

LESSON TWENTY-ONE 24-26

THE REIGN OF JOASH, AMAZIAH'S RISE AND FALL. UZZIAH'S LIFE AND TIMES.

9. THE REIGN OF JOASH—Continued (23:16-24)

INTRODUCTION

Joash and Jehoiada led far-reaching reformation in Jerusalem. Amaziah sought revenge for his father's death. Later he challenged Joash of Israel to battle and finally died at the hands of conspirators. Uzziah accomplished many internal improvements in Judah. The king's leprosy ended an otherwise useful life.

TEXT

(Scripture text in Lesson Twenty)

PARAPHRASE

(Scripture text in Lesson Twenty)

COMMENTARY

Like Saul, David, and Solomon, each of whom reigned forty years, Joash attained to the same number of years for his reign. Some blessing from Jehovah is to be seen in Joash's ability to exercise authority through that many years. Nothing more is known about his mother except her name, Zibiah, and the place of her origin, Beersheba. As long as Jehoiada lived, the high priest exercised a good influence over Joash. Later in his reign, Joash turned away from Jehovah. The king regarded the high priest like a son would look to a father. Jehoiada's deep concern for the protection of the seed of David led him to a careful selection of two wives for Joash. Why he chose two wives we are not told. Perhaps he was suggesting that this should be the extent of Joash's harem. The record indicates that Joash was the father of several children. This, also, was another indication of Jehovah's blessing.

The Temple of Jehovah needed physical repairs. Athaliah had used all of her influence to promote Baalism. Joash's purpose at this time was to effect a complete renewal of the Temple. Jehoiada encouraged him in every way.¹ The priests and Levites were informed of Joash's purpose and were sent throughout the kingdom to tell the people of the king's plans and to collect money for the project. The official religious leaders failed to throw themselves fully into this good work even though they had been told that the matter was urgent. The king counseled with Jehoiada and inquired about the failure of the priests. A half shekel tax (Exodus 30:13-15; Numbers 1:30) was supposed to be paid each year by every male for the purpose of helping to support the work of Jehovah's House. This tax had not been collected for a long time. God's House had been completely impoverished by the Baalists. Joash was deeply concerned.

Since his first plan had failed, Joash devised the building of a box with a necessary opening in the cover. This box was most likely placed in the court of the priests near the altar of burnt-offering. People brought their gifts to the Temple, turned them over to the attending priests who deposited the gifts in the chest. Throughout the borders of Judah the people came with their Temple tax. The failure of the first program had to be laid upon the priests and Levites who would not go to the people with the king's request. Once Joash's country-men were told about the king's plan, with great rejoicing they came. Day after day they filled the money box. Perhaps there was a daily accounting of the funds by attendant priests at the Temple. Just as soon as the money was available, workmen began the task of renewing Jehovah's house. Whatever needed to be done to make the Temple substantial was accomplished by masons, carpenters, and workers in metals. When all of the necessary repairs were made and paid for, money remained in the building fund. This money was used to provide vessels of silver and gold for the service of the Temple. As long as Jehoiada lived, the people of the southern kingdom remained faithful to Jehovah.

¹Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 283

Jehoiada was blessed with a long life of one hundred and thirty years. His being "full of days" (verse 15) suggests something of the satisfaction and the fulfillment of his life. He was accorded a state funeral and was honored in his burial in the royal cemetery. Jehoiada ranked with the best men who were leaders of Jehovah's people. He was a "good" man in relation to his people and his God. Evil forces, held in check in Jehoiada's day, were unleashed when he died. The princes of Judah approached Joash with subtle flattery. Their "obedience" probably caused Joash to think too highly of himself. The idea of "worship" is associated with the action of the princes. Joash was about thirty five years old. Considering all that Jehovah had done for him, it is difficult to understand that he could be influenced so easily to rebel against God. These counselors were like the men who advised Rehoboam to act so foolishly earlier in Israel's history. By this choice, Joash's destiny was sealed. All that a person has done for Jehovah in former days is of no value in personal salvation if one is not faithful until death. When "the house of Jehovah" is forsaken, men not only fail to go there to worship, but they abandon God's whole program. In this context Jesus said, "You should look for Me in My Father's house" (Luke 2:49). He was always totally involved in His Father's business. The historian in Chronicles was fully aware of the cycle of history in which the Hebrews moved. They forsook Jehovah. They gave themselves to "the Asherim" (Baalism). They suffered under the wrath of Jehovah. Their God, moved by great compassion, sent prophets to convict the people of sin and to urge repentance. These prophets were often scorned and were sometimes put to death.

Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, was among the prophets sent by Jehovah to Judah and Jerusalem. He was motivated by and clothed with the Holy Spirit. His message was clear and pointed. Considering all that Jehovah had done for His people and weighing the consequences of their actions, there was no excuse for the rebel attitude. Zechariah emphasized their transgression, reviewed their failures, and reminded his hearers that Jehovah had abandoned them. King Joash dared to order death by

stoning for the prophet. The law had said that idolaters were to be stoned (Leviticus 20:2). The law was completely ignored as this death sentence was decreed for Zechariah. In a remarkable statement in Matthew 23:29-36 our Lord condemned the scribes and Pharisees because of their rejection of Himself and the prophetic word. He summarized the history of the Hebrew people when He charged them with the blood of the prophets which had been shed from the time of Abel to the time of Zechariah. Genesis is the first book in the Hebrew Bible. Second Chronicles is the last book in the Hebrew Bible. The expression, as Jesus used it, "from Abel to Zechariah", took in all history pertaining to God's people. Joash had begun his work in a very worthy manner. He suffered a moral and spiritual collapse. Jehoiada should most likely be regarded as the grandfather of Joash. As Zechariah was dying, he expressed confidence in Jehovah's judgment and predicted that Joash would come under that judgment.

The Syrians under their king, Hazael, came to Jerusalem and in battle humiliated Joash and his people. "At the revolution of the year" suggests that this Syrian attack took place in the spring-time. The Hebrews suffered heavy casualties. Many of their leaders were killed. Much goods was carried out of Jerusalem to Damascus. As Jehovah had used foreign powers on other occasions to chastise His own people, so He used the Syrians at this time. When the Hebrews were faithful to God, a small army of Israelites could ruin an empty equipped with legions of soldiers. On this occasion "a small company" of Syrians over-ran Judah and Jerusalem. The historian saw the hand of Jehovah in these events. Retribution for sin was God's purpose in this humiliating defeat. In due time the Syrians withdrew; however, Joash's burdens were not lightened. The king experienced failure in his personal health. Even this would be regarded as evidence of Jehovah's disapproval of his leadership. There were those who remembered how Joash had closed Zechariah's mouth by stoning him to death. These were troublous times. Servants named Zabad (Jozacar) and Jehozabad, whose parentage related them to the Ammonites

and Moabites, conspired and killed Joash in his bed. He had begun his reign in honor and with great promise. He died in shame. He was not buried in the royal cemetery.

Amaziah is the only known son of Joash. The specific nature of the burdens he placed on his "sons" is not described beyond the reference to the "rebuilding of the house of God". Political involvements with Syria and the general unsettled circumstances brought crises in internal affairs. Joash's successor would experience real trials. Other details concerning Joash were written in a "commentary of the book of the kings".

10. THE REIGN OF AMAZIAH (Chapter 25)

TEXT

Chapter 25:1. Amaziah was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jehoaddan, of Jerusalem. 2. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, but not with a perfect heart. 3. Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established unto him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father. 4. But he put not their children to death, but did according to that which is written in the law in the book of Moses, as Jehovah commanded, saying, "The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin."

5. Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together, and ordered them according to their fathers' houses, under captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, even all Judah and Benjamin: and he numbered them from twenty years old and upward, and found them three hundred thousand chosen men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield. 6. He hired also a hundred thousand mighty men of valor out of Israel for a hundred talents of silver. 7. But there came a man of God to him, saying, "O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for Jehovah is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children

of Ephraim. 8. "But if thou wilt go, do valiantly, be strong for the battle: God will cast thee down before the enemy; for God hath power to help, and to cast down." 9. And Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?" And the man of God answered, "Jehovah is able to give thee much more than this." 10. Then Amaziah separated them, to wit, the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in fierce anger. 11. And Amaziah took courage, and led forth his people, and went to the Valley of Salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand. 12. And other ten thousand did the children of Judah carry away alive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, so that they were all broken in pieces. 13. But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, and smote of them three thousand, and took much spoil.

14. Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them. 15. Wherefore the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, who said unto him. "Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which have not delivered their own people out of thy hand?" 16. And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, "Have we made thee of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten?" Then the prophet forbore, and said, "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel."

17. Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Joash, the son of Jehoahaz the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face." 18. And Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying,

"The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, 'Give thy daughter to my son to wife:' and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle. 19. "Thou sayest, 'Lo, thou hast smitten Edom;' and thy heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee?"

20. But Amaziah would not hear; for it was of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they had sought after the gods of Edom. 21. So Joash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Beth-shemesh, which belongeth to Judah. 22. And Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to his tent. 23. And Joash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate, four hundred cubits. 24. And he took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.

25. And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Joash son of Jehohaz king of Israel fifteen years. 26. Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, are they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel? 27. Now from the time that Amaziah did turn away from following Jehovah they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there. 28. And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 25:1. Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years, in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jeho-addan, a native of Jerusalem. 2. He did what was right, but sometimes resented it! 3. When he was well established as the new king, he executed the men who had

assassinated his father, 4. However, he didn't kill their children but followed the command of the Lord written in the law of Moses, that the fathers shall not die for the children's sins, nor the children for the father's sins. No, everyone must pay for his own sins.

5, 6. Another thing Amaziah did was to organize the army, assigning leaders to each clan from Judah and Benjamin. Then he took a census and found that he had an army of 300,000 men twenty years old and older, all trained and highly skilled in the use of spear and sword. He also paid \$200,000 to hire 100,000 experienced mercenaries from Israel. 7. But a prophet arrived with this message from the Lord: "sir, do not hire troops from Israel, for the Lord is not with them. 8. If you let them go with your troops to battle, you will be defeated no matter how well you fight; for God has power to help or to frustrate." 9. "But the money!" Amaziah whined. "What shall I do about that?" And the prophet replied, "The Lord is able to give you much more than this!" 10. So Amaziah sent them home again to Ephraim, which made them very angry and insulted. 11. Then Amaziah took courage and led his army to the Valley of Salt, and there killed 10,000 men from Seir. 12. Another 10,000 were taken alive to the top of a cliff and thrown over, so that they were crushed upon the rocks below. 13. Meanwhile, the army of Israel that had been sent home raided several of the cities of Judah in the vicinity of Beth-horon, toward Samaria, killing 3,000 people and carrying off great quantities of booty.

14. When King Amaziah returned from this slaughter of the Edomites, he brought with him idols taken from the people of Seir, and set them up as gods, and bowed before them, and burned incense to them! 15. This made the Lord very angry and he sent a prophet to demand, "Why have you worshiped gods who couldn't even save their own people from you. 16. "Since when have I asked your advice?" the king retorted. "Be quiet now, before I have you killed." The prophet left with this parting warning: "I know that God has determined to destroy you because you have worshiped these idols, and have not

accepted my counsel.”

17. King Amaziah of Judah now took the advice of his counselors and declared war on King Joash of Israel (son of Jehoahaz, grandson of Jehu). 18. King Joash replied with this parable: “out in the Lebanon mountains a thistle demanded of a cedar tree. ‘Give your daughter in marriage to my son.’ Just then a wild animal came by and stepped on the thistle, crushing it! 19. You are very proud about your conquest of Edom, but my advice is to stay home and don’t meddle with me, lest you and all Judah get badly hurt.”

20. But Amaziah wouldn’t listen, for God was arranging to destroy him for worshiping the gods of Edom. 21. The armies met at Beth-shemesh, in Judah, 22. and Judah was defeated, and its army fled home. 23. King Joash of Israel captured the defeated King Amaziah of Judah and took him as a prisoner to Jerusalem. Then King Joash ordered two hundred yards of the walls of Jerusalem dismantled, from the gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate. 24. He carried off all the treasures and golden bowls from the Temple, as well as the treasures from the palace; and he took hostages, including Obed-edom, and returned to Samaria.

25. However, King Amaziah of Judah lived on for fifteen years after the death of King Joash of Israel. 26. The complete biography of King Amaziah is written in The Annals of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 27. This account includes a report of Amaziah’s turning away from God, and how his people conspired against him in Jerusalem, and how he fled to Lachish—but they went after him and killed him there. 28. And they brought him back on horses to Jerusalem and buried him in the royal cemetery.

COMMENTARY

The parallel of this record is in II Kings 16:1-20. Amaziah came to the throne in Judah during the crisis which resulted in his father’s death. The new king was twenty five years old. He should have been very capable as Judah’s king. Jehoaddan, his mother, probably had been selected by Jehoiada as a wife for

Joash. She was always associated with Jerusalem. Amaziah was to reign over Judah for twenty nine years. The historian cannot altogether approve or disapprove Amaziah's kingship. The king could have done much better in approaching Jehovah's ideal. He concerned himself with avenging his father's death. He may have been fearful of his own safety as long as the conspirators, Zabad and Jehozabad, lived. The children of the murderers were spared because they posed no real threat to Amaziah. The chronicler reminds the reader that Moses (Deuteronomy 24:16) had said that children should not die for their fathers' sins. Amaziah, most likely, was not too concerned about Moses' instructions in this regard.

Military conflict too often was the order of the day. On numerous occasions the Edomites revolted against Judah. Amaziah organized his army and was able to mobilize three hundred thousand men out of Judah and Benjamin. To qualify for service, a man had to be twenty years of age and physically capable of doing all that would be expected of men in a walking army that used spears and shields. In addition to his own forces, Amaziah paid one hundred talents of silver (about two hundred thousand dollars) to hire the services of one hundred thousand men from the northern kingdom. There may have been other considerations in addition to the silver talents. Jehovah's will was not sought in these matters because it was necessary for "a man of God", a true prophet, to come to Amaziah. Jehovah's word was that Judah could go to war against Edom with the assurance of victory if Amaziah would obey God. In order to secure Jehovah's approval, Amaziah had to release the soldiers of the northern kingdom from their contract. Such a release would cost Amaziah a hundred talents of silver. The king of Judah was assured that "God had power to help" and that He was "able to give" much more than a hundred talents of silver. Against his better judgment, the king sent the hired soldiers home. He then led his army to the Valley of Salt at the extreme southern end of the Dead Sea. "The children of Seir", the Edomites, were defeated. They lost ten thousand men on the battlefield and another ten thousand were taken captive and

brought to Petra in Edom. When the Israelites (soldiers from the northern kingdom) were sent home at the prophet's word, they became very angry. They vented their wrath by attacking several cities in Judah while Amaziah was occupied with Edom. Beth-horon was about twelve miles northwest of Jerusalem. At least three thousand people of Judah were slain by their brethren from the north and much of their goods was taken.

Amaziah's idolatry cannot be excused. Jehovah had just given him a thorough victory over Edom. Judah's king sought out the gods of Edom, packed them up, brought them back to Jerusalem and worshipped them. We are amazed at Jehovah's mercy. Why would He even allow Amaziah to live? Jehovah sent a prophet (not otherwise identified) with a biting indictment. The gods of the Edomites (Baal, Molech, Chemosh and others) were powerless to prevent Edom's defeat in battle. Why would Amaziah concern himself with these idols? On a previous occasion the king had questioned Jehovah's word and then grudgingly obeyed. Now, he dared to insult the prophet by reminding him that he was not a member of the king's cabinet. In addition to the insult, he threatened the prophet's life. Bringing Edom's idols to Jerusalem sealed Amaziah's destiny. He would be destroyed.

Apparently encouraged by his military success against Edom, Amaziah planned to extend his conquests. He "took advice" from his counselors and challenged Joash, king of Israel, to war. To "look one another in the face" was the king of action described in II Samuel 2:13ff when Abner's men and Joab's men met for battle. To ask for a man's daughter in marriage meant that the intended groom counted himself at least equal in rank with the woman and her family. The "thistle" (Amaziah) had insulted the mighty "cedar" (Joash) and the thistle could well expect to be destroyed. The thistle represented that which was worthless, useless, and annoying. The cedar was renowned for its worth, usefulness, and pleasing odor. The advice of Joash to Amaziah was that he should forget this ill-advised war because he could very well lose his throne and the kingdom itself could be lost. Joash showed considerable

restraint and merited approval for his diplomacy. The prophet had said that "God had determined to destroy" Amaziah. That which followed "was of God." Amaziah's idolatry sealed his destiny. Bethshemesh was a village about fifteen miles southwest of Jerusalem. Here the battle was joined and Amaziah and his people were convincingly defeated. Once more Joash was very patient in that he did not put Amaziah to death. Amaziah was returned to Jerusalem. A considerable portion of the walls of Jerusalem was ruined. Much booty and spoil, along with prisoners of war (hostages), were taken back to Samaria. Obed-edom was the name of the person in charge of the treasures in the king's house. Once more, the Temple was robbed. So Amaziah's idol worship brought real trouble to Judah.

Joash, king of Israel, preceded Amaziah in death by fifteen years. Amaziah's tragic history was reduced to written form in the "books of the kings of Judah and Israel." The conspiracy that brought about Amaziah's death began to take shape when he brought the Edomite idols to Jerusalem. Lachish was about twenty five miles west of Hebron in the low lying foothills of Judah. This village was heavily fortified; nevertheless, the conspirators killed Amaziah as he sought refuge there. The dead king was brought back to "the city of Judah" (Jerusalem) where he was buried in the royal cemetery.

11. THE REIGN OF UZZIAH (Chapter 26)

TEXT

Chapter 26:1. And all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah. 2. He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers. 3. Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jecholiah, of Jerusalem. 4. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 5. And he set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God: and as long as he

sought Jehovah, 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 he built cities in the country of Ashdod, and among the Philistines. 7. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Meunim. 8. And the Ammonites gave tribute to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad even to the entrance of Egypt; for he waxed exceeding strong. 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. And he built towers in the wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns for he had much cattle; in the lowland also, and in the plain: and he had husbandmen and vinedressers in the mountains and in the fruitful fields; for he loved husbandry. 11. Moreover Uzziah had an army of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their reckoning made by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the officer, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains. 12. The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses, even the mighty men of valor, was 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, even for all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and coats of mail, and bows, and stones for slinging. 15. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and upon the battlements, wherewith to shoot arrows and great stones. 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, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah his God; for he went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense. 17. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant men: 18. and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, "It pertaineth not unto thee Uzziah, to burn incense unto

Jehovah, 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 honor from Jehovah God." 19. Then Uzziah was wroth; and he a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah, beside the altar of incense. 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 quickly from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him. 21. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah: 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 burial which belonged to the kings; for they said, "He is a leper:" and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 26:1. The people of Judah now crowned sixteen-year-old Uzziah as their new king. 2. After his father's death, he rebuilt the city of Eloth and restored it to Judah. 3. In all, he reigned fifty-two years, in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah, from Jerusalem. 4. He followed in the footsteps of his father Amaziah, and was, in general, a good king so far as the Lord's opinion of him was concerned. 5. While Zechariah was alive Uzziah was always eager to please God. Zechariah was a man who had special revelations from God. And as long as the king followed the paths of God, he prospered, for God blessed him.

6. He declared war on the Philistines and captured the city of Gath and broke down its walls, also those of Jabneh and Ashdub. Then he built new cities in the Ashdub area and in other parts of the Philistine country. 7. God helped him not only with wars against the Philistines but also in his battles with

the Arabs of Gurbaal and in his wars with the Meunites. 8. The Ammonites paid annual tribute to him, and his fame spread even to Egypt, for he was very powerful. 9. He built fortified towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, and the Valley Gate, and at the turning of the wall. 10. He also constructed forts in the Negeb, and made many water reservoirs, for he had great herds of cattle out in the valleys and on the plains. He was a man who loved the soil and had many farms and vineyards, both on the hillsides and in the fertile valleys. 11. He organized his army into regiments to which men were drafted under quotas set by Je-iel, the secretary of the army, and his assistant, Ma-aseiah. The commander-in-chief was General Hananiah. 12. Twenty-six hundred brave clan leaders commanded these regiments. 13. The army consisted of 307,500 men, all elite troops. 14. Uzziah issued to them shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and slingstones. 15. And he produced engines of war manufactured in Jerusalem, invented by brilliant men to shoot arrows and huge stones from the towers and battlements. So he became very famous, for the Lord helped him wonderfully until he was very powerful.

16. But at that point he became proud—and corrupt. He sinned against the Lord his God by entering the forbidden sanctuary of the Temple and personally burning incense upon the altar. 17, 18. Azariah the high Priest went in after him with eighty other priests, all brave men, and demanded that he get out. “It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense,” they declared. “That is the work of the priests alone, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to this work. Get out, for you have trespassed, and the Lord is not going to honor you for this!” 19. Uzziah was furious, and refused to set down the incense burner he was holding. But look! Suddenly—leprosy appeared in his forehead! 20. When Azariah and the others saw it, they rushed him out; in fact, he himself was as anxious to get out as they were to get him out, because the Lord had struck him. 21. So King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death and lived in isolation, cut off from his people and from the Temple. His son Jotham became vice-regent, in charge of the king’s affairs and of the

judging of the people of the land. 22. The other details of Uzziah's reign from first to last are recorded by the prophet Isaiah (son of Amoz). 23. When Uzziah died, he was buried in the royal cemetery even though he was a leper, and his son Jotham became the new king.

COMMENTARY

Uzziah is also called Azariah (II Kings 14:21, Isaiah 6:1). When Amaziah was murdered, Uzziah, only sixteen years of age, was installed as king of Judah. There appeared to be no contest for the throne as there had been in the days of Joash. Eloth was located at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. It was a very strategic port. Solomon's Ophir navy used this as a home port. Jehoshaphat had attempted and failed to establish a navy at Eloth. Uzziah was concerned about the economic welfare of his people. He was granted a long reign of fifty two years. The queen mother's name was Jecholiah. From the time of Bathsheba, the queen mother exercised great authority in Jerusalem. Uzziah received a good report from the chronicler. The good in Amaziah's reign was remembered as a model for Uzziah's kingship. Amaziah's failures were not recalled. Zechariah appeared as a man of God. He "had understanding in the vision of God". He was a "seer" like Samuel had been (I Samuel 9:9). Zechariah's relationship to Uzziah is not detailed. The prophet most likely served as a counsellor to the king. The historian knew the full record of the king's life. "As long as Uzziah sought Jehovah" his government was stable, but the day came when "his heart was lifted up." A summary of Uzziah's achievements is given in verses 6-15. The Philistines were always insisting upon their right to control the coastal plain along the Mediterranean. Even Abraham and Isaac had encounters with this people in their day. More recently they had allied with the Arabians in conflict against Jehoram. Gath is renowned in Bible history as Goliath's home. It was about twenty five miles west of Bethlehem and about fifteen miles from the coast. Jabneh was about thirty miles northwest of Jerusalem and five miles from the coast. Ashdod was near the Great Sea about ten miles

south of Jabneh. Uzziah attacked these three villages and brought them under subjection. Certain Arabians had taken control of territory at Maon, a village about fifteen miles south of Hebron. The Meunim lived at Maon. Nothing more is known about Gur-baal. The historian recorded the fact that "God helped" Uzziah in his conflict with the Philistines. The Ammonites lived on the border of the desert. Their capital, Rabbath, was about twenty five miles east of the Jordan river. These descendants of Lot were forced to pay tribute to Judah. The fame of Uzziah spread even to Egypt in these good years of his reign. He fortified Jerusalem. The gates of a walled city were very necessary and they were also vulnerable to attack. Towers or forts were built at the corner gate on the west side of the city and at the valley gate which probably opened on the valley of Hinnom on the west or south side of the city. The walls of Jerusalem were often extended and strengthened by enterprising kings. Uzziah was very sympathetic with the farmers and herdsmen among his people. Towers were necessary to protect against raiding bands. The wilderness area in Judah was the region west of the Dead Sea, the area around Bethlehem and Tekoa. The lowland was the foothill region (Shephelah) in Judah between the mountains and the coastal plain. Those who kept vineyards, cultivated barley, wheat, flax, and tended olive trees were especially blessed because Uzziah "loved husbandry".

As Uzziah gave attention to the internal development of his kingdom, he did not neglect military provisions. He had an army of three hundred seven thousand five hundred men. Those were organized under twenty six hundred officers. Jeiel, Maazeiah, and Hananiah were responsible to the king for these military registrations. Uzziah is described as a strong military leader who had the respect of the soldiers. Not only did he provide for his men conventional weapons of war, such as spears, bows, and slings; he also produced machines designed to hurl great stones and propel arrows with super-human force.¹ He attained wide fame through the invention and use of these improved military tools. The chronicler leaves the impression

¹Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 315

that Uzziah was "marvellously helped" by Jehovah.

The sin of the king and the judgment that followed is the subject of verses 16-21. The great military leader, the strong friend of his country-men, the king who trusted God became proud and took upon himself liberties that did not pertain to him. He dared to presume to fill the office of priest by going into the Temple (he entered the Holy Place) and standing by the altar of incense just at the door of the Oracle to burn incense on the sacred altar.¹ Azariah was "the chief priest" (verse 20). He, along with eighty regular priests, contested Uzziah's action and charged him with "trespass" against God. The historian observed that these were "valiant men". They dared to accuse the king. They predicted that Jehovah would dishonor Uzziah. Instead of repenting and retreating, the king was furious against his accusers. As he proceeded to burn the incense (the pot or pan was in his hand), the dread disease of leprosy erupted in his forehead. It "rose like the sun". His anger turned to mortal fear. With the priests behind him the king hurriedly left the Temple. Lepers were forced to live apart from the regular community and outside the cities and villages. Since Uzziah was a king, he lived in "a separate house". He was stricken by Jehovah. Very likely, leprosy caused his death. Never again could he go to the Temple. He was unclean. Jotham, Uzziah's son and prince regent, took over the official functions of government.

Uzziah had begun well. His life closed with the ex-king broken in body and spiritually bankrupt. In the very year of Uzziah's death Isaiah experienced his vision of God (Isaiah, chapter 6). The prophet Isaiah wrote an account of Uzziah's life. As he had to live apart from others in the latter years of his life, so in his death, even though buried in the royal cemetery, he was placed in a plot apart from the honored kings of Judah.

¹Schultz, Samuel J., *The Old Testament Speaks*, p. 207

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

LESSON TWENTY-ONE 24—26

797. Identify the mother of Joash.
798. Where did Joash send to get money to repair the Temple?
Why was this repair so urgent?
799. Who was assigned to collect the building fund? What happened?
800. For what purpose had Jehovah's Temple been plundered?
801. How was the chest used?
802. Explain the reference to "Moses' tax".
803. Who were the responsible persons in the use of the building funds?
804. What kinds of skilled workmen were employed?
805. Having repaired the Temple, how were surplus funds used?
806. When were burnt offerings usually offered at the Temple?
807. How old was Jehoiada at death and where did they bury him? How was he regarded among his people?
808. With regard to religion, what happened upon Jehoiada's death?
809. What does the record say about prophets?
810. Who was Zechariah? What did he say? What happened?
811. In connection with Zechariah, explain Jesus' words in Matthew 23:34, 35.
812. Who spoke these words in 24:22, "Jehovah look upon it"?
813. How could a small band of Syrians defeat a great army of Hebrews?
814. How did Joash pass? Why did it happen this way?
815. Where was Joash buried?
816. According to this account, where would one find the recorded events of Joash's life?
817. How long did Amaziah reign? What was his mother's

- name?
818. How many Hebrew soldiers did Amaziah number and assemble? Out of which tribes were these called up?
 819. Why did Amaziah not carry out a complete purge to secure his throne?
 820. How large was the army that he hired and identify this army?
 821. Underscore the great truth in the last part of 25:8.
 822. What word did the man of God speak to the king?
 823. What was Amaziah's concern and how did the man of God answer him?
 824. How did the mercenary army react?
 825. Against whom did Amaziah go to war?
 826. While Amaziah was engaged in battle what happened in Judah?
 827. What very foolish thing did Amaziah do?
 828. Describe Amaziah's attitude toward the prophet of Jehovah.
 829. Explain Amaziah's word, "Come, let us look one another in the face."
 830. Why would Joash refer to the thistle and the cedar?
 831. Why did Amaziah act so foolishly?
 832. Where did Joash and Amaziah meet? What were the results?
 833. In what records were Amaziah's acts written?
 834. Where did Amaziah die? How did this happen?
 835. By what other name was Uzziah known?
 836. Carefully locate Eloth.
 837. How long did Uzziah rule?
 838. Characterize Uaaizh's reign.
 839. Name other nations over which Uzziah won victories.
 840. Describe Uzziah's experiences in Philistia.
 841. What did this king do for Jerusalem?

842. Locate the wilderness of 26:10.
843. What kind of internal improvements did Uzziah accomplish?
844. What were the engines of 26:15?
845. Describe Uzziah's army. What are your impressions of Uzziah as a king?
846. How was this king "Marvellously helped"?
847. Describe Uzziah's sin.
848. Who tried to prevent the king from acting foolishly?
849. Describe Uzziah's attitude.
850. How did Jehovah pass judgment on the king?
851. How long was this affliction upon Uzziah? Where did he live?
852. Who followed him to the throne?
853. Who wrote an account of the acts of Uzziah?
854. Where was king Uzziah buried?