

## Lesson 4 – 2 Kings 14-15

Text: 2 Kings 14-15; 2 Chronicles 26

Main Characters: God, Uzziah (Azariah)

Key Passages:

- 2 Chronicles 26:5 – Uzziah sought God, and as long as he sought Him, God made him prosper.
- 2 Chronicles 26:16 – Uzziah's strength and pride ultimately led to his downfall.

Main Storyline:

After Amaziah's death in Judah, his son, Uzziah (also called Azariah), became king over Judah. Also, like Amaziah, he initially was a very good king, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord. As long as he sought the Lord and obeyed Him, God prospered him and the kingdom. A prophet of that day, Zechariah, apparently helped Uzziah to stay faithful to the Lord. Unfortunately, like other kings before him, including Amaziah (2 Kings 14:4), Uzziah did not remove the high places; the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense at these locations.

Uzziah was favored by the Lord in many ways, especially militarily. God helped Uzziah to defeat the Philistines, the Arabians, the Meunites, and the Ammonites (who also brought tribute to Uzziah). He took back much of the land that had been taken from Judah during the reigns of previous kings. Uzziah also fortified the city of Jerusalem, building towers along the walls and fortifying the walls as well. He also constructed watchtowers in the desert for additional protection.

Uzziah's army was very powerful and well-organized. He had about 307,500 soldiers in his army. Each soldier was fully equipped with contemporary armor and weaponry, including shields, spears, bows, slings, body armor, and helmets. He also built war devices to help defend Jerusalem which could launch arrows and large stones. These devices were invented by very skilled men and were probably very similar to the ballista (very heavy crossbow) and catapult siege weapons.

Besides his physical strength, Uzziah was also blessed with great fame and fortune. His fame spread far and wide as a result of the strength of Judah (helped by God). Uzziah also had many farmers, livestock, and vinedressers. At his peak, Uzziah was very similar to Solomon: he was helped by God to be one of the most wealthy and powerful kings in the region.

Unfortunately, all of this fame and power ultimately turned Uzziah's heart away from serving the Lord. Uzziah disregarded the laws of God and brazenly entered the temple in order to burn incense on the altar of incense. This was strictly forbidden as only the priests were able to enter the Holy Place and perform the sacrifice. Initially, the priests simply confronted him and rebuked him for his arrogance. Instead of repenting and being humble, Uzziah hardened his heart and became furious at the priests. While he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on Uzziah's forehead. The priests immediately threw him out of the temple; Uzziah, too, knew that God had punished him.

Uzziah lived out the rest of his days in an isolated house, cut off from God's people, until he died. Though he was initially a very good king, he allowed himself to be corrupted by the blessings that God had provided to him. Uzziah ultimately became proud and, as a result, was punished. When Uzziah died, he was buried separately from his fathers (in a particular field) because of his leprosy. In his place, Uzziah's son, Jotham, became king of Judah.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) The past often repeats itself; we must educate ourselves on history and learn from others.
- 2.) God blesses us that we might, in turn, bless him with our lives. We must not become proud.
- 3.) When we are rebuked for sinful actions, it is always best to listen and repent of our sins.