Moses (Leviticus 20:1-5). The valley of Hinnom, where human sacrifice was practised, was located on the southern boundary of Jerusalem beside Mount Zion. It was later used by the righteous reformer Josiah as a dump site (2 Kings 23:10), and because of its association with the perpetual fires and practices of the heathen (cf. 2 Kings 16:3), it later came to be called Gehenna, a symbol for hell (cf. Mark 9:43).

The Lord’s punishment came soon and hard (cf. parallel account, 2 Kings 16). Judah was attacked by Syria (Aram) and many were taken captive. Judah also lost much territory to the Philistines (28:18). Pekah, king of Israel, killed 120,000 Judeans, including Ahaz’s son. They also took 200,000 captive, including women and children, to make them slaves. At this point, the Lord intervened, for His appointed punishment upon Judah was already exceedingly great, but in taking the captives, Israel had overstepped their mission.

God sent His message to the victorious army through Oded, a faithful and courageous prophet. He warned them not to take captives nor enslave their brethren from Judah (cf. Leviticus 25:42-43), otherwise more punishments would come upon them than they already deserved, for they too were guilty before the Lord. Their sin was rebellion against the house of David, abandoning the true worship of the Lord at His House, and worshipping false gods (calf worship).

The noble elders of Samaria (the capital city of the Northern Kingdom) wisely heeded the prophet’s words and kindly returned the captives, treating them as the good Samaritan treated the destitute man from Judea (Luke 10:30-37). The problems, however, were not over for Judah.

Edom saw Judah's weakened condition as an opportunity to attack, which they did successfully, taking some captives. History proves that there had always been much animosity and cruelty between Edom and the children of Israel (25:11; 1 Chronicles 18:12; 1 Kings 11:15-16; Obadiah 10-14; Psalms 83:4-8).

Ahaz turned to Assyria for help, though the prophet Isaiah had tried to prevent it, for it showed the nation did not trust in God (Isaiah 7:4-9). Because Ahaz did not listen to him, the result was that Assyria subjugated Judah (2 Kings 16:10). Thus the door was opened for the eventual Assyrian conquest of Judah under Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13).

As well as stripping the House of God of all its treasures, Ahaz went so far as to desecrate it, maliciously breaking the holy articles and boarding it up. His goal was to displace the truth with the false worship of idols, "But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel" (28:23). Ahaz's reign was full of turmoil. After he died, the people recognized that he was not worthy to be buried beside the remains of king David, since he did not represent David's righteous house.

## **Prayer**

Again Lord, we realize the consequences of failure to follow You closely. Keep us true to You. Keep our sons and daughters, the next generation, true to You. Use us today as a godly influence for Your glory.