

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### **The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity**

#### **III. The Latter Era Of The Divided Kingdom, 2 Kings 2:1-27:41**

##### **W. Heeding God's Assigned Roles**

##### **(2 Kings 15:1-7 with 2 Chronicles 26:1-23)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

The practice of violating one's rightful role in life is widespread today, and it unsettles many people in society:

(1) Ben Shapiro's story, "U. S. institutions losing trust" (Republican-American, March 30, 2019, p. 6A) noted that "the mainstream media," the "intelligence community" and prosecutors had "suggested continuously for years that Trump was illegitimately elected" by "collusion" with "the Russian government," but the release of the extensive Mueller report that claimed it did not find such collusion left "unending egg on" the "faces" of many in these parties.

Mr. Shapiro added: "The job of the media is to objectively [sic] cover stories, not to drive narratives. The job of the intelligence community is to diligently [sic] follow evidence, not to follow its cognitive bias. The job of the state's attorney is to prosecute crime, not to play politics . . . But . . . '(o)bjective' journalists see themselves as crusaders; political members of the intelligence community see themselves as protectors; prosecutors see themselves as emissaries of social justice rather than as a part of the broader, more objective system of determining guilt and innocence," and "(t)he result is the continued atomization [disunification] of our society." (Ibid.; brackets ours)

(2) It occurs in religious realms: the story, "Pope's fear of spreading virus goes viral" (Ibid., March 29, 2019, p. 7D) told how "Pope Francis . . . began pulling his hand away to discourage people from kissing his ring 'to avoid the risk of contagion for the people.'" However, "(v)ideo of the incident went viral, with conservative critics blasting what they said was Francis' 'graceless' disrespect for the tradition and the faithful who wanted to honor it," Ibid.

Significantly, this problem is the result of the long history of Church leaders' violating their Biblical roles: the story noted, "The tradition of kissing the ring of a bishop or pope goes back centuries, as a sign of respect and obedience" (Ibid.), but the Apostle Peter whom the Catholic Church alleges was its first pope, in 1 Peter 5:3 in even the Roman Catholic Bible, The New American Bible, 1986, p. 1352, told church leaders, "Do not lord it over those assigned to you, but be examples to the flock." Centuries of promoting the kissing of a church leader's ring by the laity has helped officials "lord it over" the flock in violation of God's role for leaders, creating the ring-kissing crisis!

Need: *So, we ask, "What is the SOLUTION to people functioning outside their proper roles?!"*

- I. When Judah's king Azariah (Uzziah) assumed the throne, he began to reign by doing what was right in God's eyes (2 Kings 15:1-3 with 2 Chronicles 26:1-4), so God greatly blessed him (2 Chronicles 26:5-15):**
- A. Azariah sought God's direction through a prophet named Zechariah who had understanding of God's visions, and as long as he thus sought the Lord's guidance, God caused Azariah to prosper, 2 Chronicles 26:5.
  - B. Azariah's prosperity was multi-faceted, too, 2 Chronicles 26:6-15:
    - 1. He prospered in his interactions with other nations, 2 Chronicles 26:6-8:
      - a. Azariah defeated the Philistines in their major cities of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod, and he built cities of Judah around Ashdod, 2 Chronicles 26:6.
      - b. Besides the Philistines, God helped him against the Arabs and Meunites, and the Ammonites recognized his sovereignty over them, signified in their bringing him gifts, and his fame spread to Egypt's borders because he had become so powerful, 2 Chronicles 26:7-8 NIV; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 640.
    - 2. Azariah prospered in his military preparations for Judah's national defense, 2 Chronicles 26:9, 11-15:
      - a. He fortified the city of Jerusalem by building towers along its wall and fortifying them, 2 Chron. 26:9.
      - b. Azariah built a strong, well-organized army of 307,500 men with 2,600 being an elite force, v. 11-13.
      - c. They were armed with shields, spears, helmets, coats of armor, bows and slings, 2 Chron. 26:14 NIV.
      - d. Azariah also made catapults and placed them on the towers and city wall fortifications to shoot arrows and large stones so that he was greatly respected by other surrounding nations, 2 Chronicles 26:15 NIV.
    - 3. King Azariah also prospered greatly in agriculture, for he loved farming, 2 Chronicles 26:10:
      - a. He built defensive towers in the Southern Judean desert and dug many wells there for his herds of livestock, 2 Chronicles 26:10a; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 2 Chronicles 26:10.
      - b. He also had lots of herds in the foothills in western Judah, 2 Chronicles 26:10b; Ibid.
      - c. In the hills, king Azariah had vineyards with vinedressers and fruitful fields, 2 Chron. 26:10c; Ibid.
      - d. He accomplished all of these objectives because he loved farming, 2 Chronicles 26:10d.

- II. However, when he became strong, Azariah relied on his own human might instead of recalling that the Lord had made him strong, so he proudly usurped the Biblical role of the priests, 2 Chronicles 26:16:**
- A. Having become a strong and respected king, Azariah became proud, resting in his human might instead of the Lord, so he entered the Lord's temple to burn incense, 2 Chronicles 26:16.
  - B. This deed violated not only the role of the priests who alone were to burn incense to the Lord (Exodus 30:7-9), but it violated God's trespassing law: being of the line of David and thus from the tribe of Judah, it was a capital offense for Azariah even to enter into the temple building's Holy Place, cf. Numbers 1:50-53.
- III. The high priest, also named Azariah, along with 80 other priests, withstood the king, 2 Chron. 26:17-18:**
- A. The high priest and 80 other priests entered the temple and told the king he was usurping their role, v. 17-18a.
  - B. They urged him to leave the sanctuary because the king had sinned, that he had been unfaithful and the Lord would not honor him for trying to burn incense unto the Lord, 2 Chronicles 26:18b.
- IV. Proud king Azariah raged in fury at the priests for daring to confront and critique him, but while he was expressing his rage, GOD expressed HIS OWN RAGE at king Azariah, immediately striking him with leprosy in his forehead, 2 Chronicles 26:19; 2 Kings 15:5a. [This event recalls God's striking Miriam with leprosy because she expressed jealousy over Moses' prophetic ministry in Exodus 12:1-2, 9-16.]**
- V. The priests who saw the leprosy suddenly appear on the king's forehead reacted by quickly thrusting him out of the temple, and when king Azariah himself saw his unhealthy state, he was eager to leave the temple, realizing that God was punishing him for usurping the role of the priests, 2 Chronicles 26:20.**
- VI. King Azariah then lived for the rest of his life in quarantine as a leper to the day of his death, and his son Jotham ruled over the king's palace and judged the people, 2 Chronicles 26:21-23; 2 Kings 15:5b-7.**

***Lesson:*** *When king Azariah heeded the Lord, seeking God's guidance through the ministry of God's prophet, the Lord greatly blessed him until he became very strong. However, when he grew strong, he also became proud and usurped the Biblical role of the priests, so the Lord struck him with leprosy, and Azariah was left to live in quarantine as a leper to the day of his death.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) May we then obey God and see Him bless us instead of stepping outside of His assigned role only to face His discipline. (3) If others around us turn proud and step outside of God's assigned roles, be sure that God will eventually correct them. (4) Applied to the matter of bad leaders who cause the decline of secular and religious institutions as noted in our introduction, be sure (a) that God will one day judge all such parties. (b) However, may we also recall our past teaching that Revelation 3:21 predicts we will see people oppressed by bad leaders be driven to seek and find balm only in the exposition of God's Word in Biblical churches. Rest assured that the decline we see in man's institutions simply fits into God's plan!*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the message . . . )

This sermon's lesson has application to an important issue that we as a Church face today (as follows):

In line with the historic Christian faith, we have long taught that those who do not trust in Christ will face everlasting conscious torment in hell, but Mark Woods' article ("Intolerable cruelty? How evangelicals are rethinking the doctrine of hell," April 1, 2018; christianitytoday.com) reported that a growing number of evangelicals claim a God of love cannot let humans suffer endless conscious torment so that He must either annihilate the souls that are in hell or save them out of it. Some evangelicals want us to soften our teaching on hell that we not upset sensitive folk.

However, 2 Timothy 4:1-2 directs pastors to preach God's Word in solemn accountability to Christ Who will judge the living and the dead at His coming, and God's Word includes passages like Revelation 14:9-11, Revelation 20:15 and Matthew 25:31-46. Revelation 14:9-11 claims that people who will follow the antichrist in the future Great Tribulation era will "be tormented with fire and brimstone . . . for ever and ever," getting "no rest day or night." Revelation 20:15 adds that all the people whose names are not found written in the book of life, namely, all who have "rejected Christ as Savior during their lifetimes" on earth (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Rev. 20:11-15), will also be cast into that lake of fire to experience its everlasting, conscious torment! Jesus in Matthew 25:41 said He would one day tell the unsaved, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41) where the unsaved will suffer "everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46).

Thus, to stay in God's assigned role as a pastor as directed in 2 Timothy 4:1-2, I will continue to preach God's Word that teaches if people do not trust in Christ as Savior, they will end up in eternal conscious torment in hell!

**May we trust in Christ for salvation. May we fulfill God's assigned roles for us in accountability to Him and trust the Lord one day to deal with all who step outside of His roles for them.**