



## LESSON 10 PROSPERITY & DECAY

Israel		Judah	
Jeroboam	931–910	Rehoboam	931–913
Nadab	910–909	Abijah	913–911
Baasha	909–886	Asa	911–870
Elah	886–885		
Zimri	885		
Omri	885–874		
Ahab	874–853	Jehoshaphat	873–848
Ahaziah	853–852		
Joram	852–841	Jehoram	848–841
Jehu	841–814	Ahaziah	841
		Athaliah	841–835
Jehoahaz	814–798	Joash	835–796
Jehoash	798–782	Amaziah	796–767
Jeroboam II	793–753	Uzziah	792–740
Zechariah	753		
Shallum	752		
Menahem	752–742	Jotham	750–731
Pekahiah	742–740		
Pekah	752–732	Ahaz	735–715
Hoshea	732–722	Hezekiah	729–686
		Manasseh	696–642
		Amon	642–640
		Josiah	640–609
		Jehoahaz	609
		Jehoiakim	608–598
		Jehoiachin	598–597
		Zedekiah	597–586

When Abram first arrived at Shechem in Canaan, the Lord appeared to him and promised, “to your descendants I will give this land” (Genesis 12.7). Later, the Lord defined the borders of the land which He would give to Abraham’s descendants: “To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates” (Genesis 15.18). The Lord was faithful to His promise and we read that “Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt” (1Kings 4.21).

However, by this point in our study of the Divided Kingdom the glorious days of Solomon were in the distant past. As king after king in both Israel and Judah led the people into either outright apostasy or half-hearted fealty to the Lord, they steadily lost territory and power. Recently in our study we saw how Hazael took all of Israel’s territory on the eastern side of the Jordan (2Kings 10.32) and how the army of Jehoahaz was reduced to 50 horsemen, 10 chariots and 10,000 infantry (2Kings 13.7).

In this lesson we will study how both Israel and Judah experienced one final period of prosperity, as the Lord blessed them with both peace and wealth. However, these blessings from God did not engender loyalty or faithful-

ness from the rulers and citizens of the kingdoms.

### Geopolitical Situation

To understand how God changed the fortunes of both Israel and Judah we need to examine what was happening in the nations surrounding them,

particularly Assyria and Aram (Syria). Significantly, we've not had much to say about Egypt due to the fact that a series of weak rulers and internal problem had severely weakened this once mighty nation. The Assyrian Empire determined much of what happened in Judah and Israel. We noted in our study of Ahab how Assyria had been expanding its territory during the reign of Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC), leading to an alliance between Israel and Aram. However, that alliance was broken once Assyrian power in the region waned. Aram quickly took advantage of the situation and was a plague to both Israel and Judah, taking territory and decimating their forces (see 2Kings 10.32; 12.17-18; 13.7).

Israel's low point came during the days Jehoahaz, but at that time "the Lord gave Israel a deliverer, so that they escaped from under the hand of the Arameans" (2Kings 13.5). This deliverer was not named in Scripture, but history would point to a new Assyrian king, Adadnirari III (810-783 BC), who resumed Assyria's expansion and handed the Syrians (Aram) a series of defeats. Assyrian power waned once again following the reign of Adadnirari III, but this time Aram was so weakened that it left Israel and Judah free to expand. The reigns of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC) in Israel and Uzziah (792-740) in Judah occurred at this time.

## Jeroboam II's Reign in Israel (2Kings 14.23-29)

Recall that the Lord promised Jehu that 4 generations of his descendants would reign because of his faithfulness in executing God's judgment on Ahab's family and Baal (2Kings 10.30). Jeroboam II (to distinguish from Jeroboam, first king of Israel) was the third descendant to assume the throne of Israel. Note the following as you read the text:

- » "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (vs. 24): important to note that Israel's prosperity was not the result of faithfulness, but because of the Lord's grace (note vss. 26-27).



- » “He restored the border of Israel” (vs. 25): Hamath “was situated in central Syria at the place where the main road from the north crossed the Orontes River, about 133 miles north of Damascus” (ZIB-BC). The Sea of Arabah was the Dead Sea. Note that Jeroboam restored the northern border to that of Solomon’s day (1Kings 8.65).

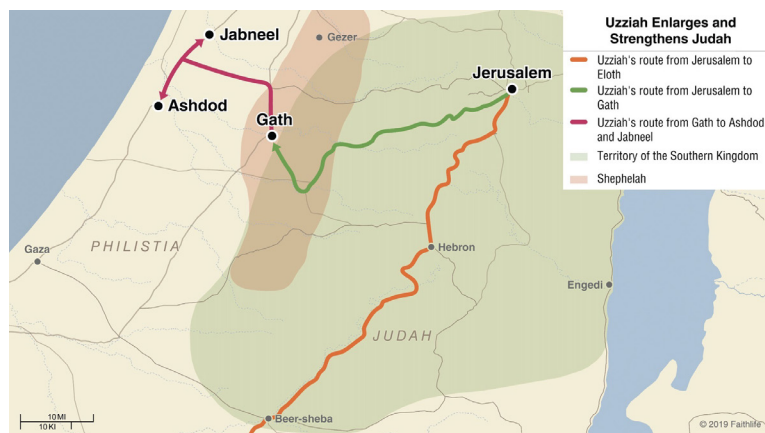


- » Jonah... of Gath-hepher (vs. 25): this prophet is better known to us for his commission to go preach to Ninevah, and we will consider him more in our next lesson. However, God also used him to proclaim his mercy to Israel (vss. 26-27).

## Uzziah’s Reign in Judah (2Kings 14.21-22; 15.1-7; 2Chronicles 26)

Uzziah’s grandfather (Joash) and father (Amaziah) had both begun their reigns by faithfully following the Lord, yet rebelled against Him later in their reigns. Tragically, Uzziah would continue this pattern. Note the following as you read the text:

- » “sixteen years old, and made him king...” (2Chronicles 26.1): “Uzziah was apparently made king in the aftermath of Amaziah’s imprisonment in Samaria and had a lengthy coregency with Amaziah (the first twenty-five years out of his fifty-five-year reign). In addition, Uzziah coreigned with his son Jotham during the final decade of his reign (ca. 750–740 B.C.)” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » Elath (2Chronicles 26.2): located on the Gulf of Aqaba (the Red Sea) and part of Solomon’s kingdom (1Kings 9.26). “It stood at the southern end of the great King’s Highway that ran all the way north through the Transjordan to Damascus and facilitated trade connections especially with southern Arabia.” (ZIBBC)



- » “continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah” (2Chronicles 26.5): likely refers to the son of Jehoida who was killed by Joash (2Chronicles 24.17-22). Uzziah would have been 11 years old when this prophet was murdered.
- » Uzziah’s prosperity (2Chronicles

26.10-15): as you read the various ways in which Uzziah prospered, consider 1Samuel 8.10-18. Was the king prospering at the expense of the people?

- » “he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense” (2Chronicles 26.16): In his pride Uzziah attempted to assume the role of priest, even as Jeroboam had done (see 1Kings 13.1). This was a direct violation of God’s Law (Numbers 3.10; 16.40).
- » “leprosy broke out on his forehead” (2Chronicles 26.19): this is not the only time in Scripture that leprosy was a punishment for sin (see 2Kings 5.25-27). As such, physical uncleanness (Lev. 13.46) would match the spiritual uncleanness. This probably contributed to the notion that all leprosy was the result of sin (see Luke 5.12).

## **Physical Prosperity, But Moral Decay**

We’ve already seen in our study that physical prosperity did not result in faithfulness. The severity of the problem is seen in the messages of the prophets. We read that Isaiah prophesied in the days of Uzziah (2Chronicles 26.21), and while we will consider his work and that of his contemporary Micah in future lessons, let’s note a few of their messages as we conclude this lesson.

1. Isaiah noted the wealth of the people, but that wealth would be taken away (Isaiah 3.18ff).
2. Of great concern was how the wealthy were oppressing the poor among them (Isaiah 1.23; 3.13-15; 5.8; 10.1-2; Micah 3.1-3).
3. Even though the borders of the kingdom were expanded by Jeroboam II and Uzziah, both prophets looked forward to a greater Kingdom (Isaiah 2.2-4; Micah 4.1-8).