

Life Lesson 93
Joash to Uzziah
Text: II Chronicles 21:1 to 24:7

Introduction

We've been learning about the kings of the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel. Now we're going to hear about the kings of the southern kingdom, Judah. These kings were better than the kings of Israel, but not by much!

The Story

King Joash of Judah ended his reign in sin and sorrow. His army was defeated, his country was looted by the Syrians and he was very sick. At the end his own servants murdered him. What a sad ending for one who started out so well.

Amaziah, the son of Joash, became the new king of Judah. He wasn't the worst king Judah ever had, but he wasn't the best, either. The Bible tells us that he did what was right, but not with a perfect heart.

King Amaziah prepared his people to fight against the country of Edom. He gathered and organized his army and, in case he needed more help, he hired some of the Israelites to fight with him.

A prophet came to warn King Amaziah.

"Don't take these men from Israel," the prophet told him. "God is angry with the Israelites and He won't bless you if you take them with you to battle."

"But I already paid them one hundred talents of silver!" King Amaziah argued.

"God is able to give you much more than that," the prophet replied. "You'd better do what He says."

King Amaziah obeyed. He paid the Israelites and sent them away. They were mad, but they went back home.

God blessed the Judeans in battle and they won a great victory over the Edomites.

It's hard to believe anyone could be this dumb, but I'll tell you what Amaziah did next. He took some of the idols the Edomites worshipped home with him. He set them up in the palace and began to worship them himself.

A man of God came to rebuke him.

“Those silly statues couldn't protect the Edomites against you, could they? If they couldn't do anything for their own people, why do you think they can do anything for you?” he said.

Amaziah didn't repent, but went on in his willful way. He challenged Israel to a battle and lost. The Israelite king Jehoash won that battle and carried away many treasures from the temple and the palace.

Amaziah died just as his father Joash did. His own servants conspired against him and killed him. Another sad ending came to one who did what was right, but not with a perfect heart.

Amaziah's son, Uzziah, became the new king. He was just 16 years old. I'm glad to say that Uzziah was a good king. He sought the Lord, and the Bible tells us that, as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.

The Philistines were troublesome during his reign, but he asked the Lord for help and God caused the Judeans to defeat them. Uzziah became great and powerful. The

other nations paid tribute to them, and they had peace from their enemies. Uzziah reigned for 52 years. For almost all of them he was a good king.

The Bible tells us something especially interesting about Uzziah. It says that he built engines on the wall to shoot arrows and rocks at their attacking enemies. They were probably catapults, like giant slingshots.

When Uzziah was strong, his heart became lifted up. He did something that he was forbidden to do. He decided to go into the temple and offer incense to the Lord.

God had given His people instructions for worship. Ordinary people weren't supposed to offer the sacrifices. Only the priests were to do it. Uzziah decided to worship God his way instead of God's way.

Many foolish people do that today. They say, "I don't need to go to church. I'll worship God in my own way." They, like Uzziah, don't realize that God is the master. If we don't worship Him in His way, we aren't truly worshipping Him at all.

A brave priest named Azariah led a group of 80 other courageous priests to face the king. That must have been frightening, since the king could have them killed if he was angry with them. Yet, they knew the king was doing wrong, and they told him so.

"This doesn't pertain to you," Azariah told Uzziah. "This job is for the priests only."

Uzziah was angry. Before he could do anything to the priests, though, God showed him that they were speaking the truth. God struck him with the terrible disease of leprosy.

Leprosy is a painful and contagious disease. At that time there was no cure for it. King Uzziah was no longer proud and glorious. Instead he had to hide away all by himself in his house so that no one would catch the disease from him. His son Jotham helped him to rule the kingdom.

The Life Lesson

Over and over we see the same truths illustrated in the Bible. The kings who loved and served God were blessed. When they turned away and sinned against God, they were punished. When the people worshipped God, they were blessed. When they turned away to idols, they were punished.

King Uzziah was blessed and made great because he did what was right. When he became puffed up and thought he could overrule God's commandments, he was brought down.

The same things are true today. The people are blessed who love and serve God with all their hearts. They may have troubles, but God will give them strength and blessings even while the troubles are going on.

God loves His people enough to chastise them when they do wrong so they will repent and do right. Learn from the kings of Israel and Judah and do what God says!

Review Questions

Did Joash end his reign as a good king or a bad king?

Bad

How did Joash die?

His servants killed him while he was sleeping.

Who did King Amaziah hire to help him fight the Edomites?

The Israelites.

What did the prophet tell King Amaziah?

"God won't bless you if you take the Israelites with you."

What right thing did Amaziah do?

He paid the Israelites and sent them home.

What wrong thing did Amaziah do?

He brought back the idols of the Edomites and worshipped them.

Was Uzziah a good king or a bad king?

Good.

What wrong thing did Uzziah do?

He tried to offer incense in the temple -- serving God in his own way.

What happened to Uzziah for his presumption against God?

He was stricken with leprosy.