

From the sins of the greatest king of Israel, King David and his adultery, we turn to the sins of other kings in Israel and Judah. Their terrible royal track record caused the godly to long for the coming of the Messiah, a greater King whose rule would be characterized by integrity, righteousness, humility, and peace. Give thanks that the Spirit of God did dwell upon the kings of Israel and Judah so that there was a remnant of faith in some of them. We see such faith in action in Uzziah and Jotham (2 Kings 15 and 2 Chronicles 26-27).

Mon/Tues: Read 2 Kings 15:1-7; Psalm 110:3 & Jeremiah 31:33-34 It Shall Be Thy Royal Throne

The most serious shortcoming, besides personal sins, on the part of the kings of Judah was their *utter inability* to change the hearts of the people over whom they ruled. For example, during these kings' rules, God continually condemns the peoples' refusal to abandon their high places (2 Kings 12:3; 14:4 & 15:4).

Israel's history shows that the people of God were not content to pray exclusively to their covenant Lord but instead erected altars of incense where they offered prayers to foreign gods. *Tabletalk*, 4/23/10 devotional

This was the significance of the high places. Both Judah and Israel embraced the worship of Canaanite gods to ensure fruitfulness in their fields and even in their wombs. Fertility was something the Canaanites themselves boasted of in their land flowing with milk and honey. They believed that Baal and Asherah (idol consorts) were the source of the Promised Land's fertility, and they pressured Israelites to adopt the worship of these idols alongside the worship of Jehovah. Think of the anxious Israelite farmer, wanting to ensure by human and spiritual means the stability of the climate for their crops. How to avoid climate change? Well, listen to the Canaanites: Why not cover all your bases? (the argument goes), worship your LORD at the temple where He chooses His name to rest and then come home to the high places above your fields and also seek the favor of our local deities to ensure a good climate for crops.

Thus no king of Judah was able to stop the infection of the worship of the one true God by the idols of Canaan. Only great King David's greater Son would be able to rule the hearts of His people. As Psalm 110:3 predicts of Christ's rule: "His people would be willing volunteers in the day of His power!" – changed from the inside out by His Spirit!

Meditate and Pray: Give thanks that the Covenant which King Jesus inaugurates is not a merely external lip service to the LORD but stems from the heart changed by the Holy Spirit. Only King Jesus can write His Law on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). Sing about the glory of His *inward work in our lives and our response to Him* in hymn # 585:

1 Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in ceaseless praise,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

3 Take my voice, and let me sing,
always, only, for my King.
Take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee,
filled with messages from thee.

2 Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee,
swift and beautiful for thee.

4 Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect, and use
ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose,
ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will, and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne,
it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take my self, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee,
ever, only, all for thee.

Wednesday: Read 2 Kings 15:1-7 & 2 Chronicles 26:1-23

Overconfidence and a Fall

Azariah was a great king in Judah, whose fame spread as the LORD helped him rule in a marvelous way (2 Chronicles 26:15). As was traditional, when he ascended the throne at age 16, he was given a new throne name: Uzziah, meaning “Jehovah is strength.” The LORD blessed his lengthy reign of 52 years with many economic and military accomplishments, which are summed up in 2 Chronicles 26:6-15.

At the height of his strength (2 Chronicles 26:16), he sought to arrogate to himself the office of priest, coming into the Holy Place to the altar that sat before the veil into the Holy of Holies. This altar of incense was a symbol of the prayers of the priesthood continually rising to God’s throne. It was actually associated with the Holy of Holies even though it sat just outside it. Only the High Priest could once a year take incense from that altar and enter directly into God’s presence and throne on top of the Ark of the Covenant. How terrible, then, for Uzziah to presume to offer up prayers for all of Israel by grabbing one of the censers full of incense and trying to barge into the Holy Place – where no king was allowed to go.

The priests (all eighty of them) responded quickly to stop Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:17-18). But in his anger, Uzziah exposed himself to the swift judgment of the LORD as leprosy broke out on his forehead. Separated from ever worshipping the LORD with God’s people again, the Scriptures say that his life was “destroyed” (2 Chronicles 26:21 & 26:16) by this rash deed.

Meditate and Pray: Lord, protect us in our strengths and areas of expertise from overconfidence and pride, our greatest peril.

Thursday: Read 2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chronicles 26:20; Isaiah 6:1-5 & John 12:37-41 A True Vision of Holiness

What a contrast: Uzziah’s violation of the holiness of the LORD versus the humble prostration of the great prophet Isaiah when a vision of the *heavenly* Holy of Holies was given him. In the year that Uzziah died Isaiah was commissioned to serve the LORD. Faced with God’s holiness, Isaiah cries out that he is no different than the dead king – his lips and life are as unclean as a leper and he dwells with a race of spiritual lepers.

Whose attitude best depicts the attitude of the majority of the nation – the pride of Uzziah in insisting on worshipping the LORD in his own sinful way, or the attitude of Isaiah, trembling before the holiness of the LORD, “high and lifted up?”

The sad answer is seen from the Apostle John’s description of the rejection of Jesus in John 12:37ff. Though Jesus repeatedly warns the Jews to walk in the light of His revelation, they refuse to heed His

words. The result is that they fulfilled the judgment levied against the unbelief of Judah in the days of Isaiah:

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.”

Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

So we can say that many of Isaiah’s own countrymen, including King Uzziah, did not listen to the ministry of the prophets. Yet how wonderful that the vision of glory which Isaiah beheld, which John alludes to in John 12:41, stayed with the prophet and with his band of disciples as they sealed up the revelation for future generations - see Isaiah 8:20.

Meditate and Pray: May we too treasure up the Scriptures as containing the revelation of our beloved Savior. Sing about the treasure which the Word of God is for us in hymn # 139:

1 Your Word is like a garden, Lord,
with flowers bright and fair;
and everyone who seeks may pluck
a lovely cluster there.
Your Word is like a deep, deep mine;
and jewels rich and rare
are hidden in its mighty depths
for every searcher there.

2 Your Word is like a starry host;
a thousand rays of light
are seen to guide the traveler,
and make his pathway bright.
Your Word is like an armory,
where soldiers may repair,
and find, for life's long battle day,
all needful weapons there.

3 O may I love your precious Word,
may I explore the mine,
may I its fragrant flowers glean,
may light upon me shine.
O may I find my armor there,
your Word my trusty sword;
I'll learn to fight with every foe
the battle of the Lord.

Fri/Sat: Read 2 Kings 15:6; 15:32-38 & 2 Chronicles 27:1-9**Focus on the Eternal**

As we mine the Scriptures, we believe that the promise of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 *is true of all God's Word* (including 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles):

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

What this means practically speaking is that we are to be on the hunt for *every treasure of grace and hope contained in the Bible*. As my pastor during seminary said, all that is of the LORD is eternal, and we are to focus on that ten percent, even if the ninety percent of life right now might be discouraging. The ninety percent is temporary; the ten percent God is doing is eternal.

We have such two examples of God's eternal work in the midst of dark days of wickedness: first, in the lengthy confinement which Uzziah endured until his death; second, in the reign of Jotham, Uzziah's son with the ordering of God's will under this younger King of Judah.

Uzziah was confined for all his old age. At the height of his powers, Uzziah was separated from society and thereby given by God many years to contemplate his sin. As Matthew Henry hopefully says of those years:

Thus God gave Uzziah a loud and constant call to repentance, and a long space to repent, which we have reason to hope he improved. He had been a man of much business in the world; but being taken off from that, and confined to a *separate house*, he had leisure to think of another world and prepare for it.

Second, Jotham was made co-regent with his father shortly after his father was shut-away because of leprosy (2 Kings 15:6). He then reigned on his own, starting when he was 25 years old (2 Kings 15:33).

But in 2 Chronicles' gracious description of Jotham's reign we see the grace of God shining through. In 27:2-6, Jotham is blessed by the LORD militarily and economically, turning his attention to strengthening Jerusalem's defenses and building fortifications in the hill country of Judah.

Note that he did not simply rely upon the great wealth and military prowess which his mighty father had built up during his reign (2 Chronicles 26:10-15). Instead, 2 Chronicles 27:6 describes Jotham's ordering of his life and kingdom before the LORD. Here are some translations of this all-important verse in Jotham's life:

So Jotham strengthened his position because he did not waver in obeying the Lord his God. (Christian Standard Bible)

Jotham was securely established because he maintained a faithful life before the Lord his God. (Common English Bible)

And Joatham was strengthened, because he had his way directed before the Lord his God. (Douay-Rheims 1899 Bible)

So Jotham became mighty, because he ordered his ways before the Lord his God. (ESV)

So Jotham became mighty, because he directed his way before the Lord his God. (Geneva 1599 Bible)

Meditate and Pray: The Geneva Bible (1599) concludes in its comments on this verse:

Jotham showeth that all prosperity cometh of God, who never faileth when we put our trust in him.

Pray the following prayer for our lives, the lives of our loved ones, neighbors, nation, and world:

Oh, LORD, as a people greatly blessed in our military security; wealth and freedoms, please bring us back to the reality that lasting prosperity only comes from you. Remember the prayers of the fathers of our nation that we would be founded only on the inalienable realities on which you have founded the nations of the world.

Oh, LORD, as the One who has sent out your Gospel into the world, please destroy every godless foundation of national life throughout the world. Cause the nations to bow before you. Please send forth the Good News of the Gospel to fill the void as nations come to an end of themselves. Thank you that you are a God who can dig deep, solid foundations into our lives from your Scriptures. Please bring our children and grand-children into your living Church that they might be firmly based upon Jesus Christ as their only Rock of salvation.

We ask this in the Name of the One who promised that He would build His church, and the gates of Hell would not prevail against her, Amen.

Sunday: Read 2 Chronicles 27:6 and Psalm 37:23-24

Not Cast Off

The same verb used of the LORD's establishing the way of Jotham the King of Judah is used of the LORD's establishing the individual steps of the believer in Psalm 37:23:

The steps of a man are established by the Lord,
when he delights in his way;

As verse 24 says, we may stumble and fall, but not unto destruction. The LORD's mighty grip keeps ahold of our lives.

Though he fall, namely, as one that were faint hearted, *he shall not be cast off*, namely, utterly, or forever from God. 2Co 4:9; "*for the Lord putteth under his hand*," i.e., his power and might, namely, to uphold him from utter falling away, which we should quickly do if God were not with us.

Thomas Wilcocks

Meditate and Pray: Lord, please make us delight in Your Way and rule our hearts. We need your hand to grip us until our last breath. Humble us, but keep us in your way.