

## "PRIDE GOETH BEFORE DESTRUCTION"

– MAY 7. – 2 CHRONICLES 26:8-21. –

**"Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."  
– Proverbs 16:18.**

AGREAT and prosperous king in Jerusalem was Uzziah. He made a good beginning, was reverential toward God, and put his capital and the remainder of his kingdom into a good condition for defense against enemies. When thinking of the wars of Israel we are to remember that this nation for a time represented God's rule in the earth in a sense that no other nation ever did, either before or after them.

Israel's kings were anointed by Divine commission and authority, as were no other kings, and they were said to "sit upon the Throne of the Kingdom of the Lord," as no other kings before or since have held dominion. Theirs was not, however, the Kingdom of God for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth," but merely a preparatory arrangement with the typical Israelites. God's Kingdom will really come to earth after Messiah shall establish it. For a thousand years he shall reign to uplift the humble and to bless all who seek righteousness and to punish and correct all others and finally to destroy the incorrigible in the Second Death. It was, therefore, quite in line with the arrangements of that time that the kings of Israel and Judah should fortify and strengthen themselves and defend the land which the Almighty had specially given to their nation.

The truthfulness of our text was illustrated in King Uzziah when his fame had spread abroad and he began to feel his greatness. Pride came in; he forgot that he was merely the Lord's representative in the kingdom, and that his first duty as a loyal subject of the Almighty was to hearken to and obey the Divine commands.

Having accomplished great things from a political and military standpoint, Uzziah essayed to a religious distinction. He evidently felt that God was proud of him and of his success and would be very pleased to have him enter the temple after the manner of the priests and offer incense at the Golden Altar. He knew of the rules and regulations governing the temple and its service, but considered himself above them. He would go direct to God and not recognize the priest.

Many successful people fall into the same error of supposing that their success in business or in politics, their brilliancy of mind, or their polish of education are the only requisites in the sight of Jehovah. They feel that if they should go to Church and acknowledge God, God should be very proud to have them and, of course, should give them the first place in everything. This is a mistake. The great King Eternal, "the Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity," has rules and regulations governing all attempts to approach him. There is just the one way of approach and no other.

### **THE MELCHISEDEK PRIEST**

"Oh!" says one – "I see. You wish us to understand that the laity have no access to God, that they must come through the clergy, even as King Uzziah should have approached God through Israel's High Priest! But I deny that the clergy are any more than other mortals. I claim that many of them are less brilliant of mind than myself; that many of them are less educated, and others [R4786 : page 90] totally devoid of business sense. I admit that it may be well enough for the common people to approach God through the clergy, but whenever I approach I do so on the strength of my own personal intelligence and with the realization that the Almighty is glad to have me come to him. When I pray I often say, 'Oh, Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men, nor even as this publican.'" – Luke 18:11.

No, friend, that is not our thought – not the Bible thought, not the lesson we should draw from the Scriptures under consideration. We

must admit that there is no Scriptural authority for a clerical class in the Church of Christ – unless it be the twelve Apostles, St. Paul taking the place of Judas. Those twelve Scripturally rank as a hierarchy – the special mouthpieces of the Great Teacher. We are not intimating that the soul desirous of approaching God must come through the clergy of any denomination; we do emphasize, nevertheless, that there is but the one way of approaching God and that is by and through the Great Advocate whom he has appointed for us – "Jesus Christ the Righteous" – "a Priest for the Age, after the order of Melchisedek" (Heb. 5:6); "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," was his message; "There is none other name given under heaven or amongst men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12), is the Apostle's message.

### **INCENSE AT THE GOLDEN ALTAR**

Those whose eyes of understanding have never been opened to a realization that Jesus is the Divine Appointee for the reconciliation of the world to God may be excused if they approach God in prayer aside from him. Their prayers may be answered to a limited extent, if offered in sincerity, from the heart, and because, as the Apostle intimates, God "winked at" their ignorance of his arrangements.

But as King Uzziah knew of the Divine arrangement, that his prayers as incense could be offered to the Almighty on the "Golden Altar" only by the priest, so those who now have come to a realization of the fact that Jesus is the great antitypical Priest through whom communication with the Father has been opened up would come under condemnation should they intrude into the Divine presence in prayer, otherwise than as provided in the Divine arrangement, as King Uzziah was smitten with leprosy for his presumption and pride.

Leprosy, Scripturally considered, is a type of sin. Uzziah's experiences, therefore, signify, typically, that whoever would approach God aside from his ordained Priest, having a knowledge of the impropriety, would come under Divine sentence as a wilful sinner.

The penalty would be in proportion to the degree of enlightenment previously enjoyed.

### **FOURSCORE VALIANT PRIESTS**

When the king entered the holy of the temple to offer incense at the golden altar the High Priest and eighty of the under-priests followed him, protesting against his sacrifice. Although this was only their duty, it nevertheless marked them as valiant, courageous men, for in ancient times a king had great power. And King Uzziah was feeling his own greatness, and proud of it, and was likely to resent any interference with his kingly prerogatives.

Their words of protest voiced what the king already knew respecting the restrictions attaching to the services of the temple, but they added, "Go out, for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God." True honor, true blessing, true prosperity, cannot be found in opposition to the Divine arrangements. The king's course, therefore, must bring him dishonor. Had he hastened to glorify God, he would have received a blessing, no doubt. But, instead, violation of the Divine Law brought him the curse.

The lesson is a plain one, exemplified by our text and by St. Paul's words, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted; he that exalteth himself shall be abased." (Luke 14:11.) It was not enough, even if the king had good intentions, instead of pride, backing him up. Good intentions should have guided him to a study of the Divine arrangements and promises. Ignorance of the Law is not an excuse. Hence the Apostle's exhortation, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." – 2 Tim. 2:15.

The lesson seems to be one of humility, both for the Church and the world. Some are born humble-minded and others self-conceited. The latter, therefore, are **[R4787 : page 90]** handicapped as respects this grace, though Scripturally advantaged in respect to courage to

battle against present adversities. On the whole our handicaps through imperfections of the flesh are not so unequal as to make it easier for one than for another to enter into the Kingdom under the call of this Gospel Age, for where much is given much is required; and the judgment of the Lord will be according to the heart, the will, the intention, the endeavor, and not according to the flesh and its weaknesses and failures.

Humility is important, not only on its own account, but also because the other graces of the holy Spirit cannot be cultivated without it. The Apostle begins the list of these spiritual graces with *meekness*. How could one be gentle or make good progress in the cultivation of these graces if he were not meek? How could one be patient and submissive in the trials and difficulties of life if not meek? How could one be kind toward opponents and in all things if he were not meek? How could one be patient toward all if he were not meek? How could one have brotherly kindness except through meekness? How could one be Godlike except he possessed meekness? How could one be *loving* in the Scriptural sense without meekness? Along these lines all who will be of the Church will be tested. And meekness and humility must be cultivated and must abound in the heart, in order to enable the cultivation of the other fruits of the Spirit.

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### **IN THEE I TRUST**

Only for thee, Lord, would I live, while here below;  
It is my great delight, thy love to show;  
Use me, then, first as thou seest best –  
Not mine to choose, but mine to trust and rest.

Only to thee would I resign my will, 'tis all  
I have to give, and Lord, it seems so small  
A thing to offer unto thee,  
Who didst lay down thy life for me.

Only to thee, my Lord, I'd come when trials press,  
Assured that thou alone canst comfort best;  
My deepest griefs, I need not to thee tell,  
Thou understandest all, dear Lord, so well!

'Tis only thou canst send the peace which soothes my pain,  
That bids my weeping cease, and sunshine follow rain,  
My every fear remove and doubt dispel, –  
I rest on thee, and know that all is well.

JENNIE G. SHARP.

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