



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

2 KINGS

2 CHRONICLES 10-36

Week 3

A Light in the Darkness

DAY 15

2 Kings 25:8-30

Can you remember a time of darkness and despair in your life and the encouragement you received from the Light “at the end of the tunnel”?

1. How complete was the destruction of the Temple and its furnishings (vs. 8-17)?
2. What was the fate of Gedaliah, the puppet ruler of what was left of Judah (vs. 22-26)? To which nation did the Jewish remnant flee?
3. How did the king of Babylon show favor to the captured Jewish king, Jehoiachin (vs. 27-30)? This occurred in 761 B.C. Do you think this was recorded as an act of encouragement to the Jews in captivity—a grace note in the midst of such heavy and oppressive scenes of judgment? Had God hinted at this possibility earlier in the nation’s history (1Ki 8:46-51)?

Nebuchadnezzar is prominent in the *Babylonian Chronicle* which confirms some of these events. “The king of Akkad (Babylon)...laid siege to the city of Judah and the king took the city on the second day of the month Addaru. He appointed in it a new king (Zedekiah)...” Archaeologists digging in Babylon uncovered a list of foodstuffs for “Yaukin, king of Judah.” That was Jehoiachin. Thus, though God kept his promise to punish Judah, his greater **promise to raise up a king from David’s royal line** through whom all nations would be blessed was still in process. David’s sons lived on in Babylon. Also, Jewish emigrants fleeing to Egypt became the nucleus of a religious community that would eventually translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. The **Septuagint** (or “Seventy”, named for the number of scholars) translation became the Scriptures for early Greek-speaking Christians as they sought to show how God had kept his promise to David and the patriarchs through Jesus (Ac 2:29-32). God’s purposes stand in history. That is one of the great themes of 2 Kings.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Introduction to 2 Chronicles 10-36

Authorship: The Talmud attributes Chronicles to Ezra the Scribe, who helped reestablish Temple worship after the Babylonian captivity. Most likely a number of editors contributed to the book. The last event alluded to is the return from the Exile in Babylon (2 Ch 36:22-23). This passage is quoted again in Ezra 1:2-4.

Dates: Ezra arrived in Jerusalem about 458 B.C. Chronicles was finished sometime afterward. Since the founder of the Persian Empire gets the “last word” in Chronicles (2Ch 36:22-23)—this indicates that Chronicles was composed in the Persian period of Jewish history (539-331 B.C.).

Setting and purpose: The theme of 2 Chronicles 10-36 could be described as *Temple and Throne*. The focus is on the kings of Judah reigning from David’s throne in Jerusalem. The action of the book stems from these rulers’ moral choices and their commitment—or lack of it—to uphold the national worship. Thus the lives of both good kings and bad kings show God’s faithfulness to his promises to retain David’s descendants on the throne. God keeps his promises in spite of human folly.

But the Chronicler shows us that the human choice of sin and the inevitable penalties and consequences that result are still the pivotal issues around which all history turns. Thus we see the sad results of human folly graphically displayed. Solomon’s son Rehoboam loses the ten northern tribes and the last Jewish king of Davidic descent, Zedekiah, is captured and taken to Babylon.

Distinctive features: An important fact should be remembered in studying these last 27 chapters of Chronicles. In the three-fold division of the Hebrew books—Law, Prophets and Writings—the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were placed in the Writings section. This section contains such books as Psalms, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes—books more akin to today’s commentaries and devotional writings rather than the sober record of history that we associate with 1 and 2 Kings.

Understanding which biblical division Chronicles is placed in helps shed light on why certain data is recorded differently in Chronicles. The Chronicler is more interested in the moral thread across time. History serves the purpose of God's involvement with humanity and humanity's response—or lack of it—to God. Also, the Chronicler, writing later, may have had access to sources unknown to the composer of Kings. The Chronicler's interest in personalities as opposed to events and chronology has many advantages. Consider the more critical, close-up portrait of King Asa given in 2 Chronicles 16 with 1 Kings 15:9-24. The Chronicler has access to more of the inside story of palace intrigue. Kings is more interested in the literal, blow-by-blow details.

Another distinctive feature of 2 Chronicles 10-36 is the “good start/bad finish” formula applied to the kings of Judah. The Chronicler measures rulers by the standards of David and Solomon, the national heroes. In particular, kings are measured by their dedication to Temple worship. The Chronicler's portraits of the kings of Judah had one goal: to inspire his readers to see that dedication to the Temple pleases God. Since the Temple united the nation in worship, the fate of the national religion and the people were one and the same.

But the Chronicler is not a believer in mere outward show and ceremony. His heroes are kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah who give their hearts to the Lord. This high moral summons to serve God with the heart speaks to us today, never more powerfully than in 2 Chronicles 16:9, “For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” Full commitment. That is the Chronicler's message.

Reading outline:

Day	Text	Theme
16	2 Chronicles 10-11	Enough is Enough
17-18	2 Chronicles 12:1-19:3	Kings and Covenants
19	2 Chronicles 19:4-21:3	Hey! Hey! Time to Pray!
20-21	2 Chronicles 21:4-27:9	Judah's Slippery Slope
22-25	2 Chronicles 28-32	Wars, Tumults, Recoveries
26-27	2 Chronicles 33-34	A Royal Study in Opposites
28-29	2 Chronicles 35:1-36:14	From Revival to Doom
30	2 Chronicles 36:15-23	Down—but Not Out

Enough Is Enough

2 Chronicles 10:1–11:23

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever protested what seemed like unjust government or employment policies? What was the outcome?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What did the northern tribes ask of Rehoboam, Solomon's successor (10:1-11)? How did he answer their demands (vs. 12-15)? What was the result (vs. 16-19)?

2. How was Rehoboam thwarted in his desire for revenge (11:1-4)? Note the crucial message from God: "This is my doing."

3. How did Rehoboam strengthen the kingdom of Judah (vs. 5-17)? What were some of the results?

4. What evidence is there that David's family cast a long shadow in Judah (vs. 18-23)?

LIVING
out the Word

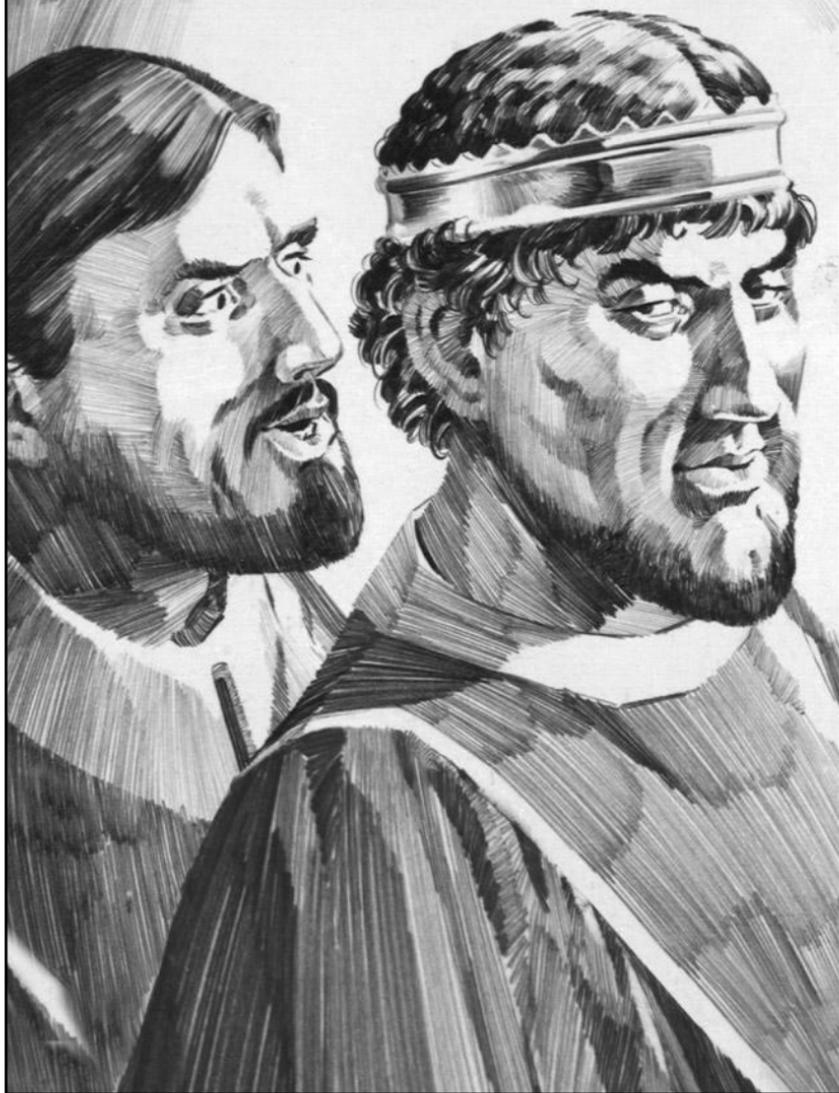
The Bible abounds in leadership lessons. Is one of the leadership principles of this chapter to be careful not to ignore the advice of more experienced people? Give reasons for your answer.

WINDOW
on the Word

*"The **secession of the north** (ten out of the twelve tribes) is obviously one of the most significant events in the history of Israel, heralding as it did a period of some two hundred years during which relations between the two kingdoms were never easy, and sometimes erupted into war (1Ki 15:7). Historically it marked the end of a major aspect of the great achievements of David, namely his uniting of different elements within the pre-monarchical tribal league. This unity, together with the greatness it brought, would never be achieved again, the northern kingdom being destined to disappear, forever, more than a century before the Babylonian exile of southern Judah" (J.D. McConville, 1 and 2 Chronicles).*

“The young men who had grown up with him replied, ‘Tell the people who have said to you, “Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter”—tell them, “My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist.”’”

2 Chronicles 10:10



Artwork by Ken Tunell

The High Price of Pride

2 Chronicles 12:1–16:14

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you known any leaders who seemed to be genuinely humble? Did they remain consistently so throughout their careers, or did they change?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was Rehoboam's big mistake? How did God humble him? Did he accept the punishment sent by God (12:1-12)? Were there good relations with Israel during his reign (vs. 13-16)?

2. Although 1 Kings 15:1-8 gives Rehoboam's son Abijah a poor review, the Chronicler only cites a positive example of his leadership. Do you think Abijah's boasting against the forces of Jeroboam (13:5-12) was foolish? Why was the army of Judah victorious that day (vs. 18)?

3. What great foreign threat loomed to trouble Asa's peaceful reign (14:2-10)? How was the crisis resolved (vs. 11-15)?

4. How did Asa respond to the encouraging words of the prophet Azariah (15:1-15)? What action revealed a genuine desire to follow God (vs. 16-19)?

5. What tactic did Asa employ to outwit the king of Israel (16:1-6)? Was God pleased with this introduction of power politics into Judah and Israel (vs. 7-9)? How did Asa react (v. 10)? How did his reign end (vs. 11-14)?

LIVING
out the Word

Asa's reign is a striking example of how a servant of God can begin well and end up poorly. Can you think of New Testament warnings that are relevant here?

WINDOW
on the Word

The **"physicians"** Asa was condemned for consulting were pagan healers who used rituals that conflicted with the laws God had given to Israel. Notice that in 2 Chronicles 12:1 **Rehoboam of Judah is said to be leading "all Israel"** even though his territory was south of the ten tribes. The Chronicler uses this phrase to emphasize that the divided nation fell short of the divine ideal for Israel.

KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

There were 19 kings on Israel's throne—all of them evil, according to the Bible. With frequent assassinations and coups, the kingdom of Israel was much less stable than that of Judah. Dates are approximate. Some reigns overlap.

MONARCH	REIGN BEGINS	COMMENTS
Jeroboam I	928	Northern kingdom given to him by God. He instituted calf-worship and a new priesthood to keep people from returning to Judah.
Nadab	910	Son of Jeroboam. "Did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of his father."
Baasha	908	Assassinated Nadab and Jeroboam's family. Continued in calf-worship of Jeroboam.
Elah	884	Son of Baasha. Continued in sins of his father.
Zimri	883	Assassinated Elah and Baasha's family. Continued in "ways of Jeroboam." Committed suicide.
Omri	883	Usurped throne. Built capital city of Samaria. "Sinned more than all those before him."
Ahab	874	Son of Omri. Married Jezebel, princess of Sidon. Instituted Baal-worship.
Ahaziah	853	Son of Ahab. Worshiped Baal and continued in "ways of Jeroboam."
Jehoram	852	Son of Ahab. Continued in evil.
Jehu	841	Anointed king by Elisha. Killed Joram, entire house of Ahab and prophets of Baal. But "did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam."
Jehoahaz	814	Son of Jehu. Followed "sins of Jeroboam."
Jehoash	798	Son of Jehoahaz. Followed "sins of Jeroboam."
Jeroboam II	782	Son of Jehoash. Followed "sins of Jeroboam." Led military and economic resurgence.
Zachariah	753	Son of Jeroboam II. "Did evil."
Shallum	752	Assassinated Zachariah. Reigned only a month.
Menahem	752	Assassinated Shallum. "Did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam." Israel became vassal state of Assyria.
Pekahiah	742	Son of Menahem. "Did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam."
Pekah	740	Assassinated Pekahiah. "Did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam." Assyria attacked parts of Israel, deporting some inhabitants.
Hoshea	732	Assassinated Pekah. Did evil, "but not like the kings of Israel who preceded him." After Hoshea attempted an alliance with Egypt, Assyria reacted by conquering Samaria and deporting some of the population. End of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.

A Breath of Fresh Air

2 Chronicles 17:1–19:3

OPENING
up to the Word

Martin Luther said: “A wise prince is a rare bird.” How many political leaders during your lifetime would you classify as *wise*?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did King Jehoshaphat show his devotion to God (17:1-9)?
2. What was the approximate size of Jehoshaphat’s army (vs. 10-19)?
3. What was one of Jehoshaphat’s mistakes (18:1)? Why was he obligated to agree to Ahab’s request (vs. 2-3)? Why did Ahab hate the prophet Micaiah (vs. 4-7)?
4. Was Micaiah’s sarcastic response to Ahab wise? What was the true prophecy (vs. 18-24)? Did Micaiah stick to his guns even with the threat of prison before him (vs. 25-27)?
5. Did Micaiah’s words come to pass (vs. 28-34)? How was Jehoshaphat corrected for his unwise alliance with Ahab (19:1-3)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Notice Ecclesiastes 10:1. Is this a good commentary on Jehoshaphat? Do we sometimes do things that war against our own best interests?
2. At least Jehoshaphat had the sense to seek wise counsel. Who are your “wise counselors”—people to whom you turn in emergencies?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Jehoshaphat’s troops totalled **1,160,000 fighting men** (17:14-18), a surprisingly large number for the small kingdom of Judah. It seems that the greater the king, the greater the numbers the Chronicler associates with his reign. It is well-known that ancient writers “rounded off” numbers, especially in chronologies. In that context, it is worth noting that Chronicles belongs to the more artistic and creative Wisdom section of Scripture rather than the historical books. Other scholars suggest that the Hebrew word for “thousand” may have been improperly transcribed.*

Hey! Hey! Time to Pray!

DAY 19

2 Chronicles 19:4–21:3

Do you feel that effective prayer needs to follow a formula or pattern, or is simply “talking with God” just as effective?

1. What was Jehoshaphat’s strategy for reviving the national worship of Judah (19:4-11)? What threat faced Jehoshaphat in the middle of his reforms (20:1-4)? How did he react (vs. 5)?

2. Some commentators see a four-part formula in Jehoshaphat’s great prayer— (1) praise to God, (2) reminders of his mighty acts, (3) explaining the problem and (4) asking for help. Can you find these points in verses 6 to 12?

3. How did God answer (vs. 14-17)? How important was praise and worship in this act of deliverance (vs. 18-28)?

4. How did Jehoshaphat’s reign recall the glory days of Solomon (20:29-37; 21:3)? Compare the statements made about Solomon in 1 Kings 4:24-25 and 1 Kings 9:26.

1. Though hemmed in by his adversaries, Jehoshaphat did not forget to praise God. Is there a lesson here for us?

*The Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites were neighbors—and often enemies— of Israel and Judah. A notable archaeological discovery—the **Moabite Stone**—was erected by King Mesha at the Moabite capital of Dibon in the time of Jehoshaphat. Mesha rebelled against Israelite control after the death of Ahab. Jehoshaphat joined forces with Israel in the war with Moab (2Ki 3:4-7). Mesha survived the war through a desperate measure (2Ki 3:26-28). He set up a stone inscription confirming the biblical account. It reads: “I am Mesha...king of Moab...As for Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years...and his son followed him...but I have triumphed over him and over his house.” The Moabite Stone now resides in the Louvre in Paris.*

OPENING

up to the Word

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on the Word

Royal Messes and Muddles

2 Chronicles 21:4–24:27

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever been actively involved in politics? Why or why not?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What were some of King Jehoram's big mistakes (21:4-6)? Why did God tolerate such rulers (vs. 7)?
2. In what ways did God correct Jehoram (vs. 8-20)? Note the sad phrase "he passed away, to no one's regret."
3. How did the new king fall under the curse pronounced on Ahab's family (22:1-9)? Who was Athaliah's grandfather?
4. How did Jehosheba (daughter of Jehoram) and Jehoiada the priest foil Athaliah's bloody purge (22:10–23:15)? What kingly example did Jehoiada look back to in carrying out his reforms (vs. 16-21)?
5. How did King Joash finance the repairs of the Temple (24:1-12)? Was the operation a success (vs. 13-14)? What happened to the priest Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada (vs. 17-22)? How did Joash pay for his evil deeds (vs. 23-27)?

LIVING
out the Word

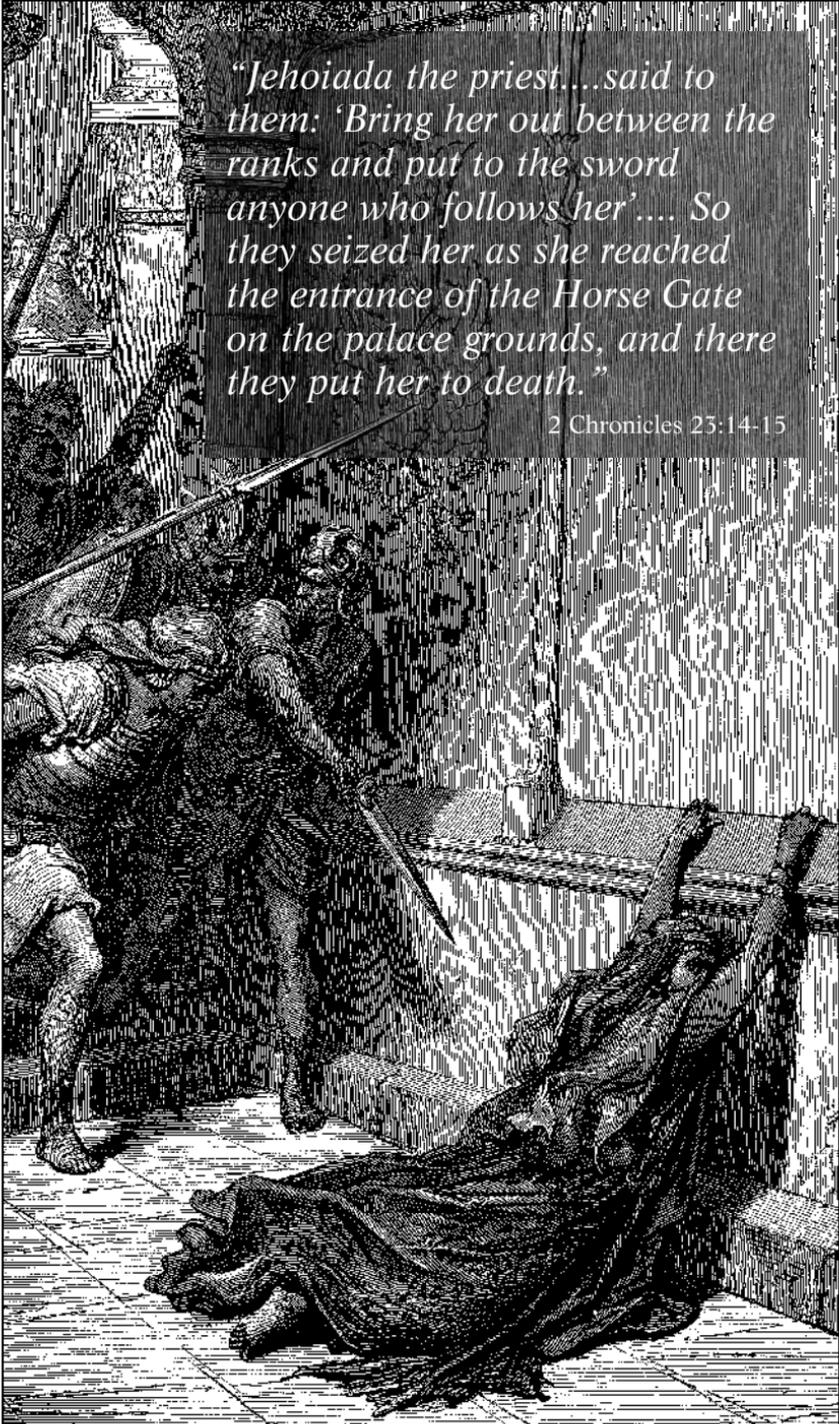
1. It has been said that "character is what you do when nobody is watching." Does the relationship between Jehoiada and Joash illustrate this principle? How?
2. Can you think of times in your life when you have felt betrayed or let down by people? How did you deal with those feelings?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The **death of Zechariah**, the son of Jehoiada, was mentioned by Jesus as an example of the callous, "inhuman" acts of which we humans are capable (Lk 11:49-51). Bloody atrocities have marred every generation known to humankind. But Jesus himself prophesied: "All who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Mt 26:52).*

“Jehoiada the priest....said to them: ‘Bring her out between the ranks and put to the sword anyone who follows her’.... So they seized her as she reached the entrance of the Horse Gate on the palace grounds, and there they put her to death.”

2 Chronicles 23:14-15



Artwork by Gustav Doré

Grandeur Amid Folly

2 Chronicles 25:1–27:9

OPENING
up to the Word

Which friends or family members stand out to you as gifted with “common sense”? In your experience, is it really common, or is it a rare commodity?

DIGGING
into the Word

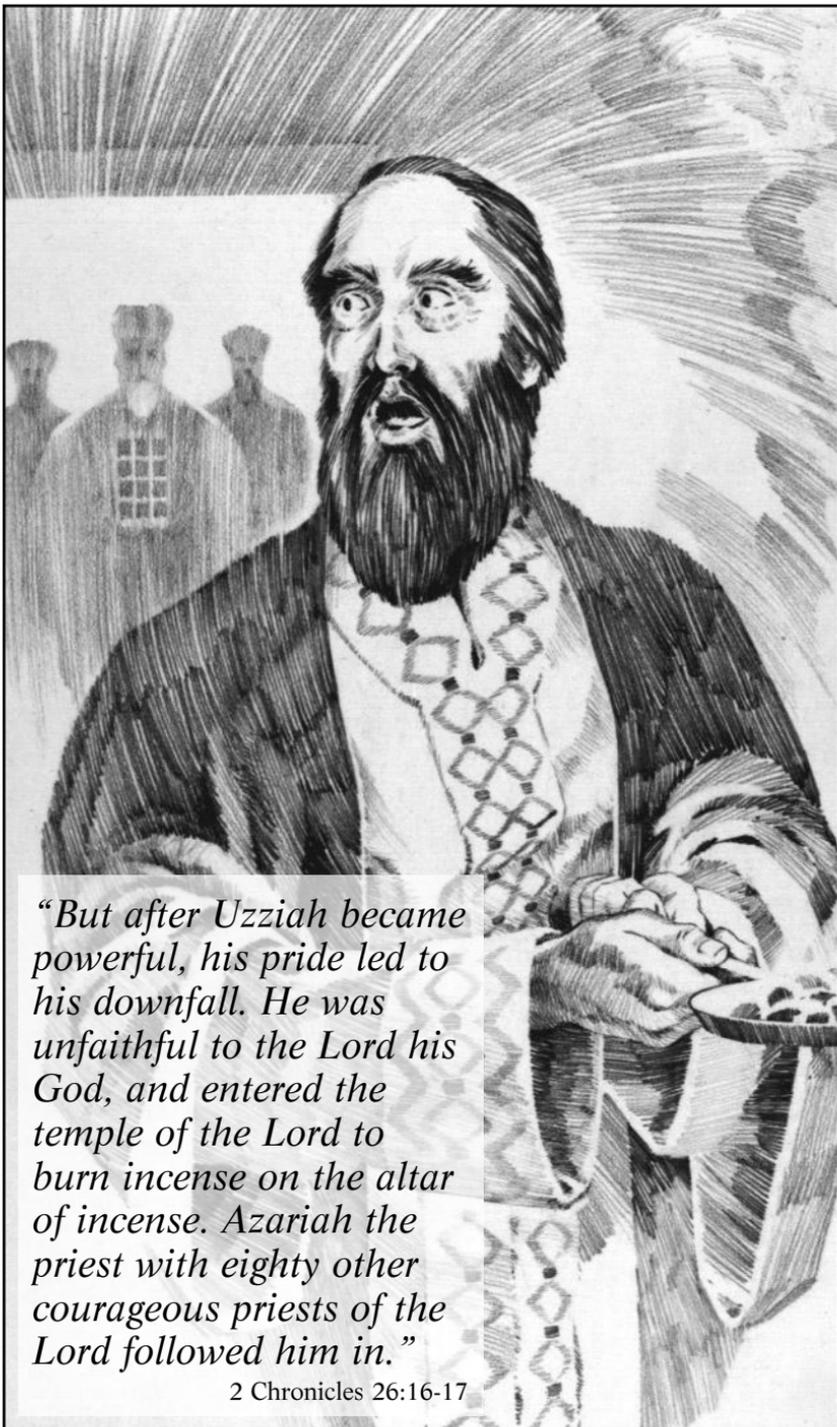
1. Amaziah is another king who follows the “good start/bad end” formula. Why do you think God warned Amaziah not to use Israelite troops for his battle (25:1-10)?
2. Did Amaziah heed God’s warning? Why was he then rebuked (vs. 11-16)? Why do you think he persisted in his original plan? What was the result (vs. 17-28)?
3. Uzziah succeeded Amaziah and launched a major military build-up (26:1-15). In the light of 2 Chronicles 8:17-18, how was the building of Elath a sign of Uzziah’s visionary leadership?
4. Did Uzziah learn from Amaziah’s mistakes? What did he do and what was the result (vs. 16-21)?
5. How did Jotham come to the throne (27:1-6)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. It is common today to blame government for most of our troubles. But does 27:2 offer an additional perspective?
2. How would you describe Amaziah’s and Uzziah’s leadership? Who did it benefit the most?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The reign of **King Uzziah** was one of the most notable in the history of the kings of Judah. Some would see it as a last “Indian summer” of peace and prosperity before the Assyrians thundered across the land. Many blessings came to Judah through his nearly 52 year reign, including the rebuilding of Elath on the Red Sea. This participation in the trade routes to Arabia, Africa and India stimulated commerce, as it did in the time of Solomon. Uzziah also paid attention to agriculture, the real basis of the nation’s economic success (26:10) and he repaired the fortresses and maintained a large standing army. The prophets Amos and Isaiah ministered in his day. A stone slab found in Jerusalem bears an Aramaic inscription from the first century A.D. saying, “Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah—do not open.”*



“But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God, and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the Lord followed him in.”

2 Chronicles 26:16-17