

## King Uzziah

The name “Uzziah” is said to literally mean “my strength is Yah”. His father’s name was Amaziah = Yah is Mighty (2 Chron. 26:1), and his mother’s name Jecoliah = Yah is able (2 Chron. 26:3). Uzziah began his reign by reflecting all of these principles: Yahweh was able through His Might to strengthen the king, and establish his kingdom. So we read:

“he did that which was right in the sight of Yahweh ... and **he sought God** in the days of Zechariah ... and as long as he sought Yahweh, **God made him to prosper**” (2 Chron. 26:4-5).

Again, the record states:

“And **God helped him** against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-Baal, and the Mehunims” (vs 7)

And again:

“... his name spread far and abroad; **for he was marvellously helped**, till he was strong” (vs. 15).

The key factor for Uzziah’s prosperity, was the fact that “he sought God ...”. It is written of God that:

“without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that **diligently seek him**” (Heb. 11:6).

Notice that here, belief in God is not a passive thing. Diligence is needed to seek after him – it is not enough to have some sort of vague idea that God exists, as is the manner of some. Rather we need to exert ourselves in seeking after Him and His Ways - and Uzziah demonstrated that due diligence.

These principles are also seen in King Asa. **He “did that which was good and right in the eyes of Yahweh his God: for he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: and commanded Judah to seek Yahweh God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment”** (2 Chron. 14:2-4). Not only did Asa seek God himself, he also commanded his people to do likewise. Hence he was also caused to prosper, as he said: “... because we have sought Yahweh our God, we have sought him, and **he hath given us rest** on every side” (2 Chron. 14:7). And when faced with an invading army, Asa “cried unto Yahweh his God, and said, Yahweh, it is nothing with thee **to help**, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Yahweh our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Yahweh thou are our God: let no man prevail against thee” (2 Chron. 14:11). Like Uzziah, Asa was helped in his contending against the adversary, because of the fact of his diligence in seeking Yahweh.

The prosperity of Uzziah is seen in his diligence in establishing his kingdom and army:

“... 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 vinedressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry. Moreover, Uzziah had an host of fighting men, ... 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” (2 Chron. 26: see verses 9-15).

The prosperity of Uzziah seems to have been unmatched in Israel, other than the great kingdom of Solomon. Yet, there were some deficiencies:

“... he did that which was right in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; **Save that the high places were not removed**: the people sacrificed and bunt incense still on the high places” (2 Kings 15:3-4).

Though there is no evidence that the king worshipped these idols, he did not take them away, and the people still worshipped them.

### **BEING MADE STRONG**

The divine record continues: “But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction ...” (2 Chron. 26:16). This is always the danger of riches and prosperity – the heart of man is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9) and being exalted in station can lead to being exalted in spirit. This was the situation with Uzziah.

The Proverbs provide appropriate remarks on this situation:

“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).

“Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Yahweh? Or lest I be poor, and take the name of my God in vain” (Prov. 30:8-9).

Being lifted up in prosperity, Uzziah’s pride led him to destruction, in a particular way that we shall proceed to examine. But this verse in Proverbs 30 is sobering for those who strive to obtain as much as this world’s goods as is possible: “give me neither poverty or riches” – both present their challenges to the faith of God’s elect. Seeking first the kingdom and righteousness of God, the believer in Christ will be satisfied with that which they have, trusting in the Lord to provide all that they have need of – as distinct from all that they would want!

In a similar way, Israel were warned of this from the beginning:

“... Beware that thou forget not Yahweh thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments and his statutes, which I command thee this day: lest when thou hast eaten, and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein, And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that though hast is multiplied, **Then thine heart be lifted up**, and thou forget Yahweh thy God ...” (Deut. 8:11-14).

Although Uzziah evidently did not forget Yahweh his God, and did not turn aside to Idols, there were problems related to his worship. He took upon it himself to approach the dwelling of God as his own high priest. So the narrative describes:

“But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against Yahweh his God, and went into the temple of Yahweh to burn incense upon the altar of incense.” (2 Chron. 26:16).

The priests tried to remonstrate with him, but rather than listen to their rebuke, “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 Yahweh, from beside the incense altar

... and Uzziah 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 Yahweh” (2 Chron. 26: see verses 16-21).

Uzziah took it upon himself to be a priest, and as a consequence he was “cut off” from the system of worship in Israel, and lived as a leper until the day of his death.

But by contrast, we read of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“So also Christ **glorified not himself to be made a high priest**; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 5:5-6).

Messiah then, was not self-appointed, as Uzziah was: he was ordained by God. And in connection with this, it is significant that Isaiah (whose name means “Salvation of Yah”) saw a vision of the Lord in glory in the holy place, in the same year that Uzziah died:

“In the year that king Uzziah died, **I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne**, high and lifted up, and his train filled **the temple**. Above it stood the seraphim ... and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Yahweh of armies; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:1-3).

Notice that the emphasis of this prophecy of Isaiah, is that Yahweh is glorified and pronounced to be thrice Holy, not man. Hence, the high priest had to wear a golden plate upon his forehead that proclaimed this:

“And thou shalt make **a plate of pure gold**, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, **HOLINESS TO YAHWEH** ... and **it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead**, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; **and it shall be always upon his forehead**, that they may be accepted before Yahweh” (Exod. 28:38)

When Uzziah went into the Temple, he was not wearing the priestly garments, and so did not have this golden plate upon his head.

Gold represents perfected faith in Scripture: hence Peter refers to: “the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire ... ” (2 Pet. 1:7). And the forehead represents the arena of thought – hence in the Apocalypse we read of the preaching angel: “Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads” (Rev. 7:3). That is, they have received the Divine Impress into their thinking.

The golden plate then, amongst other things, represented how that the High Priest had to have faithfulness to Yahweh (i.e. gold) and ascribe Holiness to him in his thinking (i.e. upon the forehead). Uzziah did none of those things: he was neither faithful, nor did he hallow the Holy Place - and neither did he ascribe holiness before God. So it was, that he was smitten with leprosy in his forehead.

Leprosy in the forehead was evidently one of the worst kinds of leprosy. It is described in the Law of Moses thus:

“... then the priest shall look upon it: and, behold, if the rising of the sore be white reddish in his bald head, or **in his bald forehead**, as the leprosy appeareth in the skin of the flesh;

he is a leprous man, he is unclean: the priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean; **his plague is in his head ...**" (Lev. 13:43-44).

Notice this, the leper who was infected in his head was not just unclean: he was "utterly unclean". His head was filled with disease, not unlike the way in which the head of the natural man is carnal, filled with diseased thoughts and intentions. Indeed, Jude makes a comparison between leprosy and the pernicious influence of false teachers:

"likewise also these filthy dreamers **defile the flesh**, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities ..." (Jude 1:8).

The words of false brethren are like a disease: "their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:17-18). Like a disease, the influence of false teachers spreads, defiling the flesh and plaguing the body. It must be eradicated like the leprosy under the law of Moses.

The prophet Amos, we are told, commenced his ministry "in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake" (Amos 1:1). This earthquake is also spoken of later by the prophet Zechariah: "ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal; yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah ..." (Zech. 14:5). There is a tradition that this earthquake took place at the same time when Uzziah went into the Temple unlawfully – although this cannot be verified from Scripture. But if that were the case, then it is perhaps significant in this context that when the veil of Messiah's flesh was rent and access to the Holy Place was made, there was a great earthquake (Mat 27:51), and again at his resurrection (Mat 28:2).

But be that as it may, through faith in Messiah's priesthood, the believers in Christ have access to that which Uzziah did not. Hence the apostle exhorted:

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to **enter into the holiest** by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God; **let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water ..." (Heb. 10:19-22).

We must not therefore be lifted up in pride as Uzziah was, but rather we must emulate the example of Messiah, waiting to be elevated by Divine appointment. Then, if we hold fast in faith, with a spirit of holiness, we shall be part of that great company of singers, singing "a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth. (Rev. 5:9-10).

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