

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CHRONICLES 14

This chapter relates the death of Abijah, and the succession of Asa in his stead, (^{<1440>}2 Chronicles 14:1), gives a good character of the latter for his reformation in religion, and for the care he took for the safety and protection of his subjects, (^{<1442>}2 Chronicles 14:2-8), and an account is given of a large army of Ethiopians that came against him, over whom he crying to the Lord, and trusting in him, by his help obtained a complete victory, (^{<1449>}2 Chronicles 14:9-15).

Ver. 1. *So Abijah slept with his fathers,* (^{<1158>}1 Kings 15:8)

and Asa his son reigned in his stead; in his days the land was quiet ten years; the Targum is, the land of Israel; but much better the Septuagint, the land of Judah; these ten years, in which it had rest from war, were the first three years of Asa's reign, and the first seven of Baasha's, according to Jarchi, and which seems right; after which there was war between them all their days, (see ^{<1152>}1 Kings 15:32,33).

Ver. 2. *And Asa did that which was good and right,* etc.] See (^{<1151>}1 Kings 15:11).

Ver. 3. *For he took away the altars of the strange gods,* etc.] Or of a strange people, of the Zidonians, Ammonites, and Moabites, which had remained from the times of Solomon, and which he built for his wives, (^{<1107>}1 Kings 11:7,8)

and the high places; built for idols; for as for those on which the true God was worshipped, they were not removed in his days, (^{<1154>}1 Kings 15:14)

and brake down the images: or statues, or pillars, erected to the honour of idols, and on which the images of them were placed:

and cut down the groves; in the midst of which they stood.

Ver. 4. *And commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers,* etc.] To pray to him, and him only, and attend his worship and service; this he did by a public edict:

and to do the law and the commandment: to observe all the laws of God, moral, ceremonial, and civil.

Ver. 5. *Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images,* etc.] Perhaps the high places in (^{<444B>}2 Chronicles 14:3) design only the high places and altars in Jerusalem, and near it; these in all the rest of the cities of the land; the “images were”, as the word signifies, “sun images”, either made in the form of the sun, or dedicated to it, or temples for it; (See Gill on “^{<435D>}Leviticus 26:30”),

and the kingdom was quiet before him; he had no foreign enemy to molest him, and so took that opportunity to reform divine worship, and in that he met with no opposition from his people.

Ver. 6. *And he built fenced cities in Judah,* etc.] For his defence against the kingdom of Israel and other nations, as Rehoboam had done before him; and which might have been demolished by Shishak king of Egypt, when he took them, (^{<441B>}2 Chronicles 11:5-12 12:4)

for the land had rest; according to the Targum, the land of Israel rested, and gave no disturbance to the kingdom of Judah, not having recovered the blow given them by Abijah; but it is rather to be understood of the land of Judah, which, as it did not attempt the reduction of the ten tribes, so it was neither attacked by them, nor any other enemy: and he had no war in those years; in the ten years mentioned, (^{<440E>}2 Chronicles 14:1), neither with Israel nor any other nation: because the Lord had given him rest; that he might be at leisure to do the above things; all rest is from the Lord, civil, spiritual, and eternal.

Ver. 7. *Therefore he said unto Judah,* etc.] To the nobles and principal men of the kingdom:

let us build these cities; which he, no doubt, particularly mentioned by name, and pointed at; that is, repair and fortify them, and put them into a better condition of defence:

and make about them walls and towers, gates and bars; which are always made to fortified places, to protect the inhabitants, and keep out an enemy:

while the land is yet before us; in our power, no enemy in it, nor any to hinder or molest:

because we have sought the Lord our God, we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side; had set up his pure worship, reformed abuses in it, and removed idolatry from it, and closely attended to the service of the sanctuary, which was well pleasing to God; the happy effect of which they experienced, rest from all their enemies round about them:

so that they built, and prospered; they began, and went on, and finished, there being nothing to hinder them.

Ver. 8. *And Asa had an army of men that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand*, etc.] These were armed with a large sort of shield, to protect them, and with spears, to push at an enemy when they came near them, and to close quarters with them:

and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand; these had also a lesser sort of shields, to defend their bodies, and bows and arrows, to annoy an enemy at a distance:

all these were mighty men of valour; able bodied men, valiant and courageous; perhaps Asa gathered these together, on hearing that the Ethiopians were preparing to attack him, as follows.

Ver. 9. *And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian, with an host of thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots*, etc.] According to Josephus^{f52}, this army consisted of 900,000 foot, and 100,000 horsemen, and certain it is there were horsemen among them, (^{<4408>}2 Chronicles 16:8) some say these were not the Ethiopians in Africa, beyond Egypt, being, as is said, too far off for such an army to travel, and it would be hard to say what should induce them to it; and besides it is urged, the king of Egypt would never have suffered them to pass through his dominions, as they must to come to Judea; but that they were the Cushite Arabs, that inhabited Midian, part of Arabia Petraea, and Arabia Felix, near Judaea, (see Gill on ^{<4411>}Numbers 12:1”), but since this great host consisted of Lubim or Libyans, inhabitants of Africa, as well as of Ethiopians, (^{<4408>}2 Chronicles 16:8), these Ethiopians seem to be rather those in Africa, who were masters of Egypt and Libya, as well as Ethiopia, quickly after the death of Shishak, or Sesostris, (see ^{<4412>}2 Chronicles 12:2,3), which accounts for the size of this army, and their passage through Egypt: that there were two sorts of Ethiopians, the western and eastern ones, the one

that dwelt in Africa, the other in Asia, appears clearly from Homer ^{f53}, Herodotus ^{f54}, and Heliodorus ^{f55}, the former of which seem here meant; nor need this army be thought incredible, especially since they were joined by the Lubim or Libyans, and assisted by the Philistines, as appears by what follows; besides, the two armies of Israel and Judah we read of in the preceding chapter, when put together, exceed this; see also (^{<1474>}2 Chronicles 17:14-18), so the armies of Tamerlane and Bajazet, that of the former being 1,600,000, and that of the latter 1,400,000 ^{f56}:

and came unto Mareshah; a city in the tribe of Judah, on the borders of it, (^{<1108>}2 Chronicles 11:8).

Ver. 10. *Then Asa went out against him*, etc.] Notwithstanding he brought so great an army with him:

and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah; where the Ethiopians were; he did not stay till they got further into his country, but marched against them when on the frontiers of it, and chose the valley to pitch in, as being more to the advantage of his smaller army; (see ^{<0017>}Judges 1:17).

Ver. 11. *And Asa cried unto the Lord his God*, etc.] Or prayed, as the Targum, with vehemence, being in distress; this he did before the battle began, at the head of his army, and for the encouragement of it:

and said, Lord, [it is] nothing with thee to help; nothing can hinder from helping, his power being superior to all others, and even infinite, and none besides him could:

whether with many, or with them that have no power; numbers make no difference with him, nor the condition they are in; whether numerous and mighty, or few and feeble; he can as easily help the one as the other, (see ^{<0146>}1 Samuel 14:6),

help us, O Lord our God; who are few and weak in comparison of the enemy:

for we rest on thee; trust in thee, and rely upon thee for help; the Targum is, ``on thy Word we lean:”

and in thy name we go against this multitude; expressing faith in him, expecting help from him, encouraging and strengthening themselves in him, going forth not in their own name and strength, but in his; the Targum is,

“in the name of the Word of the Lord:”

O Lord, thou [art] our God: and thou only we know, and serve no other, and we are thy people, called by thy name: *let not man prevail against thee;* for should this enemy prevail against them, it would be interpreted prevailing against their God.

Ver. 12. *So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah,* etc.] With consternation and terror; they were thrown into a panic:

and the Ethiopians fled; before them, just as Jeroboam and Israel had, as related in the preceding chapter, (⁴⁴³¹⁵2 Chronicles 13:15,16).

Ver. 13. *And Asa, and the people that [were] with him, pursued them unto Gerar,* etc.] A city of the Philistines, (⁰²⁰¹⁰Genesis 20:1),

and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; they were thrown into such a fright, and into so much confusion, that they could not put themselves in order, and rally again; or there fell such a vast number of them, that there were scarce any remaining alive, which seems to be the sense of the words used:

for they were destroyed before the Lord, and before his host; the army of Israel, which the Lord was, as it were, the Commander of, fought for, and led them in the pursuit, and gave them victory; or it may mean an host of angels, employed in destroying this great army; and so the Syriac and Arabic versions of (⁴⁴⁴²2 Chronicles 14:12) read, “the angel of the Lord smote the Ethiopians:”

and they carried away very much spoil; which they found in their camp, and with their slain; even much gold and silver, as Josephus ^{f57} says.

Ver. 14. *And they smote all the cities round about Gerar,* etc.] The cities of the Philistines, who were auxiliaries and confederates with these Ethiopians, and colonies from them, according to Theodoret, and who says, about Eleutheropolis was a place, called, in his time, Geraron Saton:

for the fear of the Lord came upon them; so that they had no power to defend themselves, and oppose the men of Judah:

and they spoiled all the cities; of the goods and substance that were in them:

for there was exceeding much spoil in them; great wealth and riches of one kind or another.

Ver. 15. *They smote also the tents of cattle*, etc.] The people that dwelt in tents for the sake of the pasturage of their cattle; the Scenite Arabs, so called from dwelling in tents:

and carried away sheep; which those Arabs were feeding in Palestine, and which this great army brought with them for their support:

and camels in abundance; which is another circumstance proving them to be Arabs, who abounded with camels:

and returned to Jerusalem; with their spoil, and with great joy.