

June 14

2 Kings 10, 12, 13

2 Chronicles 24

Today we are going to focus our attention on King Joash of Judah and the closing scene of Elisha's life with the King of Israel.

We left off our story of Joash the other day with him being anointed as king at the age of 7. Today we pick up with him having grown older, married and now making decisions for Judah. What seemed to be a great start to his reign ended poorly as we see he was not a king who finished well.

In fact, I think his story is one of the saddest we have read in a long time. Joash started strong and he kept going for a long time but in the end, he had turned away from the Lord. Not only that but his own people murdered him in his bed and buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings. The warning of the Bible to all of us is "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." That warning ought to instantly call to our minds the history of Joash.

So what went wrong? Well take a look at what happened. He started very well -- when he was under the care of Jehoiada he obeyed the Lord. The very first thing Jehoiada did with Joash in public, even as he crowned him king, was to give him a copy of the covenant - the law of God. The seven year old king obeyed his mentor and the Lord. Verse 16 of II Chronicles 23 is a succinct and powerful summary of what was happening. "Jehoiada then made a covenant that he and the people and the king would be the Lord's people." Joash knew from the outset that he was the king but that God was in charge.

Even after he was on his own -- ruling as king without Jehoiada's instruction he was zealous for God and for the house of God. It was in the 23rd year of his reign that he took steps to make sure that the temple was refurbished and he gave Jehoiada instructions to make sure temple was repaired. Why did it need repair? Apparently the temple had been neglected from the years of Baal worship. In the ancient world, a temple was sacred and if it wasn't taken good care of it reflected poorly on the king's rule. According to the II Kings account, the money for the repairs came from three different sources -- the temple offerings, the census offering that Moses had commanded and the offerings that were given when people made personal vows to God. The Chronicles account suggests that the reinstatement of the census offering and the dedication of that money to the task of repairing the temple was the main source of revenue and we're told the people gave gladly.

It seems that Joash keeps going strong but late in his reign, after the death of Jehoiada( who by the way lived to be 130 years old and was buried with the kings because of all the good he had done) everything came apart for Joash spiritually. There was one interesting little sentence in II Chronicles 24:17, I

wonder if you noted it. It said, "After the death of Jehoiada, the officials of Judah came and paid homage to the king and he listened to them." It doesn't take too much reading between the lines to infer what happened. Joash started out and kept going for a long time understanding that he was the king but God was in charge. Then, after Jehoiada's voice was no longer around to correct the misperceptions, he forgot that and started instead to believe all the flatterers who told him how great he was and said that he was the king and he was in charge! Apparently Joash started believing that and everything went downhill from there!

When Zechariah the priest, son of Jehoiada, challenged Joash's arrogance, Joash had him stoned. What why would he do that? The text tells us that Joash forgot all that Jehoiada had done for him: Jehoiada had helped save his life when he was a kid, Jehoiado made it possible to have him anointed as king, and Jehoiada constantly instructed him in the ways of the Lord. These kindnesses are incredible but because Joash had turned his ear to the voice of the officials of Judah instead of the ways of the Lord, he unjustly treated a priest of the Lord. There is a mighty lesson to be learned here and that is this: when we stop listening to Godly counsel and began to listen to the flattery of the world, we too, are subject to making poor choices. Joash' pride swayed him to turn away from the Lord and appeal to the desires of those around him. His destruction soon followed.

Later we learn that when Hazael, the king of Damascus threatened Jerusalem, instead of praying to the Lord, Joash bribed him with precious items from the temple and finally he died from a wound inflicted by that same Syrian army. Joash again forgot that God is in charge. Instead of being remembered for all of the wonderful things he had done, he was buried in Jerusalem -- but not with the kings.

LA – I did my best to write up the following to cover Jehoash and Elisha. Might want to check for accuracy.

Ok moving on from Judah, let's turn our attention now to Israel and see what happened in our reading.

King Jehu dies and his son, Jehoahaz, takes the throne. We read he did evil in the eyes of the Lord and even though he sought the Lord's favor he still passed on idolatry to his son Jehoash. While Jehoash was ruling Israel we are revisited by an encounter with Elisha (It has been about 40 years since we have heard of Elisha when he anointed Jehu back in II Kings 9). We are told that Elisha is on his deathbed and we see this strange prophecy he gives King Jehoash using a bow and arrows. Let me try and shed some light on this.

First of all, the king addressed Elisha as “My father” as an expression of honor from a younger king to an older prophet. He proceeds to almost quote verbatim the words “...the chariots and the horsemen of Israel” used by Elisha back in II Kings 2:12 after Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind. Here’s what I think is going on here. King Jehoash recognizes the prophet Elisha as a military leader in contrast to Elijah. As a way of paying Elisha respect and recognizing him for the role he played in the conflicts of Israel vs the Arameans, he gives him a similar distinction that Elisha gave Elijah by quoting, “My father, my father, the chariots and the horseman of Israel.”

After King Jehoash addressed Elisha, Elisha gives him a strange task – to shoot an arrow through the east window towards Aphek. Aphek had come under Aramean control and the arrow Elisha helped King Jehoash shoot represented God’s help to complete victory in regaining Aphek. However, after Elisha instructs the king to strike the ground with his arrows, the king only strikes three times. We read that Elisha is angered by this. Why? It symbolized a lack of faith. More than likely the king would have had more arrows and he only chose to use three. Elisha saw this and was upset by the king’s resolve and therefore, must of thought Israel would not get complete triumph after all against Aphek.

How’s that for a story? Then, we read, Elisha dies.