

~ Our Spiritual Safari is still climbing the uphill, rocky and dangerous road called revival in this report. Any path to a modern-day revival is treacherous; and will have many dangerous bridges that must be crossed, too. We have crossed four of them so far. We're at another bridge in this report; and this one is called *priestly service*. If you haven't read our previous eight reports, I suggest you go back and do so now. We're in what may be the driest and dustiest section of Scripture we have in the Word of God; and it may not seem important or interesting to us. But, if you will pray for wisdom, judgment and discernment, and read the Bible text very carefully before reading this report, I assure you there is more meaning here than we will ever know.

In our last report, Uzziah assumed the throne of Judah after his father, Amaziah, died. God tells us Uzziah was a good king; but his rule wasn't particularly impressive. Remember, Israel had *NO* good kings; and Judah had only had a handful of good kings – most of them were very bad. A chart of the kings of Israel and Judah, including whether they were good or bad, the prophets that prophesied to them, dates of their rule and other interesting facts is displayed below. Well, Uzziah was a good king in Judah, but we're going to his funeral today. Don't worry, though — it's what we call a "*happy funeral*" – at least, it will be to believers....

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE KINGS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

JUDAH					ISRAEL				
King	Reign	Character	Prophet		King	Reign	Character	Prophet	
1. Rehoboam	931-913 bc	(17 yrs.)	Bad	Shemaiah	1. Jeroboam I	931-910 bc	(22 yrs.)	Bad	Ahijah
2. Abijam	913-911	(3 yrs.)	Bad		2. Nadab	910-909	(2 yrs.)	Bad	
3. Asa	911-870	(41 yrs.)	Good		3. Baasha	909-886	(24 yrs.)	Bad	
					4. Elah	886-885	(2 yrs.)	Bad	
4. Jehoshaphat	870-848*	(25 yrs.)	Good	Obadiah	5. Zimri	885	(7 days)	Bad	Elijah
5. Jehoram	848-841*	(8 yrs.)	Bad		6. Omri	885-874	(12 yrs.)	Bad	
6. Ahaziah	841	(1 yr.)	Bad		7. Ahab	874-853	(22 yrs.)	Bad	
7. Athaliah	841-835	(6 yrs.)	Bad		8. Ahaziah	853-852	(2 yrs.)	Bad	
8. Joash	835-796	(40 yrs.)	Good	Joel	9. Joram	852-841	(12 yrs.)	Bad	Elisha
9. Amaziah	796-767	(29 yrs.)	Good		10. Jehu	841-814	(28 yrs.)	Bad	
10. Azariah (or Uzziah)	767-740*	(52 yrs.)	Good	Isaiah	11. Jehoahaz	814-798	(17 yrs.)	Bad	Jonah
					12. Jehoash	798-782*	(16 yrs.)	Bad	
					13. Jeroboam II	782-753*	(41 yrs.)	Bad	
					14. Zechariah	753-752	(6 mo.)	Bad	
					15. Shallum	752	(1 mo.)	Bad	
					16. Menahem	752-742*	(10 yrs.)	Bad	
					17. Pekahiah	742-740	(2 yrs.)	Bad	
11. Jotham	740-732*	(16 yrs.)	Good	Micah	18. Pekah	740-732*	(20 yrs.)	Bad	
12. Ahaz	732-716*	(16 yrs.)	Bad		19. Hoshea	732-722	(9 yrs.)	Bad	
					<i>(Capture of Samaria and captivity of Israel)</i>				
13. Hezekiah	716-687*	(29 yrs.)	Good	Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Jeremiah					
14. Manasseh	687-642*	(55 yrs.)	Bad						
15. Amon	642-640	(2 yrs.)	Bad						
16. Josiah	640-608	(31 yrs.)	Good						
17. Jehoahaz	608	(3 mo.)	Bad						
18. Jehoiakim	608-597	(11 yrs.)	Bad						
19. Jehoiachin	597	(3 mo.)	Bad						
20. Zedekiah	597-586	(11 yrs.)	Bad						

(Destruction of Jerusalem and captivity of Judah)
*Co-regency

*Co-regency

XXVI

4 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did.

5 And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.

6 And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines.

~ The three cities mentioned in verse six were strategic strongholds of the Philistines. These cities were critical to maintaining power in that land at the time in which we are studying. The entire area is tremendous today in terms of business and population. Once they built the harbor, the area exploded. This is also the area where the oil pipeline terminates from the

Red Sea; and oil is exported from there. Uzziah ruled the entire region outlined in this passage....

⁷ And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gurbaal, and the Mehunims.

⁸ And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened himself exceedingly.

⁹ Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them.

¹⁰ Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry.

~ Uzziah seems to have been a remarkable king who was a farmer at heart. The land outlined in this passage is mostly pastureland today. It's ideal for raising cattle and sheep; so, that's what Uzziah did. To the north in the Valley of Esdraelon is a great fruit country, specifically suited for grape cultivation. So, naturally, Uzziah was in the wine business. Uzziah apparently loved all these types of things. As we read on, we see he was a man of war, also; and there was a tremendous armament of Israel at this time. Most ancient machinery of war was designed to hurl rocks. Of course, the bow and arrow were also very popular at this time. Verse fifteen tells us *ALL* these projectiles were shot by "engines." Rocks and arrows were shot off of the wall mechanically. Obviously, Uzziah, was a brilliant man and he introduced myriad new types of warfare....

¹¹ Moreover Uzziah had an host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their account by the hand of Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the ruler, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains.

12 The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour were two thousand and six hundred.

13 And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

14 And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones.

15 And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.

16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

~ Verse sixteen reveals that, even amongst the best kings of Judah, there is always an Achilles heel. That is still true today, too, friends. Don't kid yourself. All men and women have a weak spot. Uzziah has just had his heart lifted up — to his destruction. Many time – most times – success is the worst possible thing that can happen to a Christian. Success causes most people to become lifted up in pride. *MANY* fall from grace. Notice what Uzziah did: he went into the temple and burned incense. What's wrong with that? Well, nothing — if you were a priest; but if you were Uzziah the king — it was all wrong because....

17 And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men:

18 And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the

sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God.

~ The priests are withstanding the king because the king is usurping their office! I pray you readers understand fully the ramifications of what we're considering in this report. Uzziah was doing what was forbidden to be done except by the sons of Aaron! Only the tribe of Aaron ministered in the holy place and ***PARTICULARLY*** at the altar of incense. Remember, the golden lamp stands would have been right there and ***ONLY*** Aaron himself – or the current high priest – tended those; not Uzziah....

¹⁹ Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar.

²⁰ And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.

²¹ And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several 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.

²² Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write.

²³ So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings; for they said, He is a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

~ King Uzziah spent his final days separated in a leper's house — with a son sitting on his throne — after Uzziah intruded into the office of the priest. That's serious business, my friends. I see many people designate

themselves pastors, prophets and evangelists, and so on – may I say this kindly? – *YOU* may be a spiritual leper. Examine yourselves and see if you are in the faith. Who? – Everyone.

When we get to the prophecy of Isaiah, we're going to re-examine this event in such a dramatic fashion it may literally traumatize you. It feels inappropriate to pause and detour with that commentary at this point. But, this is the historical time period in which Isaiah begins his prophecy. If you don't care for our theology in this report, you may want to pray about continuing with this so-called safari.

Here, we have a happy funeral and a fond farewell for Uzziah. Uzziah "*dropped dead*" – you know. There was a funeral sales company many years ago whose slogan was "*Drop Dead! And have a nice day!*" Well, you might think that's a sick form of humor, but it's funny to me. I'm laughing right now. Honestly, a Christian death should have no dread connected to it in any way. We should be able to retort, "*oh, death, where is thy sting; and, oh, grave, where is thy victory?*" Of course there will be mourning, but Paul said we aren't as those who have no hope. Paul also said he knew he would be better off dead, but he lived that he might minister and teach the Corinthians.

The funeral of a genuine Christian is always a happy event. Death is not necessarily a tragedy. There was a man who buried his wife, and he thanked God for calling her home. She made his life miserable for decades; a terror every single day. There was no love in this couple's life at the end – it had ceased many years before. He didn't shed a single tear; in fact, he smiled his way through the funeral.

Uzziah had been a good king, but God recorded his sin of intruding into the office of the priest; and that was a blemish on the apple that made it inedible. A priestly presumption was the nature of Uzziah's sin, friends! Today, many people sin by simply attending church. They presume an attempt to approach God. There is way to approach God His way – and then there is man's religious way. God told His people "*you come My way, or you don't come to Me!*" We all had better make an inventory of what

we're doing in our so-called service to God. Jesus said, "no man cometh unto the Father but by Me!" We're all spiritual lepers. I *HIGHLY* suggest you consider this report carefully – *IF* you love God enough to still be reading.

Leprosy is an awful disease physically, psychologically, and is repulsive to anyone associating with those who have it. It entailed a great deal of suffering for the victim, and his family, and friends. Death for the leper was a welcomed relief. In spite of Uzziah's sin, he was a sweet man. Even so, he was judged down here for his sin. Paul has told us that if we will judge ourselves we would not be judged. I suggest *ALL* of us judge ourself right now. There are multitudes of believers who are completely helpless and hopeless in a frail and feeble body. One of these days, they will experience the most joyful day of their lives as they pass into eternity and into the presence of our Savior! There will be no more sorrow in the case like that; and that was the case of Uzziah the king....

XXVII

¹ Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok.

² And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly.

~ Jotham constitutes good king number three in a row; and here we have an interesting paradox. He did *NOT* go into the temple *at all*. He was afraid of what had happened to his father, but Uzziah intruded into the temple the wrong way. Uzziah should have been in the temple, but he should have gone there the right way. Well, Jotham did what was right according to God, but he stayed totally away from the temple. That set a very bad example for the nation and corrupted them. Here is *ANOTHER* missed opportunity to lead people back to God. Many people have the same hang-up as Jotham. They won't go to church under any circumstances. I'm sure most of them have a justifiable reason for not going. And, I'll be honest

with you readers – because I always am honest with you – I can't say I blame them. I CAN say they set bad example as Christians....

³ He built the high gate of the house of the LORD, and on the wall of Ophel he built much.

⁴ Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers.

⁵ He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second year, and the third.

⁶ So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

⁷ Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

⁸ He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

⁹ And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

XXVIII

¹ Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father:

² For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

³ Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

⁴ He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

⁵ Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

⁶ For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.

⁷ And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king.

⁸ And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.

⁹ But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven.

¹⁰ And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God?

11 Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.

12 Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war,

13 And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.

14 So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation.

15 And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

16 At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.

17 For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.

18 The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

19 For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.

20 And Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

21 For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not.

22 And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.

23 For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.

24 And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

25 And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

26 Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

27 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God reading about a very bad king. Ahaz had completely gone into idolatry by the time he died. He, likewise, plunged the southern kingdom into these same sins. This is another classic example of "like king, like people." We're going to leave it there in this report, but we'll pick right back up again in the next ~

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Towers in the Desert >>>
<<< 2 Chronicles 26:4 – 28:27