

This chapter covers the reign of Uzziah over Judah. Following in the footsteps of his father, Amaziah, he began his reign doing what was right in the sight of the LORD but made a critical error later in his reign. Uzziah was blessed and prospered by the LORD until he became proud of his successes. Believing that nothing was beyond his ability, Uzziah sinned by assuming priestly duties that a king was not permitted to do.

3 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.

Uzziah became the king at a young age because of the assassination of his father. We are told that he had a long reign of 52 years, no doubt due in part to the fact that he began his reign at a young age. As is often done in the Biblical record of the kings, Uzziah's mother is identified by name. Perhaps the mother is named since kings often had multiple wives and concubines and so the mother is named to identify which son is becoming king.

4 And he did *that which* was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did. 5 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.

“And he did *that which* was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did” – As described in the previous chapter, Amaziah had been a good king during the first part of his reign. Uzziah followed this example and governed Judah according to the ways of God.

“And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God” – This prophet was not the Zechariah whose writings are contained in the Bible. That particular Zechariah lived some 300 years later. However, this prophet apparently served as a spiritual guide for Uzziah. When Uzziah wanted to hear from God, he consulted with this Zechariah.

“and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper” – This is a very important point. God prospered Uzziah as long as he remained faithful. The LORD withdrew His hand of blessing when Uzziah strayed because God cannot bless sin.

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 built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines. 7 And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Mehunims.

These next verses give us examples of how God prospered Uzziah, stating that his military successes came as a direct result of being blessed by the LORD. Uzziah was able to capture a certain amount of territory from the Philistines, destroying the walls of three of their cities and building new cities in Philistine territory. Verse 7 specifically states that God helped Uzziah against various enemy nations.

8 And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad *even* to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened *himself* exceedingly.

“And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah” – Ammon was a nation to the east of the Judah and the Jordan river. Ammon was either forced to pay tribute to Uzziah in a separate military campaign or they gave gifts to Uzziah in order to be on friendly terms with him.

“and his name spread abroad *even* to the entering in of Egypt” – Word of Uzziah's name, power and military strength spread all the way to the border of Egypt. The surrounding nations heard that it was not wise to challenge Uzziah in an armed conflict.

“for he strengthened *himself* exceedingly” – The word “himself” is not in the original Hebrew but is supplied by the translators. This line could easily be translated as “for he grew exceedingly strong.” Uzziah did not strengthen himself but grew strong through God's help.

Verses 9-15: These verses continue to describe how God blessed Uzziah and enabled him to conduct many building projects to fortify Jerusalem and the land of Judah. Uzziah also dug wells and planted vineyards for himself. He was also able to assemble a formidable and well-armed military and built up the defenses of Judah. His fame of being a strong king spread because he was “marvelously helped” by God (v. 15).

16 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 LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

“But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction” – God's blessings can be a double-edged sword because we can forget where they came from. Uzziah recognized how strong he had become and became lifted up in pride as if he were the source of his power and greatness. This statement of his pride is likely why we are told twice that Uzziah's success was through the help of God (vs. 7, 15).

“for he transgressed against the LORD his God” – Pride is itself a transgression against the LORD, but it also inevitably leads to other transgressions.

“and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense” – The particular transgression that led to Uzziah's destruction was that he believed that he was capable of entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense, an task reserved for priests alone (**Num. 3:10** “*And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death*”). The LORD had kept the roles of being a king and being a priest separate. The only man that served as king and priest recorded in the OT was Melchizedek and he was a type of Christ (Gen 14:18; Heb. 6:20). Only Jesus Christ Himself could legitimately and adequately fulfill both roles (Heb. 7:14-17).

17 And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, *that were* valiant men: 18 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.

Azariah, the high priest during Uzziah's reign, had the courage to stand up to the king to prevent him from doing that which only priests were allowed to do. Defying the king was a dangerous thing to do since he could order your imprisonment or execution. Azariah took 80 "valiant" (strong and courageous) priests with him to confront the king, presumably in case Uzziah called for his soldiers to enforce his will. Azariah proclaimed that burning incense was a task that only the priests of God (who were the descendants of Aaron) were allowed to do. The fact that Uzziah was the king did not authorize him to intrude into priestly responsibilities. Azariah went further and ordered the king to leave the temple and declared that: 1) the king had sinned; 2) and that the LORD would not honor him for what he was intending to do.

19 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.

"Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense" – Uzziah's pride caused him to become angry as he stood there with the censer in his hand, ready to burn incense. Who was Azariah to forbid the king from doing whatever he wanted to do? **"and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead"** – It may be that the LORD would have allowed Uzziah to leave the temple unscathed if he had repented on the spot. However, Uzziah stubbornly became angry and may have forced the issue despite the priest's warning. The LORD responded to Uzziah's unrepentant anger by giving him leprosy. One commentator pointed out that the LORD showed mercy by not killing Uzziah because death was the penalty prescribed in the Mosaic Law (Num. 3:10; 18:7).

"before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar" – The leprosy did not appear gradually and become noticeable later on but sprang up instantly in front of the priests while Uzziah was standing there beside the altar of incense. God's judgment was swift in this situation.

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 from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.

When Azariah and the priests saw the leprosy, they immediately pushed Uzziah out of the temple. The Hebrew word for "thrust" carries the idea of urgency and even fear. The Mosaic Law was particular about the temple remaining clean and so Azariah and the priests acted quickly to maintain the ceremonial cleanliness of the house of God. Uzziah offered no resistance to priests pushing him out because his apparent fear compelled him to hurriedly leave the temple before the LORD punished him further.

21 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.

"And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several [separate] house, being a leper" – We are not told if Uzziah repented and asked forgiveness for his sin, but he likely did. However, he still had to live with the consequences of his sin for the rest of his life. Sin has a cost and many times its consequences do not go away just because God has forgiven us. Uzziah had to live the remainder of his life isolated from other people.

"for he was cut off from the house of the LORD" – As a leper, Uzziah was not allowed to visit the temple. He had attempted to intrude into the temple and the priesthood and his punishment from the LORD was that he could never visit the temple again.

"and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land" – Technically Uzziah was still king, but his son, Jotham, took over the king's daily duties since he was essentially quarantined for the rest of his life.

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 the burial which *belonged* to the kings; for they said, He *is* a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

"Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write" – Apparently Isaiah, like many prophets, recorded the acts of the kings that reigned during his lifetime. This record, for the most part, is not included in the prophecy written by Isaiah that we have in the Bible. We only have the highlights of Uzziah's life presented here.

"So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings" – Apparently Uzziah was not buried in the royal graves but in a burial field that belonged to the kings.

"for they said, He is a leper" – The reason Uzziah was denied burial in the royal graves was because he was a leper. This was to avoid the defilement of the royal graves with the body of a leper.

"and Jotham his son reigned in his stead" – Jotham officially became king after his father's death.