

## The Reigns of Azariah, Zechariah, and Shallum

### 2 Kings 15:1-15

**2 Kings 15:1-7** - *"In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king. He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done, except that the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. Then the LORD struck the king, so that he was a leper until the day of his death; so he dwelt in an isolated house. And Jotham the king's son was over the royal house, judging the people of the land. Now the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? So Azariah rested with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the City of David. Then Jotham his son reigned in his place."*

### Background Notes

King Azariah, whose name means "The Lord has helped" is also known as King Uzziah, "The Lord is my Strength." We don't know why this king had two names, but he's better known as Uzziah. Isaiah referred to him as Uzziah in Isaiah 6, when Isaiah had that wonderful vision of the holiness of God.

Azariah, or Uzziah, became king when he was only sixteen years old, and he reigned for fifty-two years (v2). That's a long reign! When we put the biblical data together, we find that he co-reigned with his father, Amaziah, for about twenty-three years.

Overall, Uzziah was a good king, but he did not remove the high places (v4). Remember, foreign pagan gods were worshiped in some of the high places, but in other high places the Lord was worshiped with sacrifices and incense. However, worship of the Lord in the high places was contrary to God's Law, which said that all sacrifices were to take place at the Temple in Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 26 tells us that Uzziah was very talented and creative in building up his kingdom, and in military preparedness and organization. 2 Chronicles 26:9-15: *"And Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the corner buttress of the wall; then he fortified them. Also he built towers in the desert. He dug many wells, for he had much livestock in the lowlands and in the plains; he also had farmers and vinedressers in the mountains and in Carmel, for he loved the soil."*

*Moreover Uzziah had an army of fighting men who went out to war by companies, according to the number on their roll as prepared by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the officer, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains. The total number of chief officers of the mighty men of valor was two thousand six hundred. And under their authority was an army of three hundred and seven thousand five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. Then Uzziah prepared for them, for the entire army, shields, spears, helmets, body armor, bows, and slings to cast stones. And he made devices in Jerusalem, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and large stones. So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong."*

Unfortunately, that is not the end of Uzziah's story. His story has a sad ending. When Uzziah became strong and successful, his heart became filled with pride. He tried to take the role of a priest - a role that God had not given him. As a result, God had to discipline Uzziah severely.

## **Doctrinal Point for 2 Kings 15:1-17**

### **1. God disciplines believers for their evil deeds.**

*"Then the Lord struck the king so that he was a leper until the day of his death" (v5).* Why did the Lord strike King Uzziah with leprosy? From the context in 2 Kings 15:4-5, it seems that he was disciplined because he did not take away the high places. However, 2 Chronicles 26 reveals that Uzziah's leprosy was discipline from the Lord, because Uzziah was unfaithful and disobedient to the Word of Lord his God.

2 Chronicles 26:16-21: *"But when he was strong his pride led to his downfall, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the Lord—valiant men." [Notice, by the way, that the high priest Azariah had the same name as the king, Azariah.] "And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, 'It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the Lord God.'*

*Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the Lord had struck him. King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord."*

What a sad ending to Uzziah's story! But the lesson is clear: God disciplines believers for their evil deeds. Does God still discipline with sickness today? Yes, even with the discipline of death, if need be. Remember the deaths of Ananias and

Sapphira, because they lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5). And Paul told the Corinthian believers that because of their sin, many among them were weak and sick, and some had died (1 Corinthians 11). James 5:15 indicates that there is disciplinary sickness because of sin, and 1 John 5:16 says that there is a sin leading to death (disciplinary death). For a believer, it is far better to go home to Heaven early before doing further damage to yourself, your family, and the body of Christ. God disciplines believers for their evil deeds.

It is possible for believers to commit evil deeds. We're not talking here of mere mistakes, but of truly evil deeds. Sometimes the sins of believers are worse than the sins of unbelievers – actions of pride and hatred, as well as sins of the flesh. And Christians have very creative ways of covering up their evil deeds - but God sees them. God disciplines believers for their evil deeds.

**2 Kings 15:8-15** - *"In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of Jeroboam reigned over Israel in Samaria six months. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. Then Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and struck and killed him in front of the people; and he reigned in his place. Now the rest of the acts of Zechariah, indeed they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.*

*This was the word of the Lord That He spoke to Jehu, saying, "Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation." And so it was.*

*Shallum the son of Jabesh became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria. For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, came to Samaria, and struck Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and killed him; and he reigned in his place. Now the rest of the acts of Shallum, and the conspiracy that he led, indeed they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel."*

## **Doctrinal Point for 2 Kings 15:8-15**

### **God records the evil deeds of unbelievers.**

In these verses, we have the accounts of two kings of the northern kingdom of Israel, Zechariah and Shallum. They reigned from Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Both Zechariah and Shallum were bad kings, as were all nineteen kings of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Zechariah reigned for only six months because Shallum publicly assassinated him, and usurped the throne. But Shallum reaped what he had sown, because he was assassinated by Menahem after he reigned for only one month - the second-shortest reign of any king of Israel. Do you remember Zimri, another evil king, who only reigned for seven days before he committed suicide (1 Kings 16:18)?

2 Kings 15 tells us that the acts of Zechariah and the acts of Shallum were written in *“the chronicles of the kings of Israel.”* This is not a reference to 1 or 2 Chronicles in the Bible, because the biblical books of Chronicles were written later the books of Kings, and they only cover the kings of Judah. So *“the chronicles of the kings of Judah”* are documents that are not extant today.

But God keeps a record of the evil deeds of these kings in **God’s record books** - not only the ones mentioned here in 2 Kings. **All** of their evil deeds are kept on file in God’s record books. And besides the record of the evil deeds of these bad kings, God keeps a record of the evil deeds of every unbeliever. God records the evil deeds of unbelievers.

Listen to what we read about as to the final judgment of unbelievers in the book of Revelation: *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things that were written in the books.*

*The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15)*

God records the evil deeds of unbelievers.

## Practical Application

Let’s learn to love the phrase, **“And so it was.”**

Verse 12: *“This was the word of the Lord which He spoke to Jehu, saying, “Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.” And so it was.”*

Back in 2 Kings 10:30, God said that Jehu’s dynasty would last for four more generations. And so it was! Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam II, and now Zechariah - four generations, and no more - because God’s Word said so. **“And so it was.”** This phrase emphasizes that when God says something about the future, it is always fulfilled exactly as God predicted.

There are many prophecies in God’s Word that are yet to be fulfilled: the restoration of Israel to a right relationship with her Messiah, the return of the Lord to this planet to set up His earthly kingdom, and many more. Let me ask you: Will all these prophecies be fulfilled? Yes! They will surely be fulfilled, just as God’s Word says! And when they are fulfilled, we will rejoice and say, **“And so it was.”**

Let’s learn to love the phrase, **“And so it was.”**