

# UZZIAH'S PRIDE

## BIBLE TEXT : II Chronicles 26:1-23.

LESSON 321 Junior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12).

### BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

#### **2 Chronicles 26:1-23**

<sup>1</sup> Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who *was* sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah.

<sup>2</sup> He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

<sup>3</sup> Sixteen years old *was* Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Jecoliah of Jerusalem.

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

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

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

<sup>8</sup> And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad *even* to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened

### BIBLE REFERENCES:

#### NOTES:

##### **A Young King**

Among the kings of Judah was one by the name of Uzziah who was also called Azariah (**2 Kings 14:21 <sup>21</sup> And all the people of Judah took Azariah, which *was* sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah**). He was only sixteen years old when his father, Amaziah, was slain, and when he was made king. No doubt the people all wondered how the boy-king would rule. Would he seek the advice of those who had experience in giving counsel to rulers? Would he forsake the older ones, and seek evil counsel as Rehoboam, Solomon's son, had done? (See Lesson 287.) Could such a young king rule well?

##### **A Good Example**

Uzziah proved that a young person can be trusted with responsibility. When he started his reign, he sought God and His wisdom, and soon won the confidence of the people. Uzziah must have realised that he was young to be king, and also that he needed the help of the Lord if he was to be successful. He followed the example of his father to do that, which was right in the sight of the Lord. No doubt Uzziah's father also taught him about the Lord and His commandments. The Bible teaches that there are promises to those who honour their parents. Solomon's advice to children was to heed the instruction of their father and to remember the law of their mother (**Proverbs 1:8 <sup>8</sup> My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother**). He said that their obedience would be rewarded with "length of days, and long life, and peace" (Proverbs 3:1, 2).

As long as Uzziah sought the Lord, God made him prosper. This is what could be expected because God had promised the Children of Israel that they would prosper if they were obedient to Him (**Deuteronomy 29:9 <sup>9</sup> Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do**). In writing of those who live righteously, the Psalmist said, "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3).

##### **Prosperity**

There are different kinds of prosperity. To be prosperous means to be successful. Some people prosper in a material way. They may have money, property, and success in the things of the world. God's people are more interested in spiritual prosperity. They want to grow in the Lord, and have an abundance of God's grace and love. They want to be successful in working for the Lord. God blesses His people both spiritually and materially, but spiritual prosperity is all-important.

##### **Seeking God**

As for Uzziah, king of Judah, "As long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper." He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had an understanding of spiritual things. No doubt Uzziah went to him for advice and help. Among the prophets who lived in the days of Uzziah were Isaiah (**Isaiah 1:1 <sup>1</sup> The vision of Isaiah the son of**

himself exceedingly.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour *were* two thousand and six hundred.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

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

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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

Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah), Hosea (Hosea 1:1 <sup>1</sup> The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel), and Amos (Amos 1:1 <sup>1</sup> The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel 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). It was a wonderful privilege for Uzziah to be able to go to such men of God to hear and to heed their words.

### Building

As Uzziah prospered, he built cities for the people of Judah. One of those, Elath or Elath, was located on the shore of the Red Sea in the land of Edom (**2 Chronicles 8:17** <sup>17</sup> Then went Solomon to Eziongeber, and to Elath, at the sea side in the land of Edom). This was one of the seaports, which Solomon used for his fleet of ships (**1 Kings 9:26** <sup>26</sup> And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Eziongeber, which is beside Elath, on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom). Uzziah restored this to Judah, and probably used it as a port of trade with the countries of the East.

Uzziah not only built cities but he also built towers for protection. In Jerusalem, the gates could be defended by the towers that he built. In the desert, no doubt the towers could be used for defence, for lookouts, and for shelters. Uzziah was interested in improving the land, too. He liked farming and cattle. He had many wells dug so there would be more water. On the hillsides there were vineyards. In the valleys there were herds. In those days the land of Judah became prosperous, wealthy, and famous.

### Against Enemies

Gold helped Uzziah to prosper against his enemies, too. He went to war against the Philistines, who were old enemies of the Children of Israel. The Philistines had built some forts between their land and Judah. These forts were destroyed by Uzziah as he tore down the strongholds of the enemies.

Uzziah was successful in battle against the Arabians as well as against his other neighbours. The Amorites sent gifts of tribute, no doubt to keep on friendly terms with Uzziah. God helped him against his enemies until Uzziah's fame was spread abroad, even as far away as Egypt.

Uzziah had a standing army, which was equipped in a manner that surpassed others at that time. There were shields, helmets, and coats of mail to protect the soldiers. Uzziah's men had both knowledge and skill. They invented "engines" which shot arrows and great stones. It is the first account of the use of machinery to throw materials in warfare.

### Spiritual Strength

In a spiritual sense, it is a good thing to pull down these strongholds of the enemy, too. As God helped Uzziah so will He help us, today, against Satan, the enemy of our soul. God is pleased to have His people put the enemy to flight instead of giving in to Satan. We are told to "resist the devil, and he will flee" (James 4:7). Do you wonder how we can resist the enemy? We are told to "put on the whole armour of God" that we may be able to stand (Ephesians 6:11). The armour includes the "shield of faith" and the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:13-17).

Jesus Himself used the Word of God against Satan. When Jesus was tempted of the devil, He quoted Scripture, saying, "It is written," and Satan "departed from him" (**Luke 4:4-13** <sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. <sup>5</sup> And the devil, taking him up into an high

LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

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

<sup>18</sup> 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.*

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> 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 hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.

<sup>21</sup> 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.

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

<sup>23</sup> 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

mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. <sup>6</sup> And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. <sup>7</sup> If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. <sup>8</sup> And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. <sup>9</sup> And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: <sup>10</sup> For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: <sup>11</sup> And in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. <sup>12</sup> And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. <sup>13</sup> And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season). In order to know the passages of Scripture, we need to read and to study the Bible. It is valuable to us as the "Sword of the Spirit." Our faith can be strengthened by the Word of God because "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Prayer is necessary, too, for a person to grow spiritually, and to be strong in the Lord. We read that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). It is helpful for a person to talk about the Lord, to think about Him, and to testify of what God has done (**Malachi 3:16** <sup>16</sup> Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. Psalm 1:1-2 <sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. <sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night). In the last Book of the Bible we read about some people who will have overcome the enemy of their soul "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11).

### Pride

Uzziah had gained his fame, his strength, and his prosperity because the Lord helped him. He reigned well for many years. Then something happened. He began to think too much of himself. Instead of giving God the thanks and glory, he thought that he had done very well. He gave himself the honour for his success. He began to be proud, and was lifted up in his own eyes. We read in the Bible that there is danger in pride and self-exaltation. Here are some Scripture passages about pride: "When pride cometh, then cometh shame" (Proverbs 11:2); "An high look, and a proud heart, . . . is sin" (Proverbs 21:4); "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

About self-exaltation we read: "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased" (Matthew 23:12); "For men to search their own glory is not glory" (Proverbs 25:27); "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12); "He that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction" (Proverbs 17:19).

### Little and Big

Uzziah probably had heard about Saul who had been king over the Children of Israel. When Saul was "little" in his own sight, God made him king (**1 Samuel 15:17** <sup>17</sup> And Samuel said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?). When Saul became so big in his own sight that he disobeyed and rejected the commandment of the Lord, then the Lord rejected Saul from being king (**1 Samuel 15:23**). This should be a lesson to all who hear or read about Saul.

One day Uzziah decided that he would like to burn some incense unto the Lord. The altar of incense, or the golden altar (**Exodus 40:5** <sup>5</sup> And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle), was



leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

located in the Holy Place, "before the veil" in the Temple (**Exodus 30:6** <sup>6</sup> **And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee**). Every morning when the lamps were trimmed and every evening when they were lighted, incense was placed upon the altar so it would continuously burn as worship to the Lord (**Exodus 30:7-8** <sup>7</sup> **And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.** <sup>8</sup> **And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations**). Only the priests were permitted to go into the Holy Place, and only the priests were given the privilege of burning incense upon the golden altar (**Numbers 16:40** <sup>40</sup> **To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses**).

### **Not His Work**

One might think that Uzziah was very religious to want to burn incense unto the Lord. But, by so doing, he was taking upon himself a privilege, which God had not given him. It meant that he tried to fill a place that God had given only to the priests. Although God had blessed Uzziah and prospered him, God had not done away with the Law, which gave only the sons of Aaron the right to burn incense. Each person must fill the place that God has given him. When one is faithful and humble, God may grant other privileges to him. Although a person might have a great desire to do something for the Lord, he still must do that which is right and pleasing to God. The Prophet Samuel said, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Samuel 15:22).

### **Disobeying**

No person, not even a king, can break God's law without suffering. When Uzziah entered the Holy Place, he disobeyed, not because he had a great desire to do something for God nor because he was ignorant of the Law. But Uzziah had exalted himself until he wanted to take the place of the priest. Azariah, the priest, along with 80 others, warned Uzziah, and tried to stop him. The priests called to him: "Go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed."

### **Smitten by God**

One would expect Uzziah to rush out of the sacred place and pray for forgiveness. But Uzziah was proud, and he defied the priests and God. As he stood there with the censer in his hand, angry at the priests, determined to burn incense, leprosy began to show on his forehead. He was smitten by the Lord, and this was the end of his greatness.

Because of the leprosy, which was the punishment for his sin, Uzziah was "cut off from the house of the LORD." He was rushed out of the Temple, never to worship there again. Lest his family become leprous, too, he had to live apart from his family in a separate house, and "dwell alone," according to the Law (Leviticus 13:46). Uzziah could no longer act as king — his son, Jotham, judged the people of the land. Uzziah remained a leper the rest of his life. At his death, he was buried in a plot belonging to the kings. It seems that his grave was separate from those of the other kings, because "He is a leper," they said.

### **Humility**

There are accounts in the Bible that lepers were healed. We have studied about Naaman who was recovered from his leprosy when he humbled himself to obey God (Lesson 311). Miriam, the sister of Moses, was smitten with leprosy (**Numbers 12:10** <sup>10</sup> **And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was**

leprous). God healed her when the sin was confessed and Moses prayed for her. Perhaps Uzziah could have been healed. But we do not read that he even repented or asked for prayer that he might be delivered. This one sin, alone, is mentioned against Uzziah (**2 Chronicles 27:2** <sup>2</sup> **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**). We see in his life that one sin will cause a separation from God. What damage was done by one sin — exalting himself! How sad after reigning 52 years that his life should end thus, especially after such a good beginning! How much better to be “clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (I Peter 5:5). One of the things that God requires of man is “to walk humbly” with God (**Micah 6:8** <sup>8</sup> **He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?**). In Uzziah’s life, the words of the Proverbs were proved to be true: “A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit” (Proverbs 29:23).

### **QUESTIONS**

1. How old was Uzziah when he started to reign?
2. Why was the city of Elath important?
3. How could towers be of any value?
4. Who helped Uzziah against his neighbours?
5. What prophets lived at the time of Uzziah?
6. What was the result of his seeking God?
7. Why did Uzziah want to burn incense?
8. Why was it wrong for Uzziah to burn incense?
9. What was his punishment?
10. What was the cause of Uzziah’s sin?