

Why Three Kings Are Missing From Matthew 1

Endurance

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We are going to begin this sermon in II Timothy 3:16. It is one of those verses that ought to be for every single one of us something that is committed to our memory.

II Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

All Scripture is profitable but some Scripture we tend to overlook or maybe we neglect altogether. Usually these parts that we neglect altogether are in the Old Testament, and they are called "the begats." So-and-so begat this person and that person begat somebody else and that person begat somebody else. There are chapters like I Chronicles 1—8, or Ezra 2 and 10 or Nehemiah 7, 10, and 12 and I can almost guarantee you that if you will look at the chapters in your Bible they are in mint condition because you have hardly ever looked at them.

But this scripture says that the whole Bible is profitable. That means it is a practical and a useful tool, especially for the teacher. It is the standard for testing everything that claims to be true. It is our safeguard against false teaching, by giving warning when one turns aside. It is a source of guidance in the right path. It trains us how to understand how to live. It shows us how to do Christ's work in this world. And this scripture, II Timothy 3:16, is saying that we need **all** Scripture in order to function properly, even the begats. They are in there for some reason. Scripture combined with the Holy Spirit and experiences are the means by which a person is brought to maturity. We might change that and say it is the means by which we are brought to holiness.

Turning our attention from the Old Testament, I think that even in the New Testament we pay little attention to the begats that are in there. And there are two chapters, Matthew 1 and Luke 3 that have an awful lot of begats in them as well. Now I have to confess to you that I am no different. I have to almost force myself to read in those chapters, and studying into those chapters is something that I do not like to do at all. But, they are there, and when we do study into those chapters and compare them with lists that are given in the Old Testament, then some very interesting things begin to come to light. There are curious differences that appear when comparing the begats in the book of Matthew, especially, with the begats that appear in other parts of the Old Testament. Now we are going to be looking at one of those curious differences that occur between Matthew 1 and I Chronicles 3.

Matthew 1:8 Asa begat Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begat Joram, and Joram begat Uzziah.

This is typical of just about every verse that appears up to and including verse 17. The words "son of" which may appear in your Bible, does not appear in this particular one, mine says "begot." When you see that it in the Bible, it means, "descendant of." Not necessarily literally "a son of" because someone who is named there may not be a son. He may be a grandson, even a great grandson, but in this particular list all of these people are related by blood, and that bloodline ends in Jesus Christ. And that is its importance.

To confuse things a little bit further, every once in awhile, you will read in the Bible of somebody who was the son of, for example, Belial. In this case, "son of" does not even mean "descendant of," it means someone showing the characteristics of, and Belial means foolishness. So a son of Belial is a son of foolishness. And this person is showing the characteristics of someone who is foolish.

Matthew has three groups of fourteen names beginning with Abraham. The first group begins with Abraham and ends with David. The second group begins with David's son Solomon and ends with Jeconiah, who was the son of Josiah. The third group begins with Shealtiel and ends in Jesus Christ.

Now, if you would compare Luke's list with Matthew's list, you would find that Luke runs in the opposite direction. He begins with Jesus Christ and ends with Adam. So he goes backwards, whereas Matthew comes forward. Matthew, interestingly, also lists four ladies in that line as well: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. So we have 42 men, and 4 ladies. All of these were ancestors of Jesus, but they varied considerably in personality, spirituality, and experience.

Some of these people were heroes of faith, such as Abraham, David, and Ruth. Some of them had shady reputations, like Tamar and Rahab. Some of them were very ordinary personalities, like Ram and Nahshon. Some of them were evil like Manasseh and Abijah. Two of the ladies very definitely were Gentiles, and one more probably was a Gentile, because her name is not Israelitish. That is Tamar; she was probably a Gentile. The fourth lady, Bathsheba, married a Gentile. She married Uriah the Hittite and was probably considered by the Israelites to be Gentile as a result of that marriage. So, we have four very interesting ladies there.

One of the things that I feel certain God is showing us is that God is not limited by human imperfections. He can work through anybody He desires to carry out His will, even if there are shady characters in the ancestry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let us go back to a companion list in I Chronicles 3. Verse 9 has the name of David, and what is listed here is the family of David.

I Chronicles 3:10-16 And Solomon's son was Rehoboam, Abijah his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, Amon his son, Josiah his son. And the sons of Josiah were Johanan the firstborn, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, and the fourth Shallum. The sons of Jehoiakim were Jeconiah his son and Zedekiah his son.

Unless I counted them wrong, there were 21 Kings from David to Zedekiah. But in the list in Matthew, there were only 15 kings listed. Three of those were of the same generation. That is, they were brothers or uncles or nephews. These three followed Jeconiah, and so they were related by blood. They were of the same family line. However, they were not directly in Christ's line as ancestors of His and so there is a very logical reason why those three were left off. Remember, these were the three that followed Josiah.

In addition to that, there was one renegade queen who was not on either list. Her name was Athaliah. We will get to her a little while later on in the sermon, but she was a bad one. She usurped the throne following her son Ahaziah. She got on the throne by killing all the potential heirs. She was a pretty bad person. Some of the most evil kings of Judah ever had are on the list as part of Christ's ancestry.

There are three kings we have not mentioned by name yet, except in the reading of the scriptures. But there are three kings whose names appear here in I Chronicles 3, but they are omitted from the list in Matthew 1. Now it is not clear which of four possible kings, whose names are not on the list. There is a reason for this, why it appears there might be four rather than three. That is because of a confusion of names, and I will get to that just a little bit later. There are two possibilities. The three whose names are left off the list come from I Chronicles 3:11-12, where it begins with:

I Chronicles 3:11-12 Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son. And Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son.

The one possibility is that Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah were dropped off the list and the reason they might have been dropped off is because of their connection to Athaliah. The other possibility of the three names might have been Joash, Amaziah, and Uzziah. We add another name there.

Why might they have been dropped? Well, a second reason might be that rather than having been dropped because of their connection to Athaliah is that they were dropped in order to draw attention to a disastrous flaw that these three men had in common. I have to say to you right up front here that I do not know which is the correct answer because God does not tell us. Either one of the two possibilities of the three names would be a good enough reason, as far as I am concerned. We will explore the first one just a little bit. We will spend a great deal more time on the second one because if they are the ones that were dropped then the reason they were dropped has a very interesting application to you and me today. We definitely are not descended from or have direct connections to Athaliah, but we may very well have the same kind of spiritual problem, that these three, Joash, Amaziah, and Uzziah had.

Before we proceed any further, we need to understand something. The books of Kings and Chronicles are in some ways much like the four gospels. That is, they give differing points of view, differing perspectives of the same events. Kings primarily approaches things from a standpoint of giving us an insight into the history of the northern ten tribes, at least history as it regards the kings, whereas Chronicles focuses its attention on the southern kingdom of Judah.

Remember, we are dealing with two different kingdoms. The ten-tribed kingdom in the north, Israel, and the two-tribed kingdom in the south, Judah. Kings gives us the perspective, primarily, from the northern point of view. Chronicles gives us a perspective from the southern point of view.

Other differences go farther than that, because the books of Kings do not give much insight into spiritual causes or motivations. It deals with facts. I might say that it gives us facts of history from a human point of view. It is pretty much just a record of history. Chronicles, on the other hand, gives us God's thoughts about the history that took place. It is history from a divine standpoint. It gives a philosophy of the same history that Kings covers, showing deliverances, repentances, and reformations. We are going to be spending most of our time in Chronicles.

II Chronicles 21:1-4 And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place. He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azaryahu, Michael, and Shepatiah, all these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. Their father gave them great gifts, of silver and gold of precious things, with the fortified cities in Judah [in other words, he made them the mayor or the governor of that area and gave them a lot of money besides]; but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was the firstborn. Now when

Jehoram was established over the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself and killed all his brothers with the sword, and also others of the princes of Israel.

Aha! What a way to begin. He kills off his own brothers in order to make sure that they do not usurp the throne. Now, if we give him the benefit of the doubt, it is entirely possible that he had good reason to do what he did from a carnal standpoint, because maybe his brothers were giving indications that they were already plotting because they were jealous. Because Jehoram got the throne when they thought they were every bit as good as Jehoram, and that they should be on the throne. Jehoram, though, had more power. He beat them to the punch. He put them to death before they got him and assassinated him.

The background for this event goes all the way back to chapter 18, verse one, where it kind of innocently says,

II Chronicles 18:1 Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance, and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab.

Anybody know anything about Ahab? He was possibly the most wicked king that Israel ever had. He was "blessed" by having as his wife Jezebel. What a blessing! How were relations cemented between Jehoshaphat and Ahab? Well, they arranged a marriage. Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, married Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah. That was a very common way of doing things back then in those days. And so they became blood relatives.

II Chronicles 21:5-6 Jehoram was 32 years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. [Not in the ways of his father Jehoshaphat, who was a pretty good king overall.] Just as the house of Ahab had done for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of the Lord.

Let us drop down to verse 12. Things got so bad that Elijah, who had been whirled away in a whirlwind about seven or eight years before, sent a letter to Jehoram.

II Chronicles 21:12-15 And a the letter came to him from Elijah the prophet saying, 'Thus says the Lord God of your father David: Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father or the ways of Asa king of Judah but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab, and also have killed your brothers, those of your father's household, who were better than yourself, behold the Lord will strike your people with a serious affliction—your children, your wives, and all your possessions, and you will become very sick with a disease of your intestines until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day.

II Chronicles 21:18-20 And after all this the Lord struck him in his intestines with an incurable disease. Then it happened in the course of time after the end of two years that his intestines came out because of his sickness; so he died in severe pain. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning for his fathers. [That was a burning of incense, like wafting up prayers to God.] He was 32 years old when he became king. He reigned in Jerusalem eight years and, to no one's sorrow, departed. However, they buried him in the City of David, but not in the tomb of the kings.

Take notice of that because that kind of phrase usually indicates the regard in which he was held by his subjects. This sort of tragedy had its beginning in a very foolish arrangement of a marriage and had a very tragic results for Judah, because Jehoram preferred to follow his evil wife, rather than his godly father. And Jehoram's evil was so pernicious, it just kept growing and growing, so that the people would not bury him with the other kings. And so he died unregretted and unlamented. No one cried at his death, and yet he is on the list of Christ's forebears—this evil, evil man.

Now in II Chronicles 22:1-5 is mentioned Jehoram's son Ahaziah. But I think for now we are going to skip this man. We are going to get back to him later. But I will say, in verse two his mother's name was Athaliah, and he also walked in the ways of Ahab.

II Chronicles 22:3-4 He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother advised him to do wickedly. Therefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the house of Ahab; for they were his counselors after the death of his father to his destruction.

Depending upon the way that the kings are left in or left out of the list in Matthew 1 this man may be in or he may be out. If we include him in, then we are looking at the record of another king just as wicked and evil as his father Jehoram.

Let us look at another one. These three I just want to give you as examples of wicked kings who are on the list. I am doing that because I want you to see that their relative evil or righteousness apparently did not have much to do with whether they were on Christ's ancestry list or not. It almost seems that God left three men out, not because they were particularly evil, but He wanted to draw our attention to something—something else, because He could have easily left these three fellows out and the list, we might have said, would have been better without them there. But that is the way human beings look at things.

II Chronicles 33:1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem.

Manasseh was the son of probably the second or third best king that Judah ever had. To me, the three best kings, hands down, that Judah ever had were David, and he stands in a class of his own because every king is compared to David, even the good ones. Let me put it this way, all of the good kings are compared to David, because he was the standard. And there are only, that I know, three other kings that are compared to David. And that is Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. And there seems to be special attention drawn to Josiah as having been the second best, with Hezekiah then being the third best, and Jehoshaphat the fourth best. That is kind of my list, but I think that it has some biblical reasoning to it. So now we are looking here at the son of one that was at least a third best king, Hezekiah.

II Chronicles 33:2-9 But he did evil in the site of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images; and he worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. He also built altars in the house of the Lord. [Can you imagine that? Right into the temple!] He also built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said of Jerusalem, 'My name shall be forever.' And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. And also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the sons of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used

witchcraft and sorcery, consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger. He even set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and Solomon his son, 'In this house and in Jerusalem which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever. And I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I appointed to your fathers—only if they are careful to do all that I commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh seduced Judah [Look at this. That is a phrase that is used **for him and him only of all the kings.**], and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel.

Judah became worse under this wicked man than all of those whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel—the Canaanites, the Hivites, the Hittites. He seduced Judah; he destroyed all of Hezekiah's good works. He used astrology, spiritism, wizardry, human sacrifice, erection of idol groves. But you know what? He repented in captivity. But apparently, he was not allowed to be buried with the kings. Despite all of his wickedness, he is on the list in Matthew 1.

In Matthew 1, once again, just a reminder, that "begat" or "son of" does not actually mean father of, it can mean father or grandfather or great-grandfather.

Matthew 1:8 Asa begot Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat begot Joram. [We just read of him back there in II Chronicles. He was called there, Jehoram.] Jehoram [Joram] begot Uzziah.

Now, who is this man Uzziah? If you have a King James Version, it probably said Ozias. I am going to show you something very interesting I mentioned a little bit earlier towards the beginning of this sermon. One of the things that make this a bit confusing as to which group of three God intends is because of a confusion of names. Let us go back to II Chronicles 21. We are picking up here in the reign of Jehoram.

II Chronicles 21:17 And they came up into Judah and invaded it [here is an invasion that is taking place] and carried away all the possessions that were found in the king's house and also his sons and his wives. So there was not a son left to him [the "him" is Jehoram, the fellow whose intestines fell out], except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.

Now mark that name, Jehoahaz, in your mind. Let us go to chapter 22:1. Remember, back in II Chronicles 21:20, we find the burial of Jehoram and so now the kingship is going to go from Jehoram to the next in line.

II Chronicles 22:1 Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son [Whose youngest son? Jehoram's youngest son], king in his place.

Now, wait a minute, in chapter 21:17 Jehoahaz was Jehoram's youngest son. Are these two different men? Or is it the same man with two different names? That is what it is. It is the second one. In both cases, he was the youngest son. But now he has a different name and his name has changed from Jehoahaz to Ahaziah.

II Chronicles 22:6 Then he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds he had received at Ramah when he fought against Hazael, King of Syria. And Azariah the son of Jehoram....

Remember, there are no other sons of Jehoram left. What have we got here? We have a man with three names! It starts out Jehoahaz, then it becomes Ahaziah, and five verses later it becomes Azariah. See what I mean about a confusion of names?

Let us go to II Chronicles 25:27. The name I want you to pick up on here is in the very first phrase.

II Chronicles 25:27 After the time that Amaziah [A-m-a-z] turned away from following the Lord, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish, but they sent after him to Lachish and killed him there.

On to chapter 26. Now remember Amaziah—A-m-a-z—has now died because he was assassinated. And so when a king dies and you have to have a new king:

II Chronicles 26:1 All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father, Amaziah.

Now notice the name of the son, Uzziah.

II Kings 15:1 In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king.

That is Azariah—A-z-a-r—not Uzziah.

We now have Uzziah as a different name and his name now is Azariah, but they are one and the same man. Matthew was written in either Aramaic or Greek, or written in Aramaic and then translated into Greek, whichever it happened to have been. Matthew has the Greek equivalents of the Hebrew names, and the reason that there is confusion is because in the Hebrew vowels are not written. What this sets up is that if the Ozias of Matthew 1:8 is in reality the man variously called Jehoahaz or Azariah or Ahaziah and not the one that is called Uzziah, it sets up an interesting circumstance. Now, three kings in a row are not on this list.

For this sermon, we are going to make the assumption that the kings that are not on the list are Joash, Amaziah and Uzziah. We are going to look at what the Bible says about these three men. We are going to read just a phrase out of three different chapters dealing with the three different men.

II Chronicles 24:1-2 Joash was seven years old when he became king and reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. Joash **did what was right in the sight of the Lord.**

II Chronicles 25:1-2 Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem and **he did what was right in the sight of the Lord.**

II Chronicles 26:1-4 Now all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. He built Elath and restored it to Judah after the king rested with his fathers. Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem **and he did what was right in the sight of the Lord.**

I emphasized what I wanted you to see. What they had in common was that everyone of them **did what was right in the sight of the Lord.** And yet it is entirely possible that these men that did what was right have been stricken from the king's list as ancestors of Jesus Christ. And men who were downright evil were allowed to be on the list: Manasseh, Joash, or Amaziah. Very interesting!

Why? Was it because God wanted to draw attention to their stories more forcefully than otherwise might have been done if they had been left on the list? Let us go back and look at the life of Joash.

II Chronicles 22:10 Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs of the house of Judah.

Remember, I mentioned, there was one renegade queen? That was Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, granddaughter of Omre of Israel. But Jehoshabeath, daughter of the king took Joash, the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons. Now Joash was an infant at the time. Jehoshabeath was Joash's aunt. She was sister to Ahaziah. She, too, apparently, was a daughter of Athaliah. But, when she began to see the carnage that was taking place she ran into the nursery, she picked up Joash, and hid him so that Athaliah was unable to kill him (II Chronicles 22:12). He was hidden with them in the house of God for six years while Athaliah reigned over the land. Jehoshabeath had made a very good marriage, and this is what saved her, I am sure. Because she married Jehoiada who was one of the best high priests ever in the history of the Bible.

II Chronicles 24:1-2 Joash was seven years old when he became king and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord [Here is what I *did not* read to you before], **all the days of Jehoiada the priest.**

Jehoiada was a powerful influence for good. Joash had a forty year reign, but unfortunately Jehoiada did not live through the entirety of Joash's reign.

II Chronicles 24:15-16 But Jehoiada grew old and full of days and he died. He was one hundred and thirty years old when he died. [Now look at the **honor** that they gave this man.] And they buried him in the city of David among the kings.

I do not know that there are many high priests that were buried with the kings. Quite distinctive, and I think it was a recognition of two things. Number one was that he was a great, righteous man and a tremendous influence on Joash. Number two, the people recognized that, in reality, Jehoiada was actually ruling. He was the king in reality, whereas Joash, though he was the front man, did not really have it to be king. But Jehoiada did.

II Chronicles 24:17-18 Now after the death of Jehoiada the leaders of Judah came and bowed down to the king. And the king listened to them. [Pay careful attention to that.] Therefore, they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers....

In other words, they left the way of life that was represented by the temple. In other words, we might say if we were up to date, that they left the church, as it were.

II Chronicles 24:18-22 ...and served wooden images and idols; and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their trespass. Yet He sent prophets to them to bring them back to the Lord; and they testified against them, but they would not listen. Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people and said to them, 'Thus says God: Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord so you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He also has forsaken you.' So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord. Thus Joash did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him.

Jehoiada was not really his father but he had acted as his father. He was not his biological father, but in reality, he had reared this king of Judah.

II Chronicles 24:22 Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son; and as he died, he said, 'The Lord look on it, and repay!'

This is the murder that Jesus referred to there in the New Testament when He said 'You killed Zechariah between the altar and the court.' It just shows what ingratitude can do to a person's thinking.

Let us evaluate Joash's character. Joash was a fellow traveler. He was a leaner, he was a clinging vine, who did not have the resources within himself so that whenever the pressure came on him there was no one for him to lean on and he drooped and spiritually he died. We might say it this way: Joash went whichever way the wind blew. He was easily influenced by the peers who were around him. He went whichever way the crowd was going. His true character came from the crowd that he was in. When Jehoiada was with him, and the influence was for good then Joash was compliant and seemingly a good king. But, when he was with a bad crowd he went whichever way the peers were going. He was afraid to buck his peers and, let us add this: he did not repent when he was warned.

II Chronicles 24:25 And when they had withdrawn from him, (for they left him severely wounded), [Talking about Joash's servants here.] his own servants conspired against him because of the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and killed him on his bed. So he died. And they buried him in the City of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings.

So he was assassinated and not buried with the kings. Is that not an interesting contrast between him and his "father" Jehoiada, who was not even in the kingly line but was held in such high regard that he was buried with the kings? I think we would have to say that Joash's character was something that was merely programmed. It had not truly been internalized. It was not genuine. You see, brethren, faith has to be something that is grounded within us and is personally held. You might recall Ezekiel 14:14 about Noah, Job, and Daniel, that even those three righteous man could only save themselves.

Let us look at Amaziah in chapter 25.

II Chronicles 25:2 And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, *but not with a loyal heart*. [Not with the perfect heart.]

II Chronicles 25:5 Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together and set over them captains over thousands and captains of hundreds, according to their father's houses throughout all Judah and Benjamin and he numbered them from twenty years old and above and found them to be three hundred thousand choice men able to go to war who could handle a spear and shield.

Amaziah was preparing to go to war. He was putting a fighting machine together. So he took a census and this is what he found.

II Chronicles 25:6-10 He also hired one hundred thousand mighty men of valor from Israel [I mean, "bad" Israel up to the north.] for one hundred talents of silver. [They became mercenaries.] But a man of God came to him saying, 'O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the Lord is not with Israel—not with any of the children of Ephraim. But if you go, be gone! Be strong in battle! Even so, God shall make you to fall before the enemy; for God has power to help and to overthrow.' Then Amaziah said to the man of God, 'But what shall we do about the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel?' And the men of God answered, 'The Lord is able to give you much more than this.' So Amaziah discharged the troops that had come to him from Ephraim, to go back home. Therefore their anger was greatly aroused against Judah, and they returned home in great anger.

But at least Amaziah obeyed the message from God through His prophet. Now let us look at verse 14. Between verses 10 and 14 the battle occurs, and Amaziah wins a great victory.

II Chronicles 25:14 Now after it was so, after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up to be his gods, and bowed down before them, and burned incense to them.

Can you imagine that? It almost defies logic! Here God gave him a great victory over the gods that he now adopts as his gods. Is that not something?

II Chronicles 25:15-16 Therefore, the anger of the Lord was aroused against Amaziah, and He sent him a prophet who said to him. 'Why have you sought the gods of the people, which could not rescue their own people from your hand?' So it was, as he talked with him, that the king said to him. 'Have we made you the king's counselor? Cease! Why should you be killed?' [In other words, "If you keep going buddy, we are going to kill you."] Then the prophet ceased and said, 'I know that God has determined to destroy you because you have done this and have not heeded my counsel.'

Let us drop down to verse 18, because now Amaziah in between has challenged Israel, two-tribed Judah against ten-tribed Israel. And so, Joash, king of Israel was contemptuous of this challenge from Amaziah.

II Chronicles 25:18 "And Joash, king of Israel, sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying "The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, 'Give

your daughter to my son as wife'; and a wild beast that was in Lebanon passed by and trampled the thistle."

In the parable, in the riddle, Amaziah (Judah) is the thistle and Joash (Israel) is the cedar. Now a cedar is mighty and strong and the thistle is so weak that a little old forest animal can come by, and would trample and scatter it to smithereens. And so he is saying, he is taunting them, he is saying, "You come up on me and I will step on you like on a thistle, and all the seeds will go blowing all over the place." Well, Amaziah, in his puffed up pride, having just won the battle with the Edomites, says "Heh, heh, I will get you." Well he did not get them. He went to battle against Israel, and he was smashed in defeat, just like Joash said he would be.

II Chronicles 25:27-28 After the time that Amaziah turned away from following the Lord. They made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish but they sent after him to Lachish and killed him there. [Another king of Judah assassinated!] Then they brought him on horses and buried him with his fathers in the City of Judah.

You know what they did with him? Have you ever seen a Western where the guy gets shot out the wilderness somewhere and what do they do? They tie him onto the horse, stomach to the saddle, draped over the top of it with his hands tied underneath to his feet that are on the other side of the horse. That is what they did to him. Just tied him to a horse and sent him back to Jerusalem. What an ignominious ending for the royal seed to come to.

Now let us evaluate his character. What we see here is vacillating instability. A great deal like Joash, but Amaziah wanted the best of both worlds. You might compare him to a parable that Jesus gave a man who began to build. He seemingly began pretty well. He listened to the prophet of God. He repented. He changed his ways, and God gave him a great victory, and then he began to turn. So he was a man who began to build and was not able to finish. We might call him a man who is semi-religious, unsteady in character and conduct. He was a man who had the right kind of piety and godliness early in his life, but we can see here that early piety and godliness is no excuse for self-indulgence later on.

The flaw that we are beginning to see develop here is that these men all began well, but they did not finish well.

Let us look at Uzziah. Perhaps in some way, this is the most tragic of all

II Chronicles 26:4 And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father, Amaziah, had done.

He was not compared to David, was he? We just read that Amaziah was not all that great. He started out okay, but he did not finish up okay.

II Chronicles 26:5 He sought God in the days of Zechariah.

Does not that kind of remind you of Joash who sought God in the days of Jehoiada? Here was Zechariah, another strong priest, who had understanding in the visions of God. And as long as Uzziah sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. God helped him against the Philistines. And so he had a lot of victories.

II Chronicles 26:9-12 Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the corner buttress of the wall; and then he fortified them. And he built towers in the desert. He dug many wells, for he had much livestock, both in the lowlands and 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 man who went to war by companies....[In other words, he was very well organized.]The total number of the chief officers of the mighty men of valor was two thousand six hundred.

And then he tells the size of the army and how they prepared for them an entire army of shields, spears, body armor, bows, and slings to cast stones

II Chronicles 26:15-16 And he made devices in Jerusalem, invented by skillful men to be on the towers and the corners to shoot arrows and large stones [sort of like the Gatling gun, but only with arrows. Maybe dozens of arrows coming out at the same time from one device to shoot arrows and stones.] So his fame spread far and wide for he was marvelously helped until he became strong. [Sounds like a wonderful success story, does it not? But in verse 16, the butterfly turns into a worm.] But when he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

Uzziah presumptuously disregarded God's Word, because God's Word said that only the priests were to do this responsibility. Success after success spoiled his character. He became arrogant, conceited, and filled with inordinate self-esteem. He was the victim of ostentation. His heart was lifted with pride, and then he tried to emulate the Oriental kings around him and become a priest also. Now, what was the result of that?

II Chronicles 26:17-18 So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the Lord, valiant men. 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. Oh, whenever someone challenged his authority, it was a put down of his pride. He felt that he had become infallible.

II Chronicles 26:19-21 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. Then Jotham, his son was over the king's house judging the people of the land.

Josephus has an interesting story. I do not know how true it is, but I will give it to you, at least the essence of it. Josephus says that the earthquake that is mentioned by Amos in Amos 1:1 (where Amos says that he prophesied two years before the earthquake), occurred when Uzziah went into the sanctuary and that the roof of the sanctuary was torn or rent by the shaking of the earthquake and a ray of sunlight boomed into the temple and struck Uzziah right in the forehead and quickly went out

and when it went out the leprosy was what remained. Anyway, tradition has it that this was the hand of God, showing His displeasure at the presumptuous pride of this man, whom He had blessed so greatly and that now felt that he was infallible and above doing wrong and that his word had become law. Again we see a man who had started out marvelously. But when he was confronted with the truth and repentance was demanded of him late in his life because he was turning away and God was trying to save him from the course that he was headed on, the man refused to repent. They all hardened their hearts. They—the three kings—all rejected God's Word and refused to repent.

Ezekiel 18:23-24 'Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?' says the Lord God, 'and not that he should turn from his ways and should live?' [For example, Joash, Amaziah, or Uzziah.] But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered....

Is God hard? Is He austere? Is He unmerciful? Does God owe us salvation? Does He owe us eternal life? Is it something that He is bound to give us regardless of our conduct, regardless of the direction of our lives?

Ezekiel 18:24-28 All the righteousness that he has done shall not be remembered because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die. Yet you say, 'The way the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways, which are not fair? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

You see, there is an individual responsibility. God never condones sin nor grants license for us or anyone to disobey His commands. Please understand that we are not talking here about our transgressions that are done out of weakness or out of ignorance. We are talking about transgressions that are done as a way of life with knowledge that we are doing wrong. God never condones that kind of sin, and he never grants license for anyone to disobey His commands. God always allows the sinner to repent. He will always chase after the sinner with His Word and give them the opportunity to repent. We saw that with Joash and Amaziah and Uzziah. God tried to get them to repent. There is always an open door for a sinner who will repent. But unless we do, the mind eventually becomes set, becomes seared, and repentance becomes impossible.

In Exodus 32, Moses is the speaker in this poignant section, where he offers his life, you might say, as hostage to the children of Israel.

Exodus 32:33 And the Lord said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of my book.'

Just to reinforce what I said in regard to Ezekiel 18: God enters names and God has prerogative to take names out as well. That is a sobering thought indeed. Let us go to Deuteronomy 29 beginning in verse nine. Moses is addressing the people and says,

Deuteronomy 29:9 Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.

The subject here is the keeping of the covenant. Let us think of this in terms of the New Covenant rather than the Old Covenant. That is the principle I want to extrapolate from here.

Deuteronomy 29:10-15 All of you stand today before the Lord your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives—also the stranger who is in your camp, from the one that cuts your wood to the one who draws your water—that you may enter into covenant with the Lord your God, and into His oath, which the Lord your God makes with you today, that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, but with him who stands here with us today before the Lord our God, as well as with him who is not here with us today.

He is saying that what we have done in entering into this covenant is something that does not just stop with us but it reverberates and will have effects even out into the future.

Deuteronomy 29:16-19 (for you know that we dwelt in the land of Egypt and that we came through the nations which you passed by and you saw their abominations and their idols which were among them, wood and stone, silver and gold, so that there may not be among you man or woman, family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood; [In this context, "a root bearing bitterness" is apostasy or turning away.] and so it may not happen, that when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart saying; [You see the apostate, that he blesses himself in his heart, and says] I shall have peace, even though I follow the imagination [dictates] of my heart—

That is what Joash said. That is what Amaziah said. That is what Uzziah said. When they said, "I will not repent, I will not listen to God's prophets. I am going to continue to go in the direction I am going in, and I am going to have peace and prosperity regardless of that."

Deuteronomy 29:19-20 ...as though a drunkard could be included with the sober. The Lord would not spare him; for then the anger of the Lord and His jealousy would burn against that man and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the Lord would blot out his name from under heaven.

God is saying through Moses, "Do not kid yourself." I bring this up because we have come out of a very Protestant society. That society has taught us that God is virtually obligated to give us salvation because His grace is so great. "His mercy is so great, that as long as we have accepted the blood of Jesus Christ, salvation is absolutely assured." That is not true—which I will show you in just a little bit out of the New Testament. Somehow, they have worked it around in order, I think, to tickle people's ears, that God is virtually required to give us salvation. But they forget that God's mercy is perfectly balanced by His justice and those two are perfectly balanced by His love.

He knows that anybody who is of a mind to live in a way that is different from his way, should that person inherit the Kingdom of God, that person would be absolutely miserable for all eternity, and God's sense of justice will not allow Him to do that to that person. He will not commit people to that kind of misery. Not only would they be miserable, they would cause misery for everybody else as well. They would be thorns in the side of everything that is right and good and progressive, just like Satan. If it would not be good for one of us to be there, we will not be there.

II Chronicles 15:1-2 Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa. [Asa was a good king. One of the better ones that Judah had.], and said to him, 'Hear me Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. [Look at this principle.] 'The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.

It is in the book! Ritenbaugh did not write that there in the Bible. There is a principle in God's Word that expands on this in other places in the Bible—where He tells us that we are judged as we judge others. And so He says be awfully careful the kind of judgment when you begin imputing motives to people. People whose hearts you are not able to read, and you begin to say things about them that God knows to be not true. That you are judging them on the basis of your "insight"? He also tells us in the Lord's Prayer that we will be forgiven as we forgive. Another interesting one to think of. So we see a principle here, that faithfulness and loyalty is a two-way street.

Colossians 1:21-22 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled [He has granted repentance], in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

That is the means of reconciliation, by the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus Christ and the purpose is to present you and me holy, blameless, and irreproachable in His sight.

Colossians 1:23 If indeed you continue in that faith, grounded and steadfast....

Remember the three kings. They all began well. 'He did good in the sight of the Lord all the days of...!' But when they began to turn aside, and God found fault with them and He sent them a prophet to give them repentance, they hardened their hearts and rejected God's offer of mercy.

Colossians 1:23 If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel [the hope of the gospel is salvation], which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Now those three kings did not continue. Continuing is the test of the reality of our faith.