

Kings and Prophets 14-12-05b

Let's pick up our study now, we're doing Kings and Prophets, we're in 2nd Chronicles chapter 26. The people of Judah took Uzziah who was 16 years old and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. And of course they did this because Amaziah is up north because he is a grade A 24 carat rascal.

Among many other things you could say, I would just point your attention to Deuteronomy chapter 23 verse 7. Do not abhor an Edomite, do not despise an Edomite, for the Edomites are your brother, they are related to you. You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. And whatever, there's been lots of nefarious Edomites, you remember Doeg the Edomite, you remember Hadad the Assyrian king when he ran out of town, he went down to Egypt and hung out with some Edomites.

But they enjoy a special status and this is something that Amaziah did not enjoy. Amaziah completely disregards, it's one thing to go to war against a group, it is something else to slaughter them. You can't keep some parts of the law and just brush aside the others with impunity, but that's of course what he has done because he does not have a loyal heart.

So his son Uzziah was 16 and he built Elath and restored it to Judah after the king rested with his fathers. And this is probably his father the king, in other words this is one of his signal accomplishments was the rebuilding of this city, this is kind of like his monumental construction project. And then we have a repetition in verse 3, Uzziah was 16 years old when he became king and he reigned 52 years in Jerusalem, his mother's name was Jechaliah of Jerusalem.

And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Amaziah had done, meaning in the same way, which means not so hot. He sought God in the days of Zechariah who had understanding, it says, in the visions of God. I think the better reading here, the better text is in the fear of God.

The fear of the Lord, the fear of God is a more common phrase and this wasn't a matter of interpretation of visions, I think this crept into the text at a later point. Zechariah had understanding in the fear of God and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper. As long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.

Now he went out and made war against the Philistines and broke down the wall of Gath, the wall of Jadna and the wall of Ashdod and he built cities around Ashdod and among the Philistines. God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabians who lived in Gerbaal and against the Maunites. Some Bibles say the Ammonites, but these are the Maunites and these are actually a tribe they think among the Edomites.

It's a long story, but they're down in that same, these may have actually been some sort of zealot warriors down among the Edomites. Also the Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah and again I think this may be the same people, the Maunites may be the ones who brought the

tribute here. His fame spread as far as the entrance of Egypt for he became exceedingly strong.

Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, the valley gate, at the corner buttress of the wall, he fortified them. Also he built towers in the desert. He dug many wells for he had much livestock both in the lowlands and in the plains.

He also had farmers and vine dressers in the mountains and in Carmel for he loved the soil. Moreover Uzziah had an army of fighting men who went out to war by companies according to the number on their roll as prepared by Jael the scribe and Maseah the officer under the hand of Hananiah one of the king's captains. The total number of chief officers of the mighty men of valor was 2,600.

I think one of the interesting things about verse 11 is this may have been where more accurate record keeping, more accurate numbers, more valid tallies were made. And I think that's the place where the history of soldiers may have begun. The account goes to great length here to say that the king, he seems to have been very good in business and in agriculture.

And this is sort of information based. He knows where to dig wells. He knows how to get crops to grow in the high country as well as in the low country.

He seems to be very good in business and part of good business practice is very accurate record keeping and then he seems to have brought that into the army and designated men to begin keeping tallies right down to the head counts by name. The number of their roll as prepared by Jael the scribe. So then the total number of chief officers of the mighty men, this is the officer corps in the army would be an actual 2,600 officers.

Under their authority was an army of 307,500 that made war with mighty power to help the king against the enemy. And again I think this would be 307 elephants, 500 that made war with mighty power to help the king against the enemy. Uzziah prepared for them, for the entire army, shields, spears, helmets, body armor, bows and slings to cast stones.

Again this would be another reason to have a very accurate body count because you're making a helmet for every man. You're issuing a spear to every man. This would have been the earliest days of issuing things to troops and keeping track of to whom it has been issued and was it turned in and so on.

He made devices in Jerusalem invented by skillful men to be on the towers and the corners to shoot arrows and large stones. These would be catapults and there's another name for those things, the swinging trebuchet. So his fame spread far and wide for he was marvelously helped until he became strong.

But, verse 16, when he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. A record of great accomplishment, a record of the fruit of his wise administration and wise leadership kind of goes to his head and he figures he can just do anything. So now he

thinks he's going to go in and perhaps reorganize the worship in the same way that he has reorganized farming, he's reorganized labor, he's reorganized administration and agriculture and now he's going to reorganize worship.

And so he goes in and takes charge of whether he actually formally offered this incense or just went in and started telling the priests how to do it. But he's gone in and taken charge of something that is the province and the precinct of the sons of Aaron. So Azariah the priest went in after him and with him were 80 priests of the Lord valiant men 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 get out of the sanctuary for you have trespassed.

You shall have no honor from the Lord God. Uzziah became furious, had a censer in his hand so apparently he was actually trying to offer it to burn incense and while he was angry with the priests leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord beside the incense altar. And as Azariah the chief, by the way Josephus tells this story in his recounting of the history of the Jews and traditional elements or verbal memories had accrued along with this and Josephus is telling there's fire that comes out from the altar and hits him in the head and makes this leprosy.

That's not an inspired account but it's kind of interesting. So Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him and there on his forehead he was leprous so that they thrust him out of that place. Initially he is disqualified from doing what he is doing by prescription.

It is mandated that only the Aaronic priests be allowed to approach and offer incense or any other sacrifice before God. Well he comes and violates that prescription and you can try to rationalize and say well, remember the old Israelites back in the days of Moses, are we not all priests? Can't we all serve before the Lord? And once he breaks out in leprosy, now there is no question. So you want to quibble about whether or not you are qualified? Well how about a case of leprosy on your face? Now what argument have you got? You still want to say that you are qualified to come in and offer incense? God pretty much just pushes the thing beyond any doubt.

And so they throw him out and now he is not even qualified really to even be in his own palace. He ought to be covering up his face and crying unclean, unclean. So Azariah the chief priest and all the chief priests looked at him, all the priests looked at him and there on his forehead he was leprous.

So they, who by the way declares someone clean and declares someone leprous in Israel? You are not clean until the priest says you are clean and if the priest says you are leprous, you are officially leprous. So the priests exercise their God given function and say, oh king thou art leprous, get thee hence and out he goes. And he's got no further leg to stand on, he's out.

They thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out because the Lord had

struck him. God forcibly changed his mind.

King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house because he was a leper. He was cut off from the house of the Lord.

Jotham his son was over the king's house judging the people of the land. So now you have another co-regency. Does this remind you of anything? He was doing so well, but he forgot the lesson of his father and he becomes like his father.

Cut off from the king's house, cut off from the function of rulership, as gifted, as brilliant, as talented, as accomplished, as fruitful as he was in his early days, this one bad decision. How many anecdotal stories are there of people who start well, make one fatal mistake, one horrible error in judgment, and it is life changing. There is no going back.

You can't get the words back, you can't get the decision back, you can't get the action back. I had a classmate in school who was athletic, academically accomplished, looked like he had a real bright future ahead of him in the naval service, got a little tanked, had a friend in the car, drove off the seawall into Chesapeake Bay, and his friend drowned before graduation. This is shortly before graduation, and it's over.

For the rest of his life, he is the guy that got drunk and killed his friend by careless driving. You can't erase that burden, you can't escape that stain. It's one youthful indiscretion.

People going along and hit somebody, people get a little too loose in their behavior, and now there is a disease, or now there is a pregnancy, or now there is a turn in a relationship that entangles you in ways that will haunt you for the rest of your life. This isn't somebody you can run into in the future and say, oh hi, remember when we used to date? It's way beyond that. There is an entanglement, there is an inextricable problem there that haunts and overshadows and drains happiness out of future potential.

It is so important for us to heed the warnings of Scripture, to heed the examples of Scripture. Did you see anywhere where a man of God comes to Uzziah and says, oh king, you better watch out, you better be careful. He's had the warning.

Has he not observed his father imprisoned in the northern kingdom for years and years and years? Does he not see what happens when hubris blinds you, when a sense of accomplishment fills you with overconfidence, when the disloyal heart stops with even overt forms of obedience, even superficial forms of obedience? Well, I don't really need that. These old tired restrictions, I've fixed everything else in the land, I'm going to go in here and I'll get this worship run right. I just don't think these Aaronic priests really do it with the right flair.

So I'll grab a censer and do it myself, I'm the king after all. One day, one decision, one action and he's a leper for life. He is cast out, he is cut off.

There's no going back, there's no fixing it. These things are written for our instruction. The king

of Israel, the king of Judah in the Old Testament represents our chooser, the administration that goes on in our own soul.

We captain the ship, we preside over and rule over the domain of our hearts. By the way, there's a lot of talk in Christian circles about Jesus being the king of your heart and all that, that is not biblical, that's found nowhere in scripture. Jesus isn't the king of your heart, this is not the kingdom, he is not the king of the church.

The Lord Jesus Christ stands at the door and knocks. If any man hears his voice and opens the door, he comes in and it is fellowship. We are his representatives, we are his body on this earth.

His body is now raised and seated at the right hand of the Father and the body that represents him on the earth, that's us. We should no more be engaging in actions that are contrary to the purpose and the word and the will of God than the Lord Jesus himself would. I have come to do the will of the Father, I must be about my Father's business and that has to be our guiding light.

It has to be a loyal heart. God will honor the loyal heart. You can mess up greatly and survive it.

King David had a couple of real, profoundly dramatic failures, but he never lost his throne. He never lost his walk with the Lord and at the end of his life God continues to say this is the man after my own heart. God will name his own son, the Messiah, the son of David.

That is an honor that no human being except David has ever been awarded or ever will be awarded. That the son of God himself would be called the son of David. Why? Because of David's heart.

You will still mess up, we will all mess up. We are going to fail. We are all a work in progress.

The thing that distinguishes the outcome is the heart. Do not let there spring up an evil heart of faithlessness, of unbelief, which by springing up defiles many. We are connected.

In the same way that when the king goes awry many people in the Edomites, there are thousands of people in Judah suffering because of him, suffering by association. It is the same with us. We do not live to ourselves and we do not die to ourselves.

We are connected. We are a fellowship. We are a brotherhood.

Our decisions do not just affect us, they have an effect on, people would say today, they impact the community of which we are a part. You cannot isolate the effect. It makes a difference.

We have a responsibility not only before the Lord individually to love and to serve and to pursue and cultivate loyalty of heart, but we owe it to one another to not be the burden that someone else has to carry. We bear one another's burdens but ultimately we each have to shoulder our own load and we reflect love for God and love for one another in cultivating loyalty of heart so that we can be a blessing and not a curse. We can be a benefit and not a detriment to one another and certainly to God.

Your past accomplishments, I mean look at Uzziah, nice resume, wonderful, what do they call it, your sheet full of accomplishments, your curriculum vitae, this is your life's work. It looks great. Anybody would hire him for a king job.

Anybody would hire him for an agricultural manager. Anybody would hire him for a defense secretary or for an agricultural advisor. He's accomplished in so many ways and it all means nothing when you're a leper sitting alone in a house isolated and you can't do any of that anymore.

It's all in the past. Look at all of the Hollywood celebrities that have had many great successes in the past, the musicians that have had gold records in the past and they die forgotten, broke, strung out, a string of hardship and broken relationships behind them because you can't live on your past accomplishments anymore than you can think back to that fun time you had as a kid at Six Flags and that will sustain you through the difficulty. Well you know times are tough right now but you know that roller coaster at Six Flags, man that was fun.

I don't think I have ever had a ride like that. Let me just put myself back in the roller coaster and think back. We live in the present.

We live for the future. Not a lot you can do about the past and thankfully when the past is bad God can also separate that as far as the east is from the west. But learn the lesson of Amaziah Azariah.

Learn the lesson of Amaziah Uzziah. His own son failed to learn the lesson from that fatally stupid father. Superficial obedience that eventually he just drops even the forms.

He quits listening to the man of God. There is no future in disregarding God. There is just no future in it and you can see the blindness that sets in.

What possesses Uzziah to grab a censor and enter into the holy precincts? David never did this. Solomon never did this. What possesses him? You look at it from the outside and you think it's just as you look at so many things today.

You look at the stupidity of celebrities. You look at the stupidity of people who throw away long fruitful careers over peccadillos and indiscretions and stupid decisions that they make often regarding the opposite sex. And a lifetime's work goes down the toilet.

We've recently had several examples of people who have been beloved and held dear in the minds of people and well thought of for decades and now nobody wants to think of them. Nobody wants to, you know, we're going to take those comedy records and throw them out. We don't want to hear about it.

We don't want to see reruns of the program. Bad judgment is the ruination. A very small thing can ruin the contents of a very large punch bowl and this is what happens.

It is loyalty to God. God is able to repair, to turn cursing to blessing, to take what was meant for evil and turn it to good when there is a loyal heart. This is the choice that we make.

What kind of heart am I going to have? It's not the circumstances. People have done worse than this. David does worse than this.

What's worse? To take a torch and walk into the temple or murder a man for his wife? What's worse? Which king ends up a leper, isolated, empty and helpless and which one lives into his old age to see his son build the house of God? The heart makes the difference. God has the power. It is grace greater than all our sin, but grace is only given to the humble.

God resists the proud and you can see that element of hubris in both of these men. What is it that tripped up Lucifer, the son of darkness? What is it that tripped up the guardian cherub of the throne room of God? Keep your place here and turn over real quickly to Ezekiel 28. We talk about the five I wills and the attitude that he has when he loses his place in heaven, but there is a single statement that pretty well sums it all up.

Verse 17, Ezekiel 28, 17, Your heart was lifted up because of the beauty. He has a lot of accomplishments. He has served well.

He is the most beautiful, most elegant, most sophisticated creature to ever come from the hand of God. Nothing like him. He is at the top.

He is at the apex, at the pinnacle. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.

Notice, what is it that gets corrupted? Wisdom. He is not smart anymore. In another place it says, thinking themselves wise, they became fools.

By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence and you sinned. Your cast out is a profane thing. This is back up in verse 16.

And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Why? Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. Your wisdom was corrupted for the sake of your splendor.

I cast you to the ground. I laid you before human kings. You are lower than human kings.

You think about Satan offering the kingdoms of the world to the Lord Jesus. He is only the God of this world now. And so his paltry kingdoms of the earth, he is going to try to entice the Son of God in heaven with the kingdoms of this world.

You can be the king of the world if you just bypass the cross. But he has been laid lower than the kings of the earth. It is such an irony that they might gaze at you.

You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities. Defiled sanctuaries. This is

exactly what Uzziah does.

He goes in and defiles the sanctuary. Therefore I brought fire from your midst. It devoured you.

And here is this living death that literally hits Uzziah in the face. Leprosy is death. It is a living death.

It is a picture of death. In the same way that being cleansed from leprosy is a picture of rebirth as we have seen in Genesis 14 so many times. All who knew you among the peoples are admonished at you.

Admonished at you. We want to learn the lesson from the mistakes of others and not repeat it ourselves. We need to take a good hard look at ourselves in the light of what we see here.

And it is going to start small. We are going to be doing really well. We can look around and say, look, I am a pillar of the church.

Maybe I am the pastor of the church. I am doing well. I am faithful.

I am consistent. I am hitting on all eight cylinders in my spiritual life. I am doing this.

I am doing that. I am doing the other. It will always start with something small.

We are not going to wake up some morning and say, give me a gun. I am going to rob a bank. Give me a mask.

I am going to go hide in the bushes and start mugging people. I am going to embezzle all the funds from Grace and Truth's vast storehouse of wealth. I am going to run off with all the laptops.

I am going to take all the snacks and run off into the weeds. We don't wake up some morning with some big nefarious plot in our hearts. Those of us that are married, we don't wake up some morning and say, I am going to find somebody and have an affair.

I am just going to throw over my marriage. I am going to become an ingrate and an outcast. I am just going to mess it all up.

I am just going to destroy it all with a giant sledgehammer. How does it always begin? It is small cracks in the armor, small chinks, small compromises, small excuses, small omissions. They almost always end up attaching themselves to our ego.

I am getting a little bit annoyed because I don't feel appreciated. I get a little bit annoyed because how come this is happening and not this? It is hubris. It is the original sin.

It is a canard that goes back to the dawn of time that pride is the original sin. It actually is. It is self in the place of God.

I will be like the Most High. I will be the arbiter of what is right and what is wrong, not the Word of God. How do you think they could brush aside the Word of the man of God? How do you think Uzziah can walk into the temple precincts with a torch of fire? Well, I am now the standard of what is right.

I will decide. I will choose. I am that smart.

That is how intelligent I am. Wisdom corrupted for the sake of my self-righteousness. I am realized splendor.

But it is going to start small. We are going to see it in the edges. We are going to see it in the cracks.

When the Bible says, watch and pray lest you enter into temptation, did Jesus say, now watch and pray lest you flee when the arresting soldiers arrive? What was their failure? They just didn't stay awake. It started with something small. He said, watch and pray lest you enter into temptation.

It was a small thing. And they just fell asleep. If you are falling asleep, walk around.

Have you ever been driving late at night? You have to get someplace you can't not drive. Pull the car over. I used to do quarter mile sprints up and down the shoulder and get my heart rate up.

I would drive 15-20 miles. Pull the car over. Quarter mile sprint.

Down and back. Hard as I could go. Heart rate pounding.

Go another 15-20 miles. Do something. I cannot afford to fall asleep.

And if the Lord Jesus Christ says, watch and pray. Stay alert. And you feel yourself drowsing.

Come on, man. Have a fish slapping contest or something. You are fishermen.

Slap each other. Stay awake. Talk.

Start a fire. Do something. But they didn't take it seriously.

It was a small thing. And look at what it led to. They all fled.

They are cowering in fear. They abandoned the Lord in the hour of trial. At the most critical moment in the Lord Jesus ministry, He is alone.

Simon Peter is denying Him outright, outside the building. And it starts with just not paying attention when told to pay attention. Watch and pray.

No, I'm asleep. So the encouragement that I see for us in this passage is, let's not wait until it

gets to the point of attacking the Edomites and kicking them off cliffs. Let's not wait until it gets to the point of foolishly.

First He attacks the twin brother Esau. Now He's going to attack His own Israelites in the north. How foolish.

Don't walk into the temple with a torch in the room of, in the place of the designated priest. This, by the way, is what a lot of feminism and a lot of other ne'er-do-wells are attempting to do, whether it is pushing homosexuality into the churches and into the forefront, whether it is pushing women leadership. Men are not superior.

Men are designated. Husbands are not superior. Husbands are designated.

Parents are not superior. Parents are designated. Aaronic priests.

Uzziah may be smarter than all of these Aaronites put together, but he's not designated. But he corrupts his wisdom for the sake of his splendor, and he ends up a leper. And he dwells in the house.

And this is something that has repercussions beyond this life. You can lose your inheritance. You have need of endurance so that having gone through suffering, you receive the inheritance.

Inheritance is on the line. Salvation is not on the line. Inheritance is.

Opportunity is. Future service is. Being a blessing to others, being a light reflecting the glory of God in the future is on the line.

If you care anything about God and about the Savior and about fellow believers, we owe it to ourselves and we owe it to the Lord God and we owe it to our fellow believers to look at the small details of our life, find these areas of unfaithfulness, and snip it off. Cut them out. Cut them out.

If there's too much television in the house, cut it out. If your eye offends you, cut it out. If your hand offends you, cut it off.

Let's endeavor to avoid this tragic outcome. That is chapter 25 and first half of chapter 26 in 2 Chronicles. We'll pick up with the further adventures of Jotham in chapter 27 next time.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for how powerfully it illustrates for us the importance of what You have entrusted to us, what You have called us to, what You have given us through the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been redeemed at a high cost.

We have been purchased with a precious price. And because of that, the mission and the stewardship that has been given to us is equally valuable and precious. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us, show us our secret faults, show us our hidden errors so that we

can bring them into the open.

We can deal with them by the power that You have given us, the precious blood of Christ that will cleanse us from all sin, will free us to walk in the light, to fellowship with You, with the Lord Jesus, with God the Holy Spirit, and to fulfill Your purpose for us both now and in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.