

“The Rise of Uzziah”
2 Kings 14:17-
(Preached at Trinity, July 3, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The author is now moving us at supersonic speed, racing us to the end of 2 Kings, more important, racing us to the end of Israel as nation. King after king as he moves back and forth between Judah and Israel. After the death of Amaziah, king of Judah, we are briefly introduced to his son Azariah.
In **Chapter 15:13** he is called by the more familiar name, Uzziah.
The author of this chapter gives us only seven verses to describe the life of this king. This is sad because there is much to be known about Uzziah.
Thankfully, the Book of Chronicles devotes an entire chapter to his reign.
2. Uzziah came to the throne at age 16 and reigned for 52 years.
The author gives us the most important detail of his reign:
2 Kings 15:3 NAU - "He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done."
 - A. He became exceedingly strong. Even the Ammonites gave him tribute and his fame extended all the way to Egypt.
2 Chronicles 26:8 NAU - "The Ammonites also gave tribute to Uzziah, and his fame extended to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong."
 - B. Under Uzziah, Israel enjoyed prosperity not seen since the reign of Solomon.
2 Chronicles 26:10-11 NAU - "He built towers in the wilderness and hewed many cisterns, for he had much livestock, both in the lowland and in the plain. *He also had* plowmen and vinedressers in the hill country and the fertile fields, for he loved the soil. ¹¹ Moreover, Uzziah had an army ready for battle"
 - C. As testimony to the stability of Uzziah's reign, the Northern Kingdom went through five different kings during his reign.
As king after king in Israel were characterized by wickedness, the reign of Uzziah was characterized by righteousness. The writer of Chronicles gives us the secret of his success.
2 Chronicles 26:5 NAU - "and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him."
3. Uzziah's righteous reign is largely the fruit of the wise counsels of Zechariah, a man of great understanding and wisdom.
2 Chronicles 26:3-5 NAU - "Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jechiliah of Jerusalem. ⁴ He did right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father Amaziah had done. ⁵ He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him."

4. With the death of Zechariah came the end of the wisdom and righteousness that characterized the reign of Uzziah.
- A. So often, we'll see the apparent submissive obedience of a child, only to see it decay and disappear after they leave home. It is sometimes the result of forced obedience.
- a. When a child is young absolute obedience must be demanded and expected. This is because they are being taught of God's expectations. They are being taught of the importance of authority, submission, and obedience. This is our duty before God. They are also being taught that there are consequences to our actions. They should expect punishment for willful disobedience. Consistent discipline is necessary for the wellbeing of children with clear expectations and consistent consequences. Again, this models our duty to God.
- b. But their failures are continual which provide Gospel opportunities. They learn discipline but also the gracious forgiveness and love of the parents. They see mercy often given. Faithful parenting begins to win the heart of the child.
Proverbs 29:15 NAU - "The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."
By the time they are older children and teens their obedience is still demanded, but it is given not because it is forced but because they want to please their parents. Even as adults, they will model the training they received as children.
- c. It's hard to tell why Uzziah declined so quickly after the death of Zechariah, but he quickly began to display the corruption of his heart. Perhaps it was simply a case in losing the wise counsel and Godly instruction that was lacking in his own heart. But that doesn't explain his turning from the patterns he had learned from Zechariah.
- B. Uzziah was smitten by his prideful heart. Many of the pagan kings exercised the function of both king and priest. Uzziah probably believed this was his right. He entered into the Temple to burn incense. This was not his right. It was the privilege and duty of the priests alone.
2 Chronicles 26:16 NAU - "But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense."
- a. The word for "corruptly" is שָׁחַת *shachath* – The word can mean "corrupt" but it literally means, "to go to ruin."
2 Chronicles 26:16 ESV - "he grew proud, to his destruction."
- b. In other words, his pride led to his great downfall.

- C. He was confronted by the high priest and eighty others but he would not listen.
2 Chronicles 26:17-18 NAU - "Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men. ¹⁸ They opposed Uzziah the king 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. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God."
- D. God smote him with leprosy.
1. Our 2 Kings author gives us only a brief statement on the judgment of God upon Uzziah. It is clearly stated it was God's condemnation upon the king, but if this was all we knew about Uzziah we would not know why this dreadful judgment came upon him.
2 Kings 15:5 NAU - "The LORD struck the king, so that he was a leper to the day of his death. And he lived in a separate house"
 2. We get full details in the Chronicles.
2 Chronicles 26:19 NAU - "But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense."
2 Chronicles 26:21 NAU - "King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. And Jotham his son was over the king's house judging the people of the land."
5. There are several important truths we need to glean from the life of Uzziah.
- I. No matter how great we become, our lives are ultimately defined by our faithfulness to God. We are always in danger of sin. We are all plagued by pride.
- A. Uzziah was a great king
1. He grew in military might. Nations were bringing him tribute. Judah enjoyed peace under his reign.
 2. The land also enjoyed prosperity under his reign.
 3. The reason for his success was God's blessing upon his obedience.
2 Chronicles 26:5 NAU - "and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him."
 4. This was God's instruction to Joshua
Joshua 1:8 NAU - "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."
- B. The greatest of men are always in danger
1. Uzziah's reign was defined by righteousness.
2 Kings 15:3 NAU - "He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done."
 2. Sadly, in spite of his earthly greatness, he succumbed to his prideful heart.
2 Chronicles 26:16 NAU - "But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense."

3. Pride is one of our greatest dangers. It led to the sin of Adam and Eve. It leads all men into sin.
1 John 2:16 NAU - "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the ather, but is from the world."

II. The importance of wise counsel

- A. Uzziah enjoyed the wise counsel of Zechariah
 1. As long as Zechariah was alive Uzziah continued to seek God's will.
2 Chronicles 26:5 NAU - "He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him."
 2. With the departure of Zechariah Uzziah's pride went unchecked. He began to follow the ways of the human heart.
 3. God created us to live in community. He hasn't endowed one man with all knowledge and wisdom.
- B. It is the wise man who surrounds himself with wise counsellors.
Proverbs 11:14 NAU - "Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory."
Proverbs 15:22 NAU - "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed."
 1. In the US presidency, it is essential that he surround himself with an excellent Cabinet.
 2. God ordained elder plurality. No one man has all the answers.
 3. Wisdom demands that we seek spiritual counsel before making important decisions.
Proverbs 12:15 NAU - "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel."
- C. We must make sure we seek wise counsel
 1. We have endless examples in Scripture of earthly, natural, sinful wisdom that shapes most of the counsel of this world.
 2. We turn our ear towards false counsellors more often than we dare admit.
 - a. We listen to friends and family tell us all about their plans and how we ought to live. The way of the world may seem good.
 - b. We listen to the newscasters as they put their spin on the day's news – and we embrace every word.
 - c. We read blogs on the internet as if they speak wisdom from on high.
 3. It is important to turn our ears towards wise counsel
 4. The fool will not seek counsel
 - a. It is often due to pride. He doesn't value any counsel above his own. He is right in his own eyes.

- b. This was the great downfall of Uzziah. He received wise counsel from more than eighty priests but he would not hear them.
2 Chronicles 26:17-18 NAU - "Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men. ¹⁸ They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests
- 5. Wise counsel will always be the right application of God's Word to our situation. Too often, our self-will clouds our understanding and wisdom. This is why we need the wisdom of spiritual men and women to guide us.

III. The utter failure of every earthly king

- A. Judah enjoyed peace and prosperity under Uzziah
 - 1. He reigned for 52 years. Many in Jerusalem lived their entire lives under the reign of this one king.
 - 2. This is the hope of all upon the earth. That their leaders would rule with justice and equity.
Psalm 72:1-4 NAU - "Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king's son. ² May he judge Your people with righteousness And Your afflicted with justice. ³ Let the mountains bring peace to the people, And the hills, in righteousness. ⁴ May he vindicate the afflicted of the people, Save the children of the needy And crush the oppressor."
 - 3. Uzziah was a righteous king, but in the end he failed and finished out his days suffering as a leper, God's judgment upon his sin.
- B. There will be no lasting peace and righteousness until the King of kings is reigning.
 - 1. Isaiah gives the context for his vision of this King.
Isaiah 6:1 NAU - "In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple."
 - 2. Uzziah reigned 52 years, but his reign came to an end. And his reign was tarnished by sin. Is there any hope for humanity? God tells Isaiah, YES! "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple."
 - 3. Isaiah was smitten by his vision of this King.
Isaiah 6:5 NAU - "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Conclusion:

- 1. This message of this author is clear. Every earthly king is sinful. Even the kings were plagued by sin.
- 2. But Jesus Christ is Holy, Holy, Holy.
 He is the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. We must bow before this King.
Psalm 2:11-12 NAU - "Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. ¹² Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!"