

SECOND KINGS

Chapter 15

Azariah Reigns in Judah

In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, began to reign. **2 He was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 3 And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 4 Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away. The people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. 5 And the LORD touched the king, so that he was a leper to the day of his death, and he lived in a separate house And Jotham the king's son was over the household, governing the people of the land. 6 Now the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 7 And Azariah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David, and Jotham his son reigned in his place.**

15:1–7 Azariah. Long reign of Judah's next king (52 years), also called Uzziah (vv 13, 30, 34), is allotted no more space than his contemporary Jeroboam II in Israel received (14:23–29). In Azariah's case also, there is no record of his political and military activity, even though he extended the borders of Judah so that the territory of the two kingdoms at this time approximated the size of David's empire (14:22; 2Ch 26:6–15). Though the writer cites material prosperity as an example of spiritual blessing, as happens with Solomon (1Ki 3), he consistently leaps over examples of material prosperity to press his greater case: the Lord of history keeps His covenant promises. (TLSB)

15:1 *twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam.* 767 B.C., based on dating the beginning of Jeroboam's co-regency with Jehoash in 793. (CSB)

Azariah ... began to reign. He began his sole reign, after a 24-year co-regency with his father Amaziah. (His actual years were one less than his official years.) (CSB)

15:2 *fifty-two years.* 792–740 B.C. (but he was co-regent with his father Amaziah 792–767). (CSB)

15:5 *he was a leper.* A punishment for usurping the priestly function of burning incense on the altar in the temple (see 2Ch 26:16–21; cf. Lev 13:46). (CSB)

touched. Or, “struck,” implying punishment. *a leper.* Account in 2Ch 26 states that the Lord touched him with this disease because he usurped the priestly function of offering incense in the temple. (TLSB)

was over the household...governing the people of the land. Jotham ruled for his father for the remainder of Azariah's life (750–740 B.C.). (CSB)

15:6 *all he did.* A more detailed account of Azariah's accomplishments is found in 2Ch 26:1–15. (CSB)

15:7 *Jotham his son succeeded him.* For the reign of Jotham see vv. 32–38. (CSB)

15:1–7 Azariah prospers with God's blessing but also faces His judgment, which brings isolation. Prosperity or sin can divide you from the Lord and His people. Repent daily and focus on the Word, which will prosper you in God's mercy, wisdom, and love. Rejoice in your freedom to gather with the

saints for prayer and to receive the Word and the Sacraments, the greatest treasures. • O Lord, whether my house is full or bare, fill my heart with love of Your Word and my mouth with praise for Your saving name. Amen. (TLSB)

Zechariah Reigns in Israel

8 In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of Jeroboam reigned over Israel in Samaria six months. 9 And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin. 10 Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him and struck him down at Ibleam and put him to death and reigned in his place. 11 Now the rest of the deeds of Zechariah, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. 12 (This was the promise of the LORD that he gave to Jehu, “Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.” And so it came to pass.)

15:8 *thirty-eighth year of Azariah.* 753 B.C. (CSB)

Zechariah. Not the prophet who lived c 225 years later (Zec 1:1). (TLSB)

15:8–31 Covers 22 years of Israelite history. During these turbulent times, following the vigorous reign of Jeroboam II, no fewer than five kings laid claim to the throne. One maintained himself only a month; three were assassinated; only one succeeded his father. (TLSB)

15:9 *sins of Jeroboam.* See 1Ki 12:26–32; 13:33–34; 14:16. (CSB)

15:10 *struck him down.* Zechariah was the last descendant of Jehu, fulfilling the Word of the Lord that Jehu’s sons were to sit on the throne of Israel to “the fourth generation” (10:30). (TLSB)

15:12 *promise of the LORD... came to pass.* With the downfall of Jehu’s dynasty, the northern kingdom entered a period of political instability (see Hos 1:4). The remaining five kings of the northern kingdom were all assassinated with the exception of Menahem, who reigned ten years, and Hoshea, who was imprisoned by the Assyrians. From the strength and wealth of the reign of Jeroboam II, the decline and fall of the northern kingdom was swift. (CSB)

15:8–12 During Zechariah’s reign, the Lord returns to judgment against Israel, ending Jehu’s dynasty, as He had said. Earthly prosperity and power are at the Lord’s discretion, to add or remove according to His purposes. Therefore do not entrust your future to your strength or the strength of your family. The Lord alone is your strength and salvation. • O Lord, look upon me with favor, and preserve my life and family by grace. Amen. (TLSB)

Shallum Reigns in Israel

13 Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah[c] king of Judah, and he reigned one month in Samaria. 14 Then Menahem the son of Gadi came up from Tirzah and came to Samaria, and he struck down Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and put him to death and reigned in his place. 15 Now the rest of the deeds of Shallum, and the conspiracy that he made, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. 16 At that time Menahem sacked Tiphshah and all who were in it and its territory from Tirzah on, because they did not open it to him. Therefore he sacked it, and he ripped open all the women in it who were pregnant.

15:13–14 Shallum, Zechariah’s assassin, was struck down by another conspirator, Menahem, who put down all resistance with the most barbarous atrocities (v 16; Hos 13:16; Am 1:13). (TLSB)

15:13 *thirty-ninth year of Uzziah.* 752 B.C. Uzziah is another name for Azariah. (CSB)

15:14 *Menahem ... up from Tirzah to Samaria.* It is likely that Menahem was the commander of a military garrison at Tirzah, the former capital of the northern kingdom (see 1Ki 14:17; 15:21, 33). (CSB)

Tirzah. Onetime capital of Israel, replaced by Samaria (1Ki 16:24). (TLSB)

15:15 *conspiracy.* To usurp the throne. (TLSB)

15:16 *Tiphseh.* There was a Tiphseh located far to the north of Hamath (see 14:25) on the Euphrates River (see 1Ki 4:24). It is unlikely that this was the city intended. Some interpreters prefer the reading “Tappuah” of the Septuagint. Tappuah was a city on the border between Ephraim and Manasseh (Jos 16:8; 17:7–8). Perhaps there was a Tiphseh in Israel not otherwise mentioned. (CSB)

Allotted to Ephraim (Jsh 17:8), this city was located c 15 mi S of Tirzah. (TLSB)

did not open. They would not surrender to his reign. (TLSB)

ripped open all the women who were pregnant. Brutality, intended to destroy the city’s next generation. (TLSB)

Menahem Reigns in Israel

17 In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem the son of Gadi began to reign over Israel, and he reigned ten years in Samaria. **18** And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart all his days from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin. **19** Pul the king of Assyria came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that he might help him to confirm his hold on the royal power. **20** Menahem exacted the money from Israel, that is, from all the wealthy men, fifty shekels of silver from every man, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back and did not stay there in the land. **21** Now the rest of the deeds of Menahem and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? **22** And Menahem slept with his fathers, and Pekahiah his son reigned in his place.

15:17 *thirty-ninth year of Azariah.* 752 B.C. (CSB)

Menahem. Mentioned alongside other kings in a tribute list for Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria. (TLSB)

ten years. 752–742. (CSB)

15:18 *sins of Jeroboam.* See 1Ki 12:26–32; 13:33–34; 14:16. (CSB)

15:19 *Pul.* The Babylonian name (see 1Ch 5:26) of the Assyrian ruler Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C. (CSB)

Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser (v 29), known in Babylon as Pul, reigned 744–728 BC. With his help, Menahem was able “to confirm his hold on the royal power,” ending the bloody rivalry for the throne. Six years after Pul’s death, the Assyrian army was to capture Samaria and crush Israel’s independence. (TLSB)

came against the land. Assyrian annals of Tiglath-Pileser III indicate that he marched west with his army in 743 and took tribute from, among others, Carchemish, Hamath, Tyre, Byblos, Damascus, and Menahem of Samaria. (CSB)

thousand talents. This was an enormous sum of money. (CSB)

might help him to confirm his hold. It appears that as a usurper Menahem still felt insecure on the throne. The opposition to his rule may have come from those following the leadership of Pekah, who favored an alliance with the Arameans of Damascus in order to resist the Assyrian threat (see note on v. 27). Hosea denounced the policy of seeking aid from the Assyrians and predicted that it would fail (Hos 5:13–15). (CSB)

15:20 *exacted the money.* A property tax. (TLSB)

fifty shekels. A simple calculation reveals that it would require approximately 60,000 men of means to provide the 1,000 talents of tribute. This gives some indication of the prosperity the northern kingdom had enjoyed during the time of Jeroboam II. (CSB)

To make up the required sum of “a thousand talents of silver” (v 19), more than 50,000 “wealthy men” had to each contribute c \$30. This general prosperity was soon to end. (TLSB)

15:21 *years.* 742–740. (CSB)

15:17–22 Assyria, the kingdom by which the Lord will eventually punish Israel with exile, now appears and takes tribute. Israel would fall within a generation’s time. God’s people should not put off repentance. Instead, learn to lead your children and grandchildren in a life of repentance, based on God’s Law and promised mercy in Christ. For the Lord is merciful to a thousand generations of those who love Him. • Send now Your mercy, dear Father. Please do not delay. Turn our hearts, and draw us to You in Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

Pekahiah Reigns in Israel

23 In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and he reigned two years. 24 And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin. 25 And Pekah the son of Remaliah, his captain, conspired against him with fifty men of the people of Gilead, and struck him down in Samaria, in the citadel of the king's house with Argob and Arieh; he put him to death and reigned in his place. 26 Now the rest of the deeds of Pekahiah and all that he did, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

15:23–25 Conspiracies and infighting continued in the Northern Kingdom. After occupying the throne for only two years, Pekahiah lost his life in another military coup. Pekah, who conspired against him, in turn was struck down by Hoshea (v 30), the last of the Israelite kings. (TLSB)

15:23 *fiftieth year of Azariah.* 742 B.C. (CSB)

two years. 742–740. (CSB)

15:24 *sins of Jeroboam.* See 1Ki 12:26–32; 13:33–34; 14:16. (CSB)

15:25 *his captain.* Pekah was probably the ranking official in the Transjordan provinces, but his allegiance to Menahem and Pekahiah may well have been more apparent than real (see note on v. 27). (CSB)

This was a military coup. (TLSB)

conspired against him. Differences over foreign policy probably played an important role in fomenting Pekah's revolution. Pekahiah undoubtedly followed the policy of his father Menahem in seeking Assyria's friendship (see v. 20). Pekah advocated friendly relations with the Arameans of Damascus in order to counter potential Assyrian aggression (see 16:1–9; Isa 7:1–2, 4–6). (CSB)

Gilead. East of the Jordan, where Assyria would threaten first. The Gileadites likely served as the king's bodyguards. *citadel.* In this part of "the king's house," Zimri, an earlier contender for the throne, also died a violent death (1Ki 16:18). (TLSB)

Argob and Arieh. Aides who died with their king. (TLSB)

15:23–26 Under pressure from Assyria, the Israelites once again conspire against their king, Pekahiah, and establish yet another vulnerable rule. When times are difficult, you may feel tempted to turn on those close to you, but that will only bring further despair. Instead, turn to the Lord in prayer, requesting peace and unity through the Gospel, which unites God's people through Baptism in His name and communion in His Supper. • Lord, remove from us every conspiracy for human power. Move us to pray for one another and to support one another in peace. Amen. (TLSB)

Pekah Reigns in Israel

27 In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and he reigned twenty years. 28 And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin. 29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and he carried the people captive to Assyria. 30 Then Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah and struck him down and put him to death and reigned in his place, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. 31 Now the rest of the acts of Pekah and all that he did, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

15:27 *fifty-second year of Azariah.* 740 B.C. (CSB)

twenty years. 752–732, based on the assumptions (which the data seem to require) that Pekah had established in Transjordan virtually a rival government to that of Menahem when Menahem assassinated Shallum (see notes on vv. 17, 19, 25), and that the number of regnal years given here includes this period of rival rule. (CSB)

Chronology of this period presents particularly serious difficulties. (TLSB)

15:28 *sins of Jeroboam.* See 1Ki 12:26–32; 13:33–34; 14:16. (CSB)

15:29 Pekah and his Syrian ally Rezin, whose land formed a buffer state between Israel and Assyria, tried to put a stop to Tiglath-pileser's conquests by forcing Judah into an alliance against their common enemy. Despite this maneuver, briefly noted in v 37 and further explained in 16:5–17:5, Tiglath-pileser overran Israelite cities and territories on both sides of the Jordan. (TLSB)

Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came. The historical background for this attack is found in 16:5–9; 2Ch 28:16–21; Isa 7:1–17. (CSB)

Iion ... Naphtali. Over 150 years earlier Ben-Hadad I of Damascus had taken this same territory from the northern kingdom in response to an appeal by a king of Judah. (CSB)

carried the people captive to Assyria. See 1Ch 5:26. The forced exile of Israelites from their homeland was a fulfillment of the covenant curse. (CSB)

Deportation of inhabitants from invaded territories, initiated by Tiglath-pileser, was designed to break their resistance to the conqueror. (TLSB)

15:30 Samaria and the adjacent area retained some semblance of independence under the next Israelite king, Hoshea. However, he ruled only by the will of his Assyrian overlord (17:3). Tiglath-pileser III recorded that he placed Hoshea on the throne and exacted 10 talents of gold and 1,000 talents of silver from him as tribute. (TLSB)

Hoshea ... made a conspiracy against Pekah. Hoshea probably represented the faction in the northern kingdom that favored cooperation with Assyria rather than resistance. In one of his annals Tiglath-Pileser III claims to have placed Hoshea on the throne of the northern kingdom and to have taken ten talents of gold and 1,000 talents of silver as tribute from him. (CSB)

twentieth year of Jotham. 732 B.C. Reference is to his 20th official year, which was his 19th actual year. (CSB)

15:27–31 Assyria begins to dismantle Israel during the reign of Pekah and carries away the first captives. The bondage the Israelites experienced in Egypt returns to them because they reject God's Word. In our lives too, rejection of God's Word leads to bondage. Through the Word of Christ, God sets us free. • Deliver me, O Savior, and grant me life according to Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

Jotham Reigns in Judah

32 In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign. 33 He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok. 34 And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah had done. 35 Nevertheless, the high places were not removed. The people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD. 36 Now the rest of the acts of Jotham and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 37 In those days the LORD began to send Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. 38 Jotham slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father, and Ahaz his son reigned in his place.

15:32 *second year of Pekah.* 750 B.C. (CSB)

Jotham. Before continuing the story of Hoshea and the end of Israel (ch 17), the author resumes the account of Judah's kings where he left it in 15:1–7. Jotham, the first of these kings, receives the same kind of short notice accorded all kings mentioned in this chapter (vv 32–38). (TLSB)

15:33 *sixteen years.* 750–735 B.C. Jotham was co-regent with his father 750–740. Jotham’s reign was in some sense terminated in 735, and his son Ahaz took over. However, Jotham continued to live until at least 732. (CSB)

Zadok. Famous name, elsewhere associated with the priesthood, though no further details are given about this individual. (TLSB)

15:37 This parenthetical statement concerning Jotham’s reign supports the idea of an overlap between the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz (see note on v. 33), since 16:5–12; 2Ch 28:5–21; Isa 7:1–17 all place the major effort of Rezin and Pekah in the time of Ahaz. (CSB)

Pressure on Judah by this northern coalition began to build up during Jotham’s reign; its full thrust came in the days of his son Ahaz (16:5–17:5). Syria and Israel cajoled Judah to join them against Assyria. (Assyrian records show that Rezin was the last true Syrian ruler at Damascus. He was already a vassal to Assyria.) Pressure comes in the form of temptation for Judah to trust in human resources rather than in the Lord. (TLSB)

15:32–38 King Jotham of Judah faces pressure from the kings of Syria and Israel, who tempt him to focus on human alliances and strength rather than on the Lord. God, of course, is not opposed to alliances, friendships, or trust between His subjects. Indeed, He calls us to faithfulness in such relationships. Yet, He places the greatest importance on trust in His salvation. He is our greatest ally against misplaced faith and false saviors. • Jesus, author and perfecter of my faith, lead me to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. Amen. (TLSB)