

Lessons from Old Testament Kings - Joash

Reading: Romans 15:4 “... whatever things were written before were written for our learning

Introduction:

This lesson is a continuation of the series where we are looking at some of the Old Testament Kings, both good and bad, and drawing some practical lessons from both their lives and events that occurred during their reigns, in order to help us in our walk with God (**Ephesians 5:8**).

In this lesson, we will be looking at King Joash, also known as Jehoash. He was the eighth king of Judah after the nation had split during the reign of Rehoboam – refer to Annex A of this lesson. The scriptures summarise his life by saying; “*Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him*”¹ (**2 Kings 12:2**). But once Jehoiada had died, Joash turned away from the Lord, and the people went into idolatry (**2 Chronicles 24:15-18**).

LESSON

1) The background leading up to the reign of Joash

a) The introduction of idolatry into Judah

Idolatry had been introduced into Judah during the reigns of Rehoboam and Abijam, the first two kings in Judah after the nation had split (**1 Kings 14:21-15:3**) But the next king, Asa, did much to restore the nation back to the Lord. He removed the idols and the perverted persons² from the land. However, some of the high places³ still remained (**1 Kings 15:9-15**).

Jehoshaphat became king of Judah after the death of Asa. He was a godly king, but he also made peace with Ahab, the king of Israel (**1 Kings 22:41-44**). In fact, they became related through the marriage of Jehoshaphat’s son, Jehoram, to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab (**2 Chronicles 18:1; 21:5-6; 2 Kings 8:25-26**) – see Annex B of this lesson. This relationship had a bad influence on Judah, as Israel was already steeped in idolatry, particularly under the reign of Ahab and Jezebel (**1 Kings 16:29-33**).

The influence from the house of Ahab contributed to Judah turning back to idolatry after the death of Jehoshaphat (**2 Chronicles 21:4-6; 22:1-3**). For a period covering about thirteen years⁴, kings Jehoram, Ahaziah and queen Athaliah all followed in the ways of the house of Ahab (**2 Kings 8:16-18; 25-27; 11:1**).

b) Joash’s protection and subsequent coronation

When Athaliah usurped the throne, she had all of the royal heirs destroyed (**2 Kings 11:1**). At the time, Joash was just an infant, so Jehosheba, brother

¹ Biblical quotes are from the New King James Version (NKJV) Bible.

² NKJV footnote says, “*one practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals*”.

³ **2 Chronicles 14:3** appears to contradict **2 Chronicles 15:17** and **1 Kings 15:14** regarding the removal of the high places. However, the answer is that Asa removed the pagan high places, but not the high places which were devoted to God – ref: “The Books of History” by James E Smith, Third printing 2005, page 489.

⁴ Jehoram = 8 years (**2 Kings 8:17**), but part of that over-lapped with Jehoshaphat’s reign; Ahaziah = 1 year (**2 Kings 8:26**); Athaliah = 6 years (**2 Kings 11:3**).

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of the previous king (Ahaziah), took him and his nurse away and hid them in the house of the Lord for six years (**2 Kings 11:2-3**). It is worth noting that Jehosheba⁵ was married to Jehoiada, the priest (**2 Chronicles 22:11**).

When Joash was seven years old, Jehoiada the priest arranged for a coup with the “captains of hundreds”⁶, the bodyguards, escorts and Levites. Joash was proclaimed king, and Athaliah was taken out and killed (**2 Chronicles 23:1-15**). Jehoiada then made a covenant with the people of Judah that they should return to the Lord. The people agreed, and destroyed the images and priests of Baal. Jehoiada then set things back in order in the Temple (**2 Chronicles 23:16-21**).

2) The reign of Joash

a) Joash follows God and restores the Temple

It would appear that during the years of idolatry, the maintenance of the Temple had lapsed to the point where it was now in need of major repairs. After Joash had grown up, he “... *set his heart on repairing the house of the Lord.*” (**2 Chronicles 24:4**). His first method was to have the priests and Levites travel the land to collect money for the repairs. This money was to come from what the people were obliged to give⁷ in accordance with the law of Moses, plus any additional money that they wished to donate to the House of the Lord. However, by the 23rd year of Joash’s reign, not much had been done. It appears that the priests and Levites didn’t have their heart in it, for they were in no hurry to do what Joash had commanded (**2 Kings 12:4-6; 2 Chronicles 24:5-6**).

Joash then tried a new approach. Instead of the priests going around the country to collect the money and doing the repairs, he commanded that a chest with a hole in the top be placed beside the altar, near the entrance of the Temple. The money that was required to be given to the Lord, as per the law of Moses, was to be brought to Jerusalem by the people and placed in the chest. The people gladly did this. Money was collected day by day in abundance and given to the tradesmen who were doing the actual repairs. Finally, the house of the Lord was restored to its original condition. (**2 Kings 12:9-12; 2 Chronicles 24:8-13**).

Once the building repairs were finished, the rest of the money was used to make the articles for the Lord’s house – “... *articles for serving and offering, spoons and vessels of gold and silver ...*” (**2 Chronicles 24:14**).

Of special interest is the trustworthiness of the tradesmen and those handling the money. In **2 Kings 12:15** we read;

“Moreover, they did not require an account from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to be paid to workmen, for they dealt faithfully.”

These men had a job to do, and they went about it in a trustworthy manner. After all, they were restoring the Lord’s house. They could be relied upon not

⁵ Jehosheba is also called Jehoshabeath in **2 Chronicles 22:11**.

⁶ Possibly military leaders, depending on your version of Bible – see **2 Chronicles 23:14**.

⁷ For example, the money to be paid when a person consecrates someone to the Lord - **Leviticus 27:2-8**.

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to waste or abuse the funds that were given to them. They didn't need someone looking over their shoulder to make sure that they did the job properly and that the money was used wisely.

b) Joash turns away from following the Lord

In **2 Chronicles 24:2** we read that "*Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.*". But after living a full life of 130 years, Jehoiada died. Unfortunately, with his passing, his positive influence for the Lord also died⁸. The people turned away from following the Lord and returned to serving idols (**2 Chronicles 24:15-18**).

God's wrath came upon Judah, and He sent prophets to the people to try and bring them back to Him. But the people would not listen. Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, also spoke to them and gave them this verdict from God; "*Because you have forsaken the Lord, He has forsaken you.*" (**2 Chronicles 24:19-20**).

The people conspired against Zechariah, and at the command of the king, they stoned him⁹ in the court of the house of the Lord (**2 Chronicles 24:21**). Joash, the one who as a child had been protected from queen Athaliah's wrath by Jehoiada and his wife Jehosheba, was now commanding that Jehoiada's son be killed for speaking the word of God.

"Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son;"
(**2 Chronicles 24:22**).

God subsequently used Syria to punish Judah for its unfaithfulness. Even though they only had a small company of men, the Syrians were able to defeat the much larger army of Judah. Joash himself was badly wounded. The Syrians left after Joash sent to their king all the gold and other dedicated items from the Temple (**2 Kings 12:17-18; 2 Chronicles 24:23-25**). Eventually, Joash's own servants conspired against him and killed him because of the blood of Zechariah.

3) Lessons for us

I want to draw the following three lessons from the life and times of Joash;

a) Be grateful for what God and others have done for you.

Joash appears to have been ungrateful for what God and Jehoiada had done for him. Jehosheba and Jehoiada had saved Joash from being killed during the purge of Athaliah. At danger to themselves, they had kept him hidden for six years (**2 Kings 11:1-21**). There was also the hand of God in this, because God had promised David that he would have one of his descendants on the throne forever (**Psalms 89:35-37; 2 Kings 8:19**). Joash was the only remaining link for David at that time.

But later on when Judah had gone into apostasy (again), Joash commanded that Jehoiada's son be killed after he had proclaimed God's judgement on the nation (**2 Chronicles 24:20-21**).

⁸ A similar thing happened after the days of Joshua – see **Judges 2:7-11**.

⁹ Consider the words of Jesus in **Matthew 23:37**.

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In **Ephesians 5:20** we read; "... *giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ...*". We need to be thankful; we need to be grateful, for everything we have, and for what others have done to help us. For example;

- are you grateful for whatever education you have had?
- are you grateful that you can readily buy good food at a local store?
- are you grateful that we live in a free society?
- are you grateful that we can meet here freely this morning to offer praise and thanks to God?
- are you grateful for whatever good health you may have?
- are you grateful for the sacrifices your parents have made for you in raising you?

But most of all, are you grateful for what God has done for you, and continues to do, in saving your soul?

So many times we take things for granted. We don't think about them because they are "always there", or those who do things for us have always done them for us. We often don't appreciate something until we no longer have it.

Let each of us be more aware, more observant, of how blessed we really are in both the little things and also the big things. Let your gratitude be evident in the way you live your life;

- acknowledge and say thanks when someone does you a good deed,
- take care of things that people may give you,
- be ready to help others if the opportunity presents itself, and,
- thank God each day for His blessings (**Ephesians 1:3-14**).

b) Our faithfulness is not to be dependent on who is around us

Joash was faithful to the Lord, but only while Jehoiada the priest was around. Once Jehoiada had died, Joash fell away from the Lord (**2 Kings 12:2**).

I have mentioned in other lessons that it is good to have people around us who have a positive influence on us to remain faithful to the Lord. But we need to make sure that our faith is not based on the faithfulness of other people – our faith is to be based on the Word of God (**Romans 10:17**). If our faith is based on the faithfulness of others, what do we do if those other people fall away, or are no longer around?

Philippians 2:12 says; "... *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...*". This verse is not saying that we have to come up with our own version of a way to salvation - there is only one plan, one doctrine, one faith (**Galatians 1:8-9; Ephesians 4:5**). Nor is it saying that we have to work for our salvation (because Christians are already saved by grace - **Ephesians 2:8-9**). Rather, it is saying that each of us, as individuals, are to do those things that are befitting children of God; actively living a faithful life to the Lord (**Ephesians 5:8**) – someone else cannot do it for us¹⁰.

- with God's help, we are to fight our own battles against temptation (**Romans 7:19-25; 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:13-16; 4:7**).

¹⁰ Other people may be able to help and encourage you, but the primary responsibility for you remaining faithful remains with you.

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- as well as studying God’s Word collectively, we are to spend our own time with the Word, meditating on it, and understanding what God requires of us (**Ephesians 5:8-10; 1 Timothy 4:13, 16**).
- we are to work at removing from our lives those actions and attitudes that are contrary to the ways of God, and to be putting on the “new man” (**Ephesians 4:17-24f.f.**).
- we are to work at changing from our sinful ways and replacing them with works of righteousness so that we become more like Christ (**Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 2:20; Mathew 5:48**).
- and we are to do this while having a reverence, an awe, and respect for God.

c) We need to be faithful and trustworthy in whatever works we do.

The workmen given the task of restoring the Temple did not have to give account of how they spent the money because they were faithful and trustworthy (**2 Kings 12:15**). They could be relied upon to be honest in their work, and to do it to the best of their ability.

There are many different tasks that we do in life – be they at home, at secular work, in the community, or even in the church. Some are enjoyable, others, well, we simply do them because they need to be done. But whatever the task may be, whether we like doing it or not, if it is something that needs to be done, then we need to do our best in doing it.

Perhaps the approach we should take for any task is the principle that we find in **Ephesians 6:5-7**, and repeated in **Colossians 3:23**. These passages are talking about the attitude that servants (or employees) should have towards their employment – that they do it as if they are working for the Lord, not men. It doesn’t matter what type of person the master (or employer) is, the attitude is to be the same (**1 Peter 2:18**).

This principle extends beyond the workplace. Remember the words of Jesus in **Matthew 25:34-40**. He said that when we do something for other people, no matter how small or simple the task, we are effectively doing it for Him. Therefore, if whatever task we are doing is being done for the Lord, what should our attitude and approach towards it be?

- should we just do the bare minimum possible?
- should we cut corners?
- can we be relied upon to do the task when it needs to be done?
- can we be trusted to do the job properly to the best of our ability?

Jesus gave His all to save us. He faithfully carried out the Father’s will. He was obedient to the Father, even to the point of dying on a cross (**John 5:30b, 36; Philippians 2:5-8**), because His approach and desire was to do those things that pleased the Father (**John 8:29**). Let us do likewise (**Colossians 1:10**). Let us be the type of people who are considered trustworthy and faithful in all we do (**Matthew 5:16**).

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Annex A - Kings of Judah and Israel

Combined nation	Year BC (approx.)	
Saul	1050	
David		
Solomon		
Judah	Kingdom splits	Israel
Rehoboam	930	Jeroboam
Abijam		Nadab
Asa		Baasha, Elah, Zimri
		Omri
Jehoshaphat		Ahab, Ahaziah
Jehoram		Jehoram
Ahaziah	840	Jehu
Athaliah		
Joash (Jehoash)*		Jehoahaz
Amaziah		Jehoash
Uzziah		Jeroboam (ii)
		Zechariah, Shallum,
Jotham	740	Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah
Ahaz		Hoshea
Hezekiah		Fall of Israel - 722
Manasseh		
Amon		
Josiah	640	
Jehoahaz		
Jehoiakim		
Jehoiachin		
Zedekiah	586	
Fall of Jerusalem - 586		

*the subject of this lesson

Annex B - Relationship between Judah and the house of Ahab

