

Uzziah's Incense

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: 2Chron. 26:1-23

A. Uzziah - "Jehovah is my strength" (Greek) also known as Azariah

1. King of Judah, son of Amaziah, appointed by the people to replace his father - 2Kings 14:21; 2Chron. 26:1
2. Amaziah did what was right... sometimes; he was pumped up by a victory at Edom, gratuitously picked fight with Jehoash, king of Israel, and lost the precious vessels of the temple. His people had him killed
3. Uzziah was sixteen when he became king and reigned 52 years (791-739) co-regency with his father and son
4. His reign was the most prosperous except Jehoshaphat since Solomon.
5. Early in his reign, under the influence of the prophet Zechariah, he was faithful to God. He became famous and feared because God helped him in everything he did
6. He became proud, and pride became his undoing - 2Chron. 26:15-16
7. Azariah the High Priest saw the direction of Uzziah's life, and with 80 armed priests, he withstood him
 - a. "In the meantime a great earthquake shook the ground and a rent was made in the temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized upon him immediately." (Josephus Flavius, Antiquities of the Jews, IX 10:4). Amos 1:1

B. From Incense to Leprosy

1. Uzziah was struck with tzaraat while attempting to offer incense, was driven from the Temple, and compelled to live in isolation until his death
2. The government was given to his son Jotham, and he was buried in a separate grave in the field of kings
3. "That lonely grave in the royal necropolis would eloquently testify to coming generations that all earthly monarchy must bow before the inviolable order of the Divine will, and that no interference could be tolerated with that unfolding of the purposes of God" (Dr. Green, Kingdom of Israel).

C. Altar of Incense (mizbach haketoros - Ex. 30:1-10), also called the Golden Altar (Num. 4:11), and the Inner Altar, stood inside in the Holy Place "before the Veil that is by the Ark of the Covenant."

1. The altar was constructed of settim wood and covered in pure gold. It was an upright rectangular stand, measuring one cubit wide, one cubit deep, and two cubits high, with a "horn" on each corner, a border of solid gold around the top, and rings on opposite sides through which poles could be passed to carry it (Ex. 37:25-26). The poles were made of settim wood covered with gold. Moses consecrated the altar with the anointing of oil when the Tabernacle was dedicated (Lev. 40:9).

2. Incense was burned on this altar daily at the time of the morning and the evening sacrifices. The coals used on this altar had to be taken from the Altar of Burnt Offerings. The incense used had to be made according to a specific formula (Ex.

30:9, 34-35); no other incense was permitted. According to Jewish history, the incense was made by the Avtinas family, who guarded the secret of its recipe. The offering of incense had to be seasoned with salt.

- D. Leprosy comes from the verb tzara which means "to have a skin disease."
 - 1. The root of the noun form tzaraath means "smiting," it was a general term for types of skin diseases often associated with moral impurity
 - 2. The Septuagint translates the term with the Greek word lepra, from which leprosy is translated in English Bibles.
 - 3. The Law of Moses identifies three manifestations of tzaraath or leprosy: as an affliction of human skin (Lev. 13:2), of garments (Lev. 13:47), and of houses (Lev. 14:34).

I. UZZIAH'S ENTRY

- A. He was born into a position of power; raised with all of the training, advantages, and access of royalty
- B. He was a descendant of Rehoboam, a true descendent of David
- C. He became king at age 16 in a co-regency with his father under the mentorship of a devout prophet, Zechariah
- D. His father, Amaziah, served the Lord, but not completely. Perhaps the seed for Uzziah's sin was sown in part by his father
- E. He began so well, had so much promise and tremendous support from God
 - 1. Politically - He triumphed over all of his enemies.
 - 2. Militarily - He was organized, prepared, sponsored, and creative.
 - 3. Personally - His name was known all over the world.

II. UZZIAH'S ERROR

- A. He allowed success to fill him with pride in himself and forgetfulness of those who made him powerful, especially God
 - 1. Rom. 12:3; Prov. 11:2, 29:23
- B. He used his position to circumvent God's law.
 - 1. No one gets to do that with any expectation of escaping judgment

III. UZZIAH'S EPITAPH

- A. He was isolated from the people. He would never again lead a military campaign, engage in diplomacy, sit in the royal court, ride before the people in a parade, sit at the table with his family
- B. When he died, he was buried with the epitaph, "He is a leper."
 - 1. Most public figures are obsessed with their legacy. Uzziah's will always be brief and abhorrent

V. UZZIAH'S EDUCATION

- A. Familiarity can breed disrespect - Isa. 6:1-8; Ex. 3:1-5; Judges 13:22
- B. One can begin well & end poorly - Gal. 6:9; 2Tim. 4:10; 1Cor. 10:12; Rev. 2:10
- C. Success can be as difficult to handle as failure - 1Tim. 6:17-19; Prov. 16:18-19
- D. Live in such a way that your epitaph will reflect a faithful relationship with God.