

1  **The Rise and Fall of Uzziah**

2 Chronicles 26

2  **The Rise of Uzziah**

- Uzziah was the son of Amaziah.
- He became Judah's 11<sup>th</sup> king at age 16 and reigned for a total of 52 years – the second-longest tenure of any king of Judah yet.
- 2 Kings refers to Uzziah as “Azariah”.
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3  **The Rise of Uzziah**

- God blessed Uzziah in a number of ways:
  - Spiritually – Uzziah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord... As his father had done.
  - Militarily – Uzziah defeated all of his enemies, built up his cities, and increased the size of his army. Most importantly, he built up the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down in his grandfather's time. Uzziah's might was such that under him Judah became a major world power, and his fame spread all the way to Pharaoh's court.

4  **The Rise of Uzziah**

- God blessed Uzziah in a number of ways:
  - Economically – Uzziah “loved the soil.” He was gifted with an understanding of farming and husbandry, and the land flourished under his reign.
  - Creatively – Uzziah was a true “renaissance man”, and devised and built all manner of “machines... to shoot arrows and great stones.”

5  **The Rise of Uzziah**

- All of the blessings in Uzziah's life came for this simple reason: That the Lord helped him.
- *He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God, and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.* (2Ch 26:5)
- *...And his fame spread far, for he was **marvelously helped**, till he was strong.* (2Ch 26:15)

6  **THE FALL OF UZZIAH**

7  **Pride comes before the Fall**

- *...And his fame spread far, for he was **marvelously helped**, till he was strong. **But** when he was strong, **he grew proud**, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.* (2Ch 26:15-16)

8  **1) The cause of pride**

- Uzziah's pride is innate within himself. Pride is the essence of the Sin Nature. Success does not cause pride, but both success and failure can provide the environment in which pride can grow.
- Many people make the mistake of thinking that because success/wealth can make way for pride, that success in and of itself is somehow wrong.
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9  **2) The claims of pride**

- Uzziah's pride asserts itself over things for which he could take no credit:
  - Victory in battle (Proverbs 21:31)
  - Inventive genius (Exodus 35:31-32)
  - Economic growth and success (Deuteronomy 8:18)
  - Spiritual fervor (Ephesians 2:8-10)
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10  **3) The crimes of pride**

- *But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of*

*incense.* (2Ch 26:16)

- Uzziah was *unfaithful* – to the God who had proved to be so faithful to him.
- If God made Uzziah to prosper so long as he sought Him, the moment Uzziah became unfaithful, God's hand of blessing was removed.

11  **3) The crimes of pride**

- This is not to say that God's hand of love – toward David or toward David's house – was removed.
- God had made an eternal covenant with the house of David, and even though Uzziah might be unfaithful, God is never so.
- But one of the most loving things that God can do for us sometimes is to remove his hand of blessing (Heb 12:6-8)

12  **3) The crimes of pride**

- Although Uzziah's unfaithfulness to the Lord was a matter of the heart, it manifested in a very specific sin: Uzziah entered the temple of the Lord in order to burn incense on the altar of incense.
- This was a sin for two reasons:

13  **3) The crimes of pride**

- The Altar of Incense was the altar located in the Holy Place.
- Only the priests were allowed to offer incense on the Altar of Incense.
- The incense had to be of a specific formula, only accessible to the priests.
- When the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, attempted to offer "strange" or "common" incense, the Lord struck them dead (Leviticus 10).

14  **3) The crimes of pride**

- In many ways, Uzziah's sin is similar to that of Saul (1 Samuel 13).
- God ordained three positions of authority in ancient Israel: Those of prophet, priest, and king.
- Each of these roles would be eventually fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who is our Prophet, our Priest, and our King.

15  **3) The crimes of pride**

- Both Saul and Uzziah sought to enhance their authority, their prestige, or their military prowess by usurping the God-given roles of those around them.
- This is one of the ways in which pride often rears its head in the church.

16  **3) The crimes of pride**

- This was a sin for two reasons:
  - 1) Uzziah sought to take upon himself a role that God did not intend for him to have. This is one of the many ways that pride manifests itself in our lives – we seek a position, whether of authority, ministry, or influence that God did not intend for us to have, but we seek it because of the prideful way in which we view ourselves.

17  **3) The crimes of pride**

- This was a sin for two reasons:
  - 2) Uzziah's worship was not acceptable worship – i.e., his incense was not the right incense and it was not offered in the right way.
  - This is one of the defining characteristics of pride – it prevents us from being able to worship God with a whole heart.

18  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- 1) Uzziah is withstood by godly men
  - *But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the LORD who were men of valor, and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God."* (2Ch 26:17-18)

19  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- It is worth noting how Azariah the priest chooses to withstand Uzziah.
- The temple was Azariah's jurisdiction – not Uzziah's, and this episode is merely the latest in the conflict between the palace and the temple that stretches back to Joash's time.
- Though confronting him with the force necessary to back up his words, Azariah does not resort to personal recriminations.

20  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- 2) Uzziah's anger leads to destruction
  - *Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense. (2Ch 26:19)*
- Up until now, the judgment of God had not fallen. But now, Uzziah was about to follow in the generational sin of his father and grandfather.

21  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- Joash, when confronted with the reproofing words of Zechariah the priest, his own foster-brother, has him executed.
- Amaziah, when confronted with the rebuke of a prophet, threatens to strike the prophet down.
- In each instance, it is the rejection of the man of God that marks the downfall of the king.
- Now, Uzziah is experiencing his own anger with the Priests of God and repeating their folly.

22  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- Anger and pride are generational sins – they are attitudes, dispositions, and predispositions that can be passed on from one generation to the next.

23  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- Uzziah is struck down with leprosy – with *tzaraat* – at the very moment he becomes angry with Azariah and the priests of God.
- This form of leprosy was an extremely painful, often fatal, and highly-contagious fungus, that would literally eat away at the victim's skin.
- In Jewish culture, to have leprosy was considered to be one of the “walking dead.” Leprosy made you ceremonially unclean and unfit for worship.

24  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- But contemporary historical accounts give us an additional perspective on what happened that day:
  - *In the mean time a great earthquake shook the ground and a rent was made in the temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized upon him immediately. (Josephus Flavius, Antiquities IX 10:4)*

25  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- This earthquake is the same one referenced in the beginning of the book of Amos:
  - *The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. (Amo 1:1)*

26  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- Additionally, geologists provide us with additional evidence of the earthquake:
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27  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- *Masonry walls best display the earthquake, especially walls with broken ashlar, walls*

*with displaced rows of stones, walls still standing but leaning or bowed, and walls collapsed with large sections still lying course-on-course. Debris at six sites (Hazor, Deir 'Alla, Gezer, Lachish, Tell Judeideh, and 'En Haseva) is tightly confined stratigraphically to the middle of the eighth century B.C., with dating errors of ~30 years....The earthquake was at least magnitude 7.8, but likely was 8.2...This severe geologic disaster has been linked historically to a speech delivered at the city of Bethel by a shepherd-farmer named Amos of Tekoa.*

28  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- While we cannot say for certain whether this earthquake took place exactly when Uzziah entered the temple, we do know that it took place during his reign exactly around the time (750 B.C) when Uzziah was said to have become unfaithful to the Lord.
- The magnitude of the earthquake was such that it would have damaged or destroyed all the defensive improvements that Uzziah made to Jerusalem.

29  **4) The conclusion of pride**

- Uzziah's pride thus had two results:
- First, it made him unfit to worship God.
- Second, it eventually destroyed everything he had built.
  - Joash destroyed the only family he had ever had.
  - Amaziah was conquered by the very things he sought to conquer.
  - Uzziah destroyed the very things that had become his source of pride.

30  **What attitude do you bring into the House of God?**

*I will not boast in anything  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ  
His death and resurrection*

*Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer  
But this I know with all my heart  
His wounds have paid my ransom*