

JULY 30

2 Chronicles 26-28

2 Chronicles 26

Uzziah is one of the good kings in the line of David. He is especially well known for his mention in Isaiah 6:1, *In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.* Uzziah reigned for 52 years. His father, Amaziah, was very unstable and it is suggested that the people made Uzziah a co-regent with him and that father and son reigned together for many years. Notice in v. 1 that it doesn't mention the death of Amaziah, but rather that the people made Uzziah king "instead of" his father. It also doesn't explain how long Amaziah was away, hiding in Lachish.

Uzziah was the only king that an entire generation had ever known. Fifty-two years was a long time; and when he died, I'm sure for Isaiah, and for all of Israel, it was a very discouraging time.

V. 4 Note that Uzziah followed the Lord according to the way his father Amaziah had followed God for the brief time Amaziah followed God. It is interesting that Ezra doesn't compare Uzziah to David.

V. 5 Seeking God has been and will remain an important mark for someone following God. Notice that Uzziah began to seek God under the teaching of Zechariah, the man his grandfather King Joash had killed. Although it appears that the time references shouldn't work out, somehow Zechariah's influence was important in the life of Uzziah. Zechariah's godly example and murder continues into Jesus' teaching in Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51.

Vs. 6-15 This fits into what we should be getting used to. These are Uzziah's acts of faith and following God. In contrast to some of the other kings, Ezra isn't showing any great moment when Uzziah had to exercise faith. Probably the fact that he didn't worship other gods is remarkable enough. He is the first king since Jehoshaphat who didn't worship idols.

V. 16 Here is that verse of warning, *when he was strong*. It would be interesting to go through all the kings and write down the variations: When he was strong, when he was established, etc.

Vs. 16-23 It appears that for Uzziah the area of pride was thinking he should have the privilege to stand before God without needing a priest. This wasn't just disrespect for the priests and Levites, it was disrespect for the God who had given all of these instructions. As Dirty Harry so sagely put it, "A man's gotta know his own limitations." The same is true for us in the church and in the harvest.

What is interesting about this punishment is that as a leper, Uzziah couldn't enter the temple or the company of God's people. On the other hand, Uzziah could still worship God in spirit, even if he had to live outside of Jerusalem.

As disciples, it is easy sometimes to disrespect the church or God's choice in gifting or even offices like pastor or elder or deacon; but God appointed these men and designated these offices. If they are important to the Lord for His harvest, then we need to work with them, not around them. If a local church isn't a good fit for us, then we need to find a church that does allow us to join with them in unity, following Christ in the harvest and making disciples, who make disciples. We can't give up on church or what God has planned and ordained. Uzziah didn't submit to God's decision to be served by the Levites, and he paid a price for it.

2 Chronicles 27

There is not much to say here. Jotham seems to have been a good, godly king. It is possible that Jotham was actually leading the country years earlier, since he had to represent his father Uzziah who was a leper. Notice again, that Ezra does not compare Jotham to David.

V. 2 It is important to note that the people were running out of control. Uzziah had not been a godly example.

V. 6 is probably the key thought that Ezra wanted to impress on his readers. It may be that Jotham was a mediocre king; but by the fact that he ordered his ways before the Lord, he became one of the few kings against whom there is nothing negative to say.

2 Chronicles 28

This is actually a terrifying story. The Davidic line and all of Judah came within a few words of extinction. The writer of Kings didn't let us know that, but Ezra is making sure those who have come out of exile see this. Had it not been for the words of Oded in v. 9, and the favorable reaction of the men of Ephraim in v. 12, it would have been lights out. Judah was spared only by the grace of God, just like all of Israel was spared by God's grace during the Babylonian captivity.

Vs. 1-4 For whatever reason, Ahaz was deeply involved in idolatry. Remember that the idolatry back then was very sexually motivated. Sex is a great motivator. The fact that he sacrificed his infants to Molech suggests that Baal worship and sexually inspired worship were also in the picture. You had to do something with those unwanted babies that came through Baal and Asherah worship.

Vs. 5-7 Look at the carnage caused by Ahaz's sins. Notice that the defeat and massive amount of deaths were the result of not just Ahaz, but the nation following him in this sin. Ezra's point to the returnees of Israel would be clear. Leaders cause people to follow and can lead to massive ruin.

Vs. 8-11 Ahaz was defeated by Syria and then by the totally backslidden northern kingdom. Thankfully there was this prophet named Oded. In this it is obvious that God let things go this far in order to humble Judah. Otherwise it would have meant the end of Judah as a nation.

Vs. 12-15 This mercy and obedience by Israel was ironic and it was a message to Judah. In spite of all the godly kings they had had, God didn't spare Judah for allowing one ungodly man to ruin the nation.

Vs. 16-21 Ahaz had the gift of being unteachable, so the Lord kept using everything he tried against him.

Vs. 22-27 Ahaz actually became worse. It is interesting that the Lord didn't take him out; but again, this would all become a test to the people. During the Tribulation it says that the people on earth will understand that the natural disasters are from God; but rather than turning to God, they will only get madder at Him and intensify their persecution of His followers. It is the natural way that the sin within us reveals itself as it reacts to God.

Ezra's point is clear for those he was writing to, and for us. It only takes one generation to destroy everything that past generations have built. For us, that is why our focus on Christ, the harvest, and making disciples, who make disciples is so important. A church has lost its focus when it ceases to see people come to Christ and see people raised up who actually win others and make disciples. Ahaz was obviously sinful and idolatrous. In Jesus' generation those who opposed God were religious. The appearances may change, but results are the same. Anything that keeps us from doing the one thing we were left here to do, the Great Commission, has to be put aside until we are following Christ in the harvest and seeing fruit.

Romans 13

Remember that the first 11 chapters have been focused on God's redemptive purpose on earth. This chapter is a command of God to His disciples in the harvest. You can almost see how removed a person is from Christ and from the harvest by the amount of energy they expend

blaming political parties. It is very interesting to me that this is the Spirit of God writing. At the end of the chapter He calls all of us to attention, to put our energy into the harvest.

Vs. 1-7 This section should raise a lot of questions, but the tone of what the Lord is saying is pretty simple. I'm sure there were lots of things to find wrong in Rome and with Nero; but even in that context, Paul told them to live above all that and to see God's redemptive mercy and plan. Another good portion to read with this is 1 Timothy 2:1-5.

V. 1 One thing I've heard that makes sense is that we are to obey the government, until obeying is a sin.

V. 6 Isn't this interesting that Paul and the Spirit get in the face of those who complain about paying taxes?

Vs. 8-10 Paul says that our true duty in this dark harvest is to love our neighbor. This is also an interesting way to tell these Christians to adjust their perspective to the spiritual realities of life. Not only was loving one's neighbor a way to fulfill the law, but it was a very natural way to begin leading your neighbor to Christ.

Vs. 11-14 I think these are great verses and show God's perspective on where our eyes should be. This is also pretty good discipleship stuff.

Psalm 23

We read this psalm earlier in the year before we read about David and his life. Reading this psalm now, do you have a different appreciation for what David went through and how this psalm came to be?

Vs. 1-3 Notice all of the things the Lord does for us as our Shepherd. This was David's experience in the wilderness, running from Saul. It was hard and there was no big deliverance; but daily, the Lord showed David faithfulness, small deliverances and kindnesses.

V. 4 David was under the penalty of death from Saul, but David sought the Lord daily and received His comfort and leading daily.

V. 5 In the middle of all of this, God blessed David and the community that followed him. Although these were hard times, I'll bet God made them memorable and provided seasons of joy. God confirmed His anointing and choice of David during the blessings that came during these hard days.

V. 6 Notice the allusion to God's mercy (ESV notes "steadfast love") and David's passion to dwell in the presence of the Lord. It's no wonder that David set his heart to bring the ark into Jerusalem and to build the temple. This verse makes me think of what Paul says in Romans 8:31-32, *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

Proverbs 20:11

The past three verses had something to do with judging, discerning and measuring. How do you discern the heart of a child? By his acts. How do you understand what is a good or bad action? By the Word of God.