

2 Chronicles 24 • The Rise and Fall of King Joash

Introduction

Jehoshaphat had been a pretty good king for the most part, but he made some grave errors. One of them was to form a military and political alliance with King Ahab of the northern kingdom of Israel, the infamous and notorious husband of Jezebel [See 18:1]. Jehoshaphat then took Ahab and Jezebel's daughter Athaliah as a wife for his firstborn son Jehoram (Joram). When Jehoshaphat died, Jehoram had all his brothers (6) killed to ensure his ascendancy to the throne. (Did Athaliah have anything to do with that?) That, therefore, leaves only one son to continue the Davidic line through Solomon – the wicked Jehoram himself– and it says he walked in the ways of his father-in-law Ahab (21:6).

The Lord allowed the Edomites to invade Judah that same year. Even a prophetic letter from the prophet Elijah was not enough to cause him to amend his ways. He died an ugly and painful death after having been king on his own for only a little over a year. After Jehoram died, his son Ahaziah was made king and, guided by his wicked mother Athaliah, was equally wicked (22:3). In his first battle, though, he was mortally wounded and eventually killed by Jehu, king of Israel.

¹⁰Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she rose and destroyed all the royal offspring of the house of Judah. ¹¹But Jehoshabeath the king's daughter took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and placed him and his nurse in the bedroom. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah), hid him from Athaliah so that she would not put him to death. ¹²He was hidden with them in the house of God six years while Athaliah reigned over the land.

[Read 22:10-12]

Q: Who is Athaliah and what is the background for why she set out to destroy the “royal offspring”?

A: Athaliah saw her power slipping away, so she put to death all of Ahaziah's sons (her own grandchildren), including others of the royal household. Fortunately, God intervened and moved the heart of Ahaziah's sister Jehoshabeath to rescue Joash, hiding him and his nurse in the temple for 6 years under the care of the High Priest Jehoiada, who was also the husband of Jehoshabeath. This means that for a period of six years, a pagan woman (Jezebel was Canaanite) ruled Judah, though not without the presence of someone from David's line.

Point: The historical fact of interest here is that the Davidic line through Solomon came within one child of being exterminated; the spiritual fact of interest is that like everyone else involved, Joash made his own decisions regarding God and equally reaped what was sown.

Note: Chapter 23:1-15 tells how Jehoiada made Joash king and had Athaliah killed outside the temple compound, and verses 16-21 records how he rid Judah of Baal worship. (Reading of chapter 23 optional.)

[Read 24:1-3]

¹Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Zibiah from Beersheba. ²Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. ³Jehoiada took two wives for him, and he became the father of sons and daughters.

Q: What was the key to Joash being a “good” king?

A: Although he “*did what was right in the sight of the LORD*”, the key phrase is at the end of v.2, “*all the days of Jehoiada the priest.*” It wasn't a life-long commitment.

Q: Why would the scribe Ezra, when writing Chronicles after the exile, want to make a point of Jehoiada's actions and influence?

A: Ezra, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, was anxious to tell his people how important the Levites and priesthood were to preserving their national identity and God's blessings, by keeping them from intermarrying and from idolatry, core problems which led to God's judgment.

⁴Now it came about after this that Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD.

⁵He gathered the priests and Levites and said to them, “Go out to the cities of Judah and collect money from all Israel to repair the house of your God annually, and you shall do the matter quickly.”

But the Levites did not act quickly. ⁶So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief priest and said to him, “Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and from Jerusalem the levy fixed by Moses the servant of the LORD on the congregation of Israel for the tent of the testimony?” ⁷For the sons of the wicked Athaliah had broken into the house of God and even used the holy things of the house of the Lord for the Baals.

⁸So the king commanded, and they made a chest and set it outside by the gate of the house of the LORD. ⁹They made a proclamation in Judah and Jerusalem to bring to the LORD the levy fixed by Moses the servant of God on Israel in the wilderness. ¹⁰All the officers and all the people rejoiced and brought in their levies and dropped them into the chest until they had finished. ¹¹It came about whenever the chest was brought in to the king’s officer by the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, then the king’s scribe and the chief priest’s officer would come, empty the chest, take it, and return it to its place. Thus they did daily and collected much money.

¹²The king and Jehoiada gave it to those who did the work of the service of the house of the LORD; and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the LORD, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the LORD. ¹³So the workmen labored, and the repair work progressed in their hands, and they restored the house of God according to its specifications and strengthened it.

¹⁴When they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada; and it was made into utensils for the house of the LORD, utensils for the service and the burnt offering, and pans and utensils of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada.

[Read 24:4-14]

Q: What was one of the key projects on which Joash and Jehoiada collaborated in?

A: The rebuilding and refurbishing of the temple, the key place of worship for the Israelites. Notice throughout the readings for this week the dynamic interplay between prophet, priest and king. In this instance, there were blessings on the nation because the king followed the guidance of the priesthood.

Q: Why do you suppose as stated in v.10 that “all the people rejoiced” in their payment of the tax?

A: In v.7 we’re told that under Athaliah any treasure or monies for the temple were stolen and mis-used; the rejoicing is a confirmation of the right heart and intent of Joash’s spiritual leadership.

Application: *The Bible teaches that our giving is an act of worship on the same level as prayer, singing, etc. Perhaps we need to consider what is being done with those resources in order to raise our own level of rejoicing when we present our offerings for His kingdom.*

Q: Did they receive enough to complete the work on the temple?

A: They received even more so that they could restore the things needed to make the temple operate. (v.14)

Q: How long did the temple continue to operate correctly?

A: “...all the days of Jehoiada.” (v.14)

¹⁷But after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and bowed down to the king, and the king listened to them.

¹⁸They abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols; so wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their guilt. ¹⁹Yet He sent prophets to them to bring them back to the LORD; though they testified against them, they would not listen.

²⁰Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people and said to them, “Thus God has said, ‘Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you.’”

²¹So they conspired against him and at the command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the LORD. ²²Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which his father Jehoiada had shown him, but he murdered his son. And as he died he said, “May the LORD see and avenge!”

²³Now it happened at the turn of the year that the army of the Arameans came up against him; and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, destroyed all the officials of the people from among the people, and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus. ²⁴Indeed the army of the Arameans came with a small number of men; yet the LORD delivered a very great army into their hands, because they had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.

²⁵When they had departed from him (for they left him very sick), his own servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest, and murdered 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.

[Read 24:17-22]

Q: What happened to Joash after Jehoiada's death?

A: The key is verse 17: he began taking counsel from “the officials of Judah.” Obviously some influenced him by convincing him that in order to keep peace with the people they needed to reintroduce “Asherim and the idols.”

Q: What had Jehoiada the high priest failed to do in his raising Joash?

A: Obviously he had been a “father” to him (v. 22) and had over-protected him to the extent that Joash was not well-equipped to stand on his own two feet. Therefore, when Jehoiada was no longer around, Joash took counsel from whoever could influence him most. In this case, his peers.

Point of interest: Verse 19 refers to “prophets” sent to Joash to bring Judah back to the Lord. This verse introduces the following verses concerning Zechariah; but one of the “prophets” was also Joel.

Q: Who was the prophet sent to prophesy against Judah?

A: His name was Zechariah. But this is not the same Zechariah of our minor prophets in the Bible. This Zechariah was Jehoiada's grandson, whereas the one in the Bible is the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo. Nor is this the same Zechariah in 26:5.

Q: What was the king's response to Zechariah's rebuke?

A: They killed him in the temple between the temple and the altar. This incident is referred to by Jesus in Matthew 23:34, 35 (and Luke 11:51). Why does Jesus say that they killed the prophets from “Abel to...Zechariah”, with Abel being the first and Zechariah being the last? Because in the Hebrew Bible, 2 Chronicles is the last book. Therefore, in the Bible that Jesus read, Zechariah would have been the last prophet killed. Jesus is saying “from the first to the last murder in the Bible.”

[Read 24:23-25]

Applications:

1. What lessons do we learn about putting the Lord first, regardless what we may have done in the church?
2. What lessons do we learn about parenting?
3. What lessons do we learn about how well we receive “truth” in the form of evaluation or constructive criticism?
4. What lessons do we learn about discipleship and what we pass on to others?