

2 Chronicles 26

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[0 : 00] Amen. All right, 2 Chronicles chapter 26! It's not Uzziah.

It is actually Azariah. Same individual. You need to understand that. So it's referencing the same individual. But not many details are given to us in 2 Kings passage.

As a matter of fact, most of what we know about Uzziah's reign is found in 2 Chronicles 26. So again, just another reason to be thankful that God gives us what we deem too often repetitive material because it also gives us a little bit more background, a little bit more information.

We see it really the reason the Chronicler records so much more of it is because if you remember one of the three things that the book of Chronicles is really focused on or the three things are the Davidic lineage of the throne, the role of the temple, and the work of the Levites and the priests. And so as far as the reign of Uzziah goes, two of those, actually all three of those have application in his life. He is of the lineage of David, has one of the most extensive reigns within that lineage, of David, we'll see in just a moment.

[1 : 32] And his behavior within the temple and the confrontation with the priests and the Levites is really kind of how we define this time of reign. So we'll see it here.

We'll read the chapter in its entirety in 2 Chronicles 26, and then we'll get right into the text together. And all the people of Judah to Uzziah, now I want to back this up for just a few minutes.

If you remember, Amaziah, his dad, departed from the ways of the Lord. God brought judgment, declared judgment upon him. And when we were going through this last chapter, I kind of said there's a reason for this delay in judgment.

It says that he lived 15 years longer, and then he dies. And I said there's a reason for that extended period of living another 15 years. And we'll see it right here when we go into the 26th chapter.

And all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was 16 years old, and made him king in the place of his father Amaziah. And he built Elath and restored it to Judah after the king slept with his fathers.

[2 : 29] Uzziah was 16 years old when he became king, and he reigned 52 years in Jerusalem.

And his mother's name was Jechaliah of Jerusalem. And he did write in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Amaziah had done.

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. Now he went out and warred against the Philistines, and broke down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabnah, and the wall of Ashdod. And he built cities in the area of Ashdod, and among the Philistines. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians who lived in Gerbal, and the Mennites. The Ammonites also gave tribute to Uzziah, and his fame extended to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong.

Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem, at the corner gate, and the valley gate, and at the corner buttress, and fortified them. 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 vine dressers in the hill country, and the fertile fields, for he loved the soil. Moreover, Uzziah had an army ready for battle, which entered combat by divisions, according to the number of their muster, prepared by Jael the scribe and Messiah the official, under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's officers.

[3 : 47] The total number of the heads of the households of valiant warriors was 2,600. Under their direction was an elite army of 307,500, who could wage war with great power to help the king against the enemy.

Moreover, Uzziah, prepared for all the army shields, spears, helmets, body armor, bows, and sling stones. In Jerusalem, he made engines of war, invented by skillful men to be on the towers and on

the corners for the purpose of shooting arrows and great stones.

Hence his fame spread afar, for he was marvelously helped until he was strong. 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.

Then Azariah, the chief priest, entered after him, and with him 80 priests of the Lord, valiant men.

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. Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged. And while he was enraged with the priest, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priest in the house of the Lord, beside the altar of incense.

[5 : 09] Azariah, the chief priest, and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead, and they hurried him out of there. And he himself also hastened to get out, because the Lord had smitten him.

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.

Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first to last, the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, has written. So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the grave, which belonged to the kings, for they said, He is a leper.

And Jotham, his son, became king in his place. 2 Chronicles 26. In the 2 Kings passage, all that we find is that Uzziah, there named Azariah, became king when he was 16 years old, reigned 52 years, was a leper at the end of his life, and was confined to living in a separate quarters.

But we're not given all the details how the leprosy came upon him, what took place, or what transpired during his reign. Really, we're given that here. This is a very important figure in the Jewish people's history, so important that we also know even the allusion here to Isaiah, that it was during his reign, actually at the end of his reign, that Isaiah was commissioned of the Lord, because in the year of Uzziah's death, the Lord appeared to Isaiah, and we find that in Isaiah chapter 6.

[6 : 35] Bible scholars think that Isaiah was probably about 20 years old when he was called of the Lord there in Isaiah chapter 6, so it means he didn't live throughout the entirety of Uzziah's reign, but he was there, and saw the extent of it, and was impressed by it, and we know that when this great king passes away, God shows him who the true king is, who sits upon the throne eternal, and commissions him, and calls him, and appoints him, and we see that ministry there because Isaiah is the prophet of the coming king, right?

And it was when this king, this great king, Uzziah dies, is when Isaiah gets that vision. So there's a lot of background that goes into this, but I want you to see this evening, and we'll try to make our way through it very quickly.

I want you to see the danger of pride because really what goes on here is we see the great danger and tragedy that pride brings. Now we know the word of God tells us that God abhors pride, that he hates a prideful look, that pride cannot be in the presence of a holy God, that it is one of the things which he hates.

It is listed as one of the traits that God hates is that prideful individual, that proud look. But why? It is because of the great danger that it brings not only in the life of the individual, but in the life of the people connected to the individual.

And we'll just see three of them here. I know we can really look at an extensive list of them, but we have three of them highlighted in this passage. And the first thing that we notice is that pride discounts the work that has been accomplished.

[8 : 07] It is amazing when we read this, it says, And all the people of Judah to Uzziah when he was 16 years old, they made him king. And he became king at the age of 16. So the first work that we notice, and we've kind of highlighted it, is that God is graciously at work even preceding these events because there was a delayed judgment upon Uzziah's father for 15 years, which if you look at the math, it's because the one that would sit up on the throne next was a year old.

So God, you know, kind of let that judgment wait for just a minute to provide a wonderful opportunity for Uzziah to grow and to nurture and to get to the age where he was able to sit up on the throne and the people took him and they made him king at the age of 16.

Now that does not necessarily imply that he was prepared to do what he did, but we do know that God gave him a wonderful opportunity. If judgment had come immediately, then someone else would have had to reign in his place.

But yet that delayed judgment allowed for Uzziah to come to the place of reckoning, to the time of being able to reign and sit up on the throne. And then we begin to read of all the wonderful accomplishments that he rebuilt cities, that he extended the empire, that people were bringing tributes to him.

We see all this wonderful work that he is doing. It says that he reigned for 52 years, one of the most extensive reigns in all of the Davidic lineage. And in that time, he did an amazing number of things. [9 : 33] He built towers in the wilderness for the shepherds to go find cover in when they were exposed to the elements. He built many cisterns in that area to catch the rain and run off water. He did many numerous things, both geographically and physically to the region around him.

He fortified the towers around the city. He built cities in distant lands. He even brought in military force. He did not increase his military might very much from that of his father because all we see is an additional 7,500 men.

But we see they're fighting better. We see they're stronger. They're going and fighting war valiantly. We're told over and over again there are valiant men, men of valor, the way they're described in other translations.

But yet what we see is at the end of his life, for all these great accomplishments, because of the leprosy that rests upon him, he is not residing in the king's house.

He's living in a separate house. But even worse than that is that what happens at his death is he is not given a celebratory burial. He's buried in a field.

[10 : 42] And he's buried in a field because the curse of leprosy follows the individual to the grave. Now they were separated during their life because they were unclean according to the word of God.

And the Jewish people consider that uncleanness to carry it on even to after your death. And you had to be buried separate from the other people. So he did not get a place in the king's tombs. He got a place in the field that the king's owned, but he was not buried among the king's tombs. It's really telling, isn't it? The one who probably accomplished more than any other king is just buried in a place in the middle of the field.

Because all of the work is discounted when pride crept in and removed all glory that would come from that. Because pride seeks to put all of the recognition and all of the prestige upon self.

And in doing that, it destroys really the work that has been accomplished. And now he really is the central focus of it. And by the time we get to his death, we see that he's not buried among those who did great things even though he did.

[11 : 54] His work is forgotten because of the curse that rests upon him. His work is kind of discounted. And it's not like the great things he did can overcome the curse that rests upon him.

And that curse is a direct result of pride. He was a great king for sure. In the year that he died, God commissioned a great prophet, one of the major prophets in Old Testament scripture.

And he is commissioned when this great man dies. But this great man does not get great recognition because the end of his life is lived in pride and chastisement that comes as a result from it.

So we see that pride discounts the work. Secondly, and probably even more tragic than that, the work being forgotten about, is that pride diminishes the people.

One thing that stuck out to me when I read this passage, and I read it, and I reread it, and I read it, and I reread it, is how many different people are recognized within this passage.

[12 : 58] First and foremost, the reason Uzziah is king is all the people take and make him king. It was the people of Judah who took him and made them king.

So we can almost rightly say that he did not ascend the throne because of his own proudness or his own ability or his own power, but rather he did it because the people wanted him to be their king. And he is made king by the people and then we're told he does all these wonderful things and all this great work that's accomplished, but we're also told there are a great number of valiant warriors that his soldiers can fight with great splendor and might and majesty.

So surely he wouldn't have defeated the enemies had he not helped. It tells us that he did right in the sight of the Lord in verse 4, according to all his father Amaziah had done, but he continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah.

Again, this is a relatively unknown Zechariah to us. This is not the Zechariah that wrote the prophetic book Zechariah. This just happens to be another individual named Zechariah who had such an impact upon Uzziah's life that during his days he continued to seek God who had understanding through visions of God and as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him. [14:17] So that seeking is a direct result of this individual Zechariah. We are told that he has a great number of people who rule over his armies and there are scribes and there are people who lead the military force out.

There are those who do wondrous things for him. He even has people who tend the soil for him. It tells us there are plowmen and vine dressers. Why?

Because he loves the soil. He loves the land. So even the things that he loves, the things that he desires, there are people there that take care of that for him. The great military advancements that he made, it tells us that he had all these great engines of war built for shooting arrows and great stones much like the Romans would use.

So we could say that militaristically he was ahead of the time. We know that the Assyrians have entered much of this. It seems to tell us throughout history, the Romans adapted it to their use. But it seems as if Uzziah also adapted it to his use, but he did it.

It tells us why. Because that he had great men that could do it for him. There were skillful men who built these things. So make no mistake about it, all the wonderful things that took place during the 52 years of his reign, he was the king, but around him were a number of people doing these things.

[15:40] There were people leading the military, there were people tending the soil, there were people building the engines of warfare. There were all these people. Why? Because good leaders inspire good people.

And we're told there are valiant warriors. David had his mighty men, Uzziah had his valiant warriors. It tells us that he had 2,600 of them. And then we find that word valiant again when it comes to the priest.

And it is there that we find out that he begins to diminish the people. Because as many people help him and aid him to raise in popularity, arise in popularity, and to do wonderful things, and God puts enough people around him, we are told that there comes a day when the pride of his heart wants to diminish and belittle some people, and those people are the priest.

Uzziah thinks that he has now reached a level where he doesn't need the priest, so he goes into the temple to burn incense for himself. And by doing that, he is saying, I don't need the priests.

I can do it on my own. And he walks in, and he forgets the fact that the reason he has achieved any level of success is because of all the good, great, wonderful people that God's put around him.

[17:07] And the one people that are there to lead him in worship, and the one people that are there to lead him into the presence of the holiness of God, all of a sudden, he diminishes their essential nature, and he says, I don't need them, I want to do it for my own.

But we praise God that during this reign there were strong priests. Because it tells us then, Azariah the chief priest entered after him, and with him 80 priests of the Lord, valiant men.

The legacy standard says these are men of valor. And if you want to know how valiant these men are, they walk up to the king who has reigned so long, who is so popular, who has done so much good, and they rebuke him.

They say, this is not for you. You don't belong here. But it's for us to burn out sins. And the reality is, is that the moment pride came in, because it says that he was marvelously helped until he was strong.

Marvelously helped until he was strong. The moment he became strong and pride took over his heart, he diminished his need for anybody else.

[18:21] And that's what pride does to every one of us, right? We feel like, well, I've got this, I can take care of it, and it creeps in so easily into our lives, and what it does is it diminishes our need for other people.

And it diminishes the reality that we desperately need to be marvelously helped by the people around us. And it's so easy to succumb to that, and so easy to fall into that trap to think that I've got it.

that we need to be a part of it. But the reality is, is that we don't always have it, but we'll have it when we have marvelous help coming from others.

But it diminishes that. Scripture tells us that we need one another, that we are connected to one another, that it is essential that we continue to fellowship with one another, that we grow with one another, that we support one another, that we do all of the one another's in passage.

What pride says is, I got this on my own, and we end up, like Uzziah, standing in the middle of the temple holding the censer in our own hand, trying to burn our own incense. And essentially, what we're saying is, I don't need you.

[19 : 30] And that's a very dangerous place to be. Third and finally, which is the most tragic reality of this, is not only does pride discount the work, not only does it diminish the people, pride distances us from worship.

That is, it removes us from the ability to be able to worship. When the priests confront Uzziah in the temple, he's there at a place which should be a place of worship. He is at the altar of incense. Incense, if you remember when we looked at this, even going through the birth of Christ when Zechariah was in the temple and he was burning incense at the altar of incense, and the angel of the Lord says, prayers have been answered and Zechariah says, well how do I know my prayers have been answered?

We saw the irony of that and that the incense, the altar of incense was to be a visible representation of the reality that our prayers ascend or the prayers of the Jewish people ascended to the throne room of heaven and as the smoke of the incense went up it was to show them God is hearing their prayers and answering their prayers and they are in communion with God.

So that is really the heart of worship to be able to be in communion with Holy God. And so he's there saying I don't need anybody to stand in the gap for me. I can do this on my own. And you say, well pastor, we're that way.

[20 : 44] We're the priesthood of the believers, right? We don't have to have a priest stand in the gap. Well we do. He's called the high priest according to the order of Mechizedek. We have Jesus Christ who is our great high priest. So while we can go personally before the throne, it is going through the blood of the Lamb.

We dare not go apart from the high priesthood of Christ. Right? We understand that. But in this day where they were a nation still with priests and the priests were there to serve as a purpose to be that intercessor between a holy God and sinful man.

We see that Uzziah goes to the throne and he's the altar of incense and he's there burning it and he turns around and the priests confront him and they say, you can't do this. Now according to the book of Leviticus, the discipline for this is death.

Immediate death. Korah's rebellion, right? It is immediate death and all those who live in that rebellion with them. So Uzziah is deserving of death at this moment of confrontation but God does not bring physical death but he brings spiritual death in this moment because then leprosy begins to break out on his forehead.

Now even the location of the leprosy that breaks out is important because it breaks out on his forehead and the priest standing in front of him would also have something on his forehead. He would have that frontlet that was on his forehead as a part of that royal attire that God decreed, right?

[22 : 00] And it seems kind of strange to us but you know what that said on the cross of the forehead of the priest? It said, Holy to the Lord. And now across the forehead of Uzziah is unclean.

There's a separation there. Right? And now Uzziah understands the severity of what's going on because the priest tried to hurry up and get him out of there. He tries to hasten and get out of there too because he knows that he is in a very dangerous position but he'll never get to go back.

Because pride distances us from the ability to be able to worship. He wanted it to be all about him. And the rest of his life was all about him.

He lived in a separate house. His son did all the governmental affairs. And it says that he could not rule. Why? He lived in a separate house being a leper for he was cut off from the house of the Lord. The tragedy is not that he was cut off from the house of the king but that he was cut off from the house of the Lord. He lost the ability to build a worship because pride took that place.

[23 : 13] the great danger of pride is it discounts any work that has been accomplished before it. It diminishes the innumerable amount of people that have gathered around others to help them accomplish anything whatsoever and it distances them from the ability to build a truly worship for the Lord God.

We've seen it throughout history. Sadly, we've seen it in many pulpits, we've seen it in many churches and we've seen in history is replete with examples of it but pride is a very dangerous thing and here in 2 Chronicles chapter 26 we see the great danger of pride and may we stand at attention to it and adjust our lives according to it.
Thank you, my brothers.