

CHAPTER 26

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CHRONICLES 26

This chapter relates the good reign of Uzziah, (^{<420>}2 Chronicles 26:1-5), his wars and victories, his buildings, the number of his soldiers, and his military stores, (^{<426>}2 Chronicles 26:6-15), his invasion of the priest's office, in attempting to offer incense, for which he was smitten with a leprosy, which continued to his death, (^{<436>}2 Chronicles 26:16-23).

Ver. 1-4. *Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah*, etc.] Of this and the three following verses, see the notes on (^{<120>}2 Kings 14:21,22 15:2,3) where Uzziah is called Azariah.

Ver. 5. *And he sought God in the days of Zechariah*, etc.] Not that Zechariah, the last of the prophets save one, he lived three hundred years after this; nor he that Joash slew; but, as it may seem, a son of his, perhaps the same with him in (^{<230>}Isaiah 8:2),

who had understanding in the visions of God: who either had prophetic visions granted to him, or had divine wisdom to interpret such that others had; or, as others think, had a gift of interpreting the prophecies of others, the writings of Moses and David, etc. to which the Targum seems to agree; which paraphrases it,

“who taught in the fear of the Lord;”

with which agree the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions; some copies read “in the fear of God”; as an ancient manuscript mentioned by Junius, and so the Talmud¹⁹⁷:

and, as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper; in his kingdom, and against his enemies; even so long as he abode by the word, worship, and ordinances of God, of which instances are given, as follow.

Ver. 6. *And he went forth, and warred against the Philistines*, etc.] Who in the times of Jehoram broke in upon Judah, and distressed them, (^{<416>}2 Chronicles 21:16,17)

and brake down the wall of Gath; which was one of the five principalities of the Philistines:

and the wall of Jabneh; nowhere else mentioned in Scripture, but frequent in the Jewish writings; where the sanhedrim sometimes sat, and where was a famous university, and from whence sprung many of the Jewish rabbins; it is the same which in some writers is called Jamnia, and was a port near to Joppa; and belonged to the tribe of Dan, as Josephus^{f98} writes:

and the wall of Ashdod: another of the principalities of the Philistines, the same with the Azotus of the New Testament; he dismantled all these places:

and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines; where he placed garrisons to keep them in awe; (see Amos 1:8).

Ver. 7. *And God helped him against the Philistines*, etc.] He did not do all before related of himself, and by his own strength, but by the help of God; the Targum is

“the Word of the Lord helped him:”

and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gurbaal; the same with Gerar, according to the Targum; which also belonged to the Philistines, and had a king in Abraham’s time, (^{<4000>}Genesis 20:1), the same with Askelon, another of the five principalities of the Philistines:

and the Mehunims; or the Minaeans, as the Septuagint, and whom Pliny^{f99} makes mention of among the Arabians; they seem to be the Scenite Arabs; (see ^{<4000>}2 Chronicles 20:1), or rather, as the Targum, those that dwelt in the plain of Maon, which was in Arabia Petraea.

Ver. 8. *And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah*, etc.] As tributaries to him, or; however, as desirous to live in friendship with him:

and his name spread abroad, even to the entering in of Egypt; so far he carried his arms, and conquered the countries that lay between Palestine and Egypt:

for he strengthened himself exceedingly; his kingdom and its coasts from the force of enemies.

Ver. 9. *Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate*, etc.] Which was broken down by the king of Israel in his father’s time,

(⁴²⁵³2 Chronicles 25:23) and which he not only repaired, but strengthened, by building a tower upon it:

and at the valley gate; which led to the valley, (⁴⁴²³Nehemiah 2:13 3:13), called the valley of the dead bodies, in which they were cast, and in which the brook Kidron ran, (²⁸⁴⁴Jeremiah 31:40)

and at the turning of the wall; at each of those places he built towers, which Josephus^{f100} says were one hundred and fifty cubits high: and fortified them; put garrisons of soldiers into them.

Ver. 10. *Also he built towers in the desert*, etc.] In the desert of Arabia, to protect travellers from thieves and robbers, and particularly shepherds and their flocks, as appears by what follows; which a certain writer^{f101} thinks are the same which the Indians call pagodas; not such as served for temples, but were buildings encompassed with good walls, where flocks were gathered together in case of any alarm:

and digged many wells; for the watering of the flocks, which in those hot and desert places were of great use:

for he had much cattle, both in the low country and in the plains; both flocks and herds:

husbandmen also, and vinedressers in the mountains; husbandmen to take care of the corn, and manure the land for that, and gather it when ripe; and vinedressers to prune the vines, and look after them; which were very often planted on mountains, and on which also corn grew, (³⁹²⁶Psalms 72:16)

and in Carmel; a place in the tribe of Judah, where Nabal dwelt, (⁴²⁵²1 Samuel 25:2) or it may be put for any fruitful field:

for he loved husbandry; not only the profit, but the exercise of it at times; and it was usual with great personages in the eastern countries to employ themselves in some such way; Saul after he was king attended the herd, (⁴⁹¹⁵1 Samuel 11:5), Mesha king of Moab was a sheep master, (⁴⁴²²2 Kings 3:4), among the Romans, Quinctius Cincinnatus and Cato Major^{f102} were great lovers of husbandry; and we read of one of the Chinese emperors that gave himself to husbandry, held the plough himself, broke the clods, and cast in the seed, to set an example to the whole empire^{f103}. Another of their emperors gave himself wholly to husbandry^{f104}; an other chose an husbandman for his successor, and who also encouraged husbandry^{f105}.

Ver. 11. *Moreover, Uzziah had an host of fighting men,* etc.] A standing army:

that went out to war by bands; to annoy his enemies, and to scour the country from thieves and robbers, that came in troops to plunder:

according to the number of their account, by the hand of Jeiel the scribe; the secretary of war, who ordered these bands, settled their number, and directed their destination:

and Maaseiah the ruler; or officer over them, a lieutenant:

under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains; that had the command of them, or at least of one of them.

Ver. 12. *The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour were two thousand six hundred.*] Who were the commanders and principal officers of his army; and such a number supposed a large army, as follows.

Ver. 13. *And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred,* etc.] Which was larger than that in his father's time by 7500, (⁴²⁵⁶2 Chronicles 25:5) besides officers:

that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy; they were ready to fight, and fight valiantly, whenever the king had any occasion for them, or the land was invaded.

Ver. 14. *And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host,* etc.] For every soldier in the army:

shields and spears; defensive and offensive weapons, the one to cover and protect their bodies, the other to push and pierce their enemies:

and helmets, and habergeons; the first of these were a covering for the head in the day of battle, and the other coats of mail, to defend the body:

and bows; to shoot arrows out of:

and slings to cast stones; at which the Benjaminites formerly were very expert.

Ver. 15. *And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers, and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal,* etc.] Such as with the Romans were called “catapultae”, “ballistae”

^{f106}, “scorpiones”^{f107}, etc. and by this it appears that these were not first invented in Greece and Rome, but in Judea. It is said^{f108}, that the Romans received the machine to batter cities from the Greeks, and that the Trojan horse was no other than a battering ram; but if they did, the invention of them must be ascribed, not to them, but rather to the Syrians and Phoenicians, according to Pliny^{f109}; though others^{f110} suppose the Carthaginians, who were a colony of theirs, to be the inventors of them; yet, after all, they seem to be the device of some skilful men among the Jews, in the times of Uzziah; according to Diodorus Siculus^{f111}, they were not found out when Nineveh was besieged in the times of Sardanapalus:

and his name spread far abroad; in distant countries, for his warlike dispositions and preparations, which made them stand in fear of him:

for he was helped until he was strong; he was wonderfully helped by the Lord to build fortified places, raise a numerous army, and provide all sorts of armour for them, and invent such machines as would greatly annoy the enemy, whereby he became very potent, and injected dread round about him.

Ver. 16. *When he was strong*, etc.] Became great and powerful, through his victories, the enlargement of his dominions, and having a numerous army, and these well accoutred, and many fortified cities and towers:

his heart was lifted up to his destruction; he grew vain and proud, elated with his flourishing circumstances, which issued in his ruin:

for he transgressed against the Lord his God; who had helped him, and made him so great, and had bestowed so many favours upon him; the Targum is,

“the Word of the Lord his God;”

what his transgression was, follows:

and went into the temple of the Lord; the holy place, into which none but the priests might enter:

to burn incense upon the altar of incense; which stood there.

Ver. 17. *And Azariah the priest went in after him*, etc.] To hinder him from doing it, and to persuade him to go out. This was the high priest, as

appears from (^{<4370>}2 Chronicles 26:20) and is thought to be the same that is spoken of in (^{<4360>}1 Chronicles 6:10)

and with him eighty priests of the Lord, that were valiant men; not only able bodied men, but men of spirit and courage, and zealous for the honour of God.

Ver. 18. *And they withstood Uzziah the king,* etc.] They not only stood against him, but stood about him, surrounded him, so as to hinder him from approaching the altar of incense:

and said unto him, it appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord; it did not belong to his office as a king, it was no part of it

but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense; and to them only; for even the Levites might not do it, only those of the tribe of Levi, that descended from Aaron, (see ^{<0465>}Numbers 16:35),

go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed; by going into that:

neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God; but to his hurt, and be a brand of infamy upon him; for more is designed than is expressed, and as the event showed.

Ver. 19. *Then Uzziah was wroth,* etc.] With the priests, and, as Josephus ^{f112} says, threatened to kill them:

and had a censer in his hand to burn incense; ready to do it, and resolved upon it:

and while he was wroth with the priests; and expressing his indignation, and do what he would do to them, if they continued to oppose him:

the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar; which seems not only to describe the position of the priests, being beside the altar of incense, to keep the king from it, when the leprosy was seen by them in his forehead, but the quarter from whence the stroke invisibly came. Josephus ^{f113} says, there was earthquake at the same time, and a mountain was rent.

Ver. 20. *And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead,* etc.] He was leprous all over his body, no doubt, but it appeared in his forehead very remarkably,

and was seen by them all, who, without doubt, informed him of his case, and of which he soon became sensible:

and they thrust him out from thence; the holy place, he being now unfit to be in a common dwelling house, or his own palace, and much less to be in the house of God:

yea, himself also hasted to go out, because the Lord had smitten him; fearing, should he continue there, that something worse would befall him; the Targum is, the Word of the Lord. The leprosy was a disease sent immediately from God, as the case of Miriam, and this of Uzziah, show; and so the Persians^{f114} had a notion, that those had it who sinned against the sun, and for that reason, and which they accounted and worshipped as God.

Ver. 21. *And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper*, etc.] (see Gill on “~~<121816>~~2 Kings 15:5”),

for he was cut off from the house of the Lord; not, suffered to enter into that, because of his uncleanness:

and Jotham his son was over the king’s house, judging the people of the land; (see ~~<121816>~~2 Kings 15:5).

Ver. 22. *Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last*, etc.] What were done by him, both in the beginning and latter end of his reign:

did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write: not in his own prophecy, but in the history of his own times, which was usual for every prophet to write, though now lost, (see ~~<121816>~~2 Kings 15:6).

Ver. 23. *So Uzziah slept with his fathers*, etc.] Died as they did, the same year, according to Dr. Lightfoot^{f115}, in which he was smitten with the leprosy; and in the year of his death it was Isaiah had the vision related in (~~<20101>~~Isaiah 6:1), etc.

and they buried him with his fathers; (see Gill on “~~<121817>~~2 Kings 15:7”).