

# Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 25, Part 1

## 2 Kings 15-16, Part 1

© 2024 John Oswalt and Ted Hildebrandt

So, we begin in chapter 15 with Azariah, Uzziah, and his contemporaries. And we notice that for a 52-year reign, Uzziah doesn't get much press space. He only gets seven verses.

Now with Jeroboam II, the king in the north, we're pretty sure why Jeroboam didn't get much, because he was a bad king. But Uzziah, notice what it says, verse three, he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father Amaziah had done. All right, keep your finger in there and turn over to chapter 18, verse three.

This is describing Hezekiah. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, what? Just as his father David had done. So it kind of depends on what standard you're being measured by, doesn't it? Well, compared to Amaziah, Uzziah did well.

Yeah, but that's not the standard. The standard is David. And so we wonder if indeed, well, yeah, OK.

As far as it goes, it's fascinating that Chronicles tells us much more about Uzziah, describes his accomplishments, his strengths, and tells us the reason why Uzziah contracted leprosy. He tried to offer incense in the temple, acting as a priest. And you cannot do that in Israel.

An Israelite king cannot be a priest because the king who is a priest today is God tomorrow. So that very hard and fast line. I think he did what some of our megachurch pastors do.

I think maybe he may have read and believed his press releases. It's a very dangerous thing to do. Now, let me ask you, why do you think Chronicles gives him so much more space than Kings does? If he was a relatively good and strong king, why would Kings diss him, if you will? What do you think? You don't know.

OK. Well, let me push you a little bit. Why not? Why wouldn't I? How does Kings evaluate a good king versus a bad king? What does a good king do? He follows the Lord.

In what ways? He gets rid of the high places. He gets rid of the idols. What else? Yes, reestablish some festivals.

And one other thing, he makes sure that the poor are cared for. That's Deuteronomy's philosophy of history. Worship the Lord alone.

Do not worship idols of other gods or Yahweh. Obey the law of the Lord, the Torah, the instructions, in particular, as they relate to the poor and the helpless. Right through the Old Testament, the evidence that you belong to God is, number one, you don't worship idols.

And number two, you care for the poor. Caring for the poor is evidence that you really know God. Well, we don't have any indication that Uzziah did anything other than, pretty clearly, he did not worship idols.

But there's no indication that he really cared for the poor, the broken, and the outcasts. And over and over again, that is the evidence. How do you treat those who cannot bless you? Who cannot repay you? Because that's the character of God.

God gives himself away for free. And the question is, do his followers do that? So, I rather suspect Chronicles has a different concern. Chronicles wants to know, has this guy been faithful in terms of the temple and the Levites and the priesthood? Has he taken care of those folks? Evidently, Uzziah did.

But for Kings, there's no evidence that he really took care of the poor and the helpless. Now, that's implications, not a clear statement that way. But I think it may well be.

I think, again, Reverend Keith Boyett spoke in chapel today. He also talked about the Sunday Christians and what this pandemic has done in terms of all of that. And here again, the issue is, does Christ live in me every day of the week, in particular in the way I treat those who cannot pay me back? All right.

Well, as your chart says, it's during the reign of Uzziah that Zechariah comes to the throne. And shortly thereafter, he is killed. Now, the Bible makes the point, he is the fourth generation of the Jehu dynasty.

God had made a promise because you were faithful in destroying Ahab. I'm going to give you four generations. I'm not going to give you an eternal dynasty because you didn't turn away from those idols at Dan and Beersheba, but I'm going to give you four generations. And sure enough, if you didn't know better, you would think God was a promise keeper.

But that's exactly what he's done. And so, Zechariah, only two years, but he's the fourth generation after the inauguration of Jehu. Now, I make the point here, and again, if you look at your chart, that the bloodletting of Zechariah, Shalom, and Menahem actually occurred while Assyria was still weak.

So, how do we explain that? Why this frenzy of bloodletting here? How would you explain that? Remember, how did we describe Jeroboam's reign? Long reign. Did I teach you anything? It was a reign of great prosperity. It was a reign of great distinction between the wealthy and the poor.

Now, how does this bloodletting connect with that? You're all very silent tonight. Has to do with things, economics? Very, very possibly. Very possibly.

When we're wealthy and comfortable, it's easy to take matters into our own hands and say, well, they got theirs; I'm going to get mine. So, the Bible is very ambiguous about wealth. If you are wealthy, it's a gift of God, and you'd better use it for His glory.

But in fact, the Bible says most wealthy people grabbed it themselves and are therefore under judgment. So, I think what we're seeing here is the end of that long period of wealth and comfort and power and people saying, I'm going to get mine. I got it coming to me.

It's always very interesting to me. We don't have many left now. But when I hear children of the depression, over and over again, the line you hear is, well, I guess we were poor, but we didn't know it.

Now, in our period of affluence, we all feel like we're poor. We're not Bill Gates. We're not some multimillionaire somewhere.

So, are you getting yours? I'm going to get mine. And it's every man and woman for themselves. I think that's what's going on here.

So, notice verse 12, which we already talked about. The word of the Lord spoken to Jehu was fulfilled. Your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.

I asked the question, how does that statement relate to the veracity of the Bible? What God says comes to pass—exactly, exactly. His promises.

And that's right through the Bible. Right through the Bible, we have God saying, now, this is what's going to happen. And lo and behold, there it is.

Now, this is what's going to happen. There it is. It starts with Abraham.

And God kept his promises. And so the book is a testimony to the promise-keeping power of God. And the book then draws from that God-given authority.

Yes, we can believe it. We can trust it. We can stand on it.

So, we're told that Menahem wiped out Shalom. And if you look at verse 16, he started out from Tirzah. Tirzah is a little bit south and east of Samaria.

You have to go in a kind of roundabout way to get up to Samaria. It's not too far. But Tirzah was evidently on the way.

And maybe they tried to stop him or something. But here's this almost casual brutality that becomes part of this idea. I'm going to get mine, and nobody's going to stand in my way.

So, he sacked Tirzah and ripped open all the pregnant women. Right through the Bible, that picture is the picture that is used to depict senseless brutality. To rip open pregnant women and to smash babies on rocks.

We don't have Menahem doing that. But nevertheless, here it is. So, it's just casual brutality.

Anybody who gets in my way they're going to pay for it. So, then, it's interesting. Verse 18 is pretty explicit during his entire reign.

Now, that isn't always said of other kings. It'll just say he didn't turn away. But here, during his entire reign, he did not turn away.

Then Paul, king of Assyria, invaded the land. Pul is Tiglath-Pileser. And Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver.

Notice, to do what? To gain his support and strengthen his hold on the kingdom. What's going on there? Here comes Tiglath-Pileser with his army. What's Menahem doing? He's buying an alliance.

Exactly. Here again, you have the feeling that he's feeling pretty shaky on his throne. And so, he's going to buy his way into Tiglath-Pileser, not merely to keep Tiglath-Pileser away, but for Tiglath-Pileser to prop him up.

Now, again, exactly. He's finding his strength in man. His security is in his enemy.

I've said this numerous times before. Sin makes you dumb. Tiglath-Pileser is not your friend, Menahem.

And you buy your way into his friendship. It's a very short-term investment. Now, how does this relate to us? What does it have to do with us? Where is your security? What is propping you up? What is propping me up? Am I really depending on what is

finally my enemy for my security? Now, I'm not opposed to investment, not opposed to insurance.

I had a friend who once said, you don't believe in God if you have insurance. Well, I'm not quite willing to go there. I think it may be that if you don't buy insurance, you don't believe in God.

But anyway. But the question is, in the end, what am I depending on? In another assignment, I'm working on a study on Joseph. And I think of that in all his losses.

You have that statement. God was with him. Wow.

And I think it's pretty evident that Joseph knew that and was banking on it. So, if she lies about me and I end up in jail, God is with me. We tend to say the opposite.

Well, unless everything goes well, obviously, God is out to get me. But no, God was with him.