

# CHAPTER 12

This chapter gives us the history of the reign of Joash, which does not answer to that glorious beginning of it which we had an account of in the foregoing chapter; he was not so illustrious at forty years old as he was at seven, yet his reign is to be reckoned one of the better sort, and appears much worse in Chronicles (2 Chronicles 24) than it does here, for there we find the blood of one of God's prophets laid at his door; here we are only told,

- I.** That he did well while Jehoiada lived (v. 1-3).
- II.** That he was careful and active to repair the temple (v. 4-16).
- III.** That after a mean compact with Hazael (v. 17, 18) he died ingloriously (v. 19-21).

## ~~2~~ 2 KINGS 12:1-3

### THE REIGN OF JOASH, KING OF JUDAH

The general account here given of Joash is,

- 1.** That he reigned forty years. As he began his reign when he was very young, he might, in the course of nature, have continued much longer, for he was cut off when he was but forty-seven years old, v. 1.
- 2.** That he did that which was right as long as Jehoiada lived to instruct him, v. 2. Many young men have come too soon to an estate — have had wealth, and power, and liberty, before they knew how to use them — and it has been of bad consequence to them; but against this danger Joash was well guarded by having such a good director as Jehoiada was, so wise, and experienced, and faithful to him, and by having so much wisdom as to hearken to him and be directed by him, even when he was grown up. Note, It is a great mercy to young people, and especially to young princes, and all young men of consequence, to be under good direction, and to have those about them that will instruct them to do *that which is right in the sight of the Lord*; and they then do wisely and well for themselves when they are willing to be counselled and ruled by such. *A child left to himself brings*

*his mother to shame*, but a child left to such a tuition may bring himself to honour and comfort.

**3.** That the *high places were not taken away*, v. 3. Up and down the country they had altars both for sacrifice and incense, to the honour of the God of Israel only, but in competition with, and at least in tacit contempt of, his altar at Jerusalem. These private altars, perhaps, had been more used in the late bad reigns than formerly, because it was not safe to go up to Jerusalem, nor was the temple-service performed as it should have been; and, it may be, Jehoiada connived at them, because some well-meaning people were glad of them when they could not have better, and he hoped that the reforming of the temple, and putting things into a good posture there, would by degrees draw people from their high places and they would dwindle of themselves; or perhaps neither the king nor the priest had zeal enough to carry on their reformation so far, nor courage and strength enough to encounter such an inveterate usage.

## ~~2K12~~ 2 KINGS 12:4-16

### THE REPAIRING OF THE TEMPLE

We have here an account of the repairing of the temple in the reign of Joash.

**I.** It seems, the temple had gone out of repair. Though Solomon built it very strong, of the best materials and in the best manner, yet in time it went to decay, and there were *breaches found in it* (v. 5), in the roofs, or walls, or floors, the ceiling, or wainscoting, or windows, or the partitions of the courts. Even temples themselves are the worse for the wearing; but the heavenly temple will never wax old. Yet it was not only the teeth of time that made these breaches, the sons of Athaliah had *broken up the house of God* (~~2Ch12~~ 2 Chronicles 24:7), and, out of enmity to the service of the temple, had damaged the buildings of it, and the priests had not taken care to repair the breaches in time, so that they went worse and worse. Unworthy were those husbandmen to have this valuable vineyard let out to them upon such easy terms who could not afford to keep the winepress in due and tenantable repair, ~~Mat21~~ Matthew 21:33. Justly did their great Lord sue them for this permissive waste, and by his judgments recover *locum*

*vastatum* — *for dilapidations* (as the law speaks), when this neglected temple was laid even with the ground.

**II.** The king himself was (as it should seem) the first and forwardest man that took care for the repair of it. We do not find that the priests complained of it or that Jehoiada himself was active in it, but the king was zealous in the matter,

**1.** Because he was king, and God expects and requires from those who have power that they use it for the maintenance and support of religion, the redress of grievances, and reparation of decays, for the exciting and engaging of ministers to do their part and people theirs.

**2.** Because the temple had been both his nursery and his sanctuary when he was a child, in a grateful remembrance of which he now appeared zealous for the honour of it. Those who have experienced the comfort and benefit of religious assemblies will make the reproach of them their burden (~~<39B8>~~Zephaniah 3:18), the support of them their care, and the prosperity of them their chief joy.

**III.** The priests were ordered to collect money for these repairs, and to take care that the work was done. The king had the affairs of his kingdom to mind, and could not himself inspect this affair, but he employed the priests to manage it, the fittest persons, and most likely, one would think, to be hearty in it.

**1.** He gave them orders for the levying of the money of the dedicated things. They must not stay till it was paid in, but they must call for it where they knew it was due, in their respective districts, as redemption-money (by virtue of the law, ~~<87D>~~Leviticus 27:2, 3), or as a free-will offering, v. 4. This they were to gather every man of his acquaintance, and it was supposed that there was no man but had acquaintance with some or other of the priests. Note, We should take the opportunity that God gives us of exciting those we have a particular acquaintance with to that which is good.

**2.** He gave them orders for laying out the money they had levied in *repairing the breaches of the house*, v. 5.

**IV.** This method did not answer the intention, v. 6. Little money was raised. Either the priests were careless, and did not call on the people to pay in their dues, or the people had so little confidence in the priests'

management that they were backward to pay money into their hands; if they were distrusted without cause, it was the people's shame; if with, it was more theirs. But what money was raised was not applied to the proper use: *The breaches of the house were not repaired*; the priests thought it might serve as well as it had done, and therefore put off repairing from time to time. Church work is usually slow work, but it is a pity that churchmen, of all men, should be slow at it. Perhaps what little money they raised they thought it necessary to use for the maintenance of the priests, which must needs fall much short when ten tribes had wholly revolted and the other two were wretchedly corrupted.

**V.** Another method was therefore taken. The king had his heart much set upon having *the breaches of the house repaired*, v. 7. His apostasy, at last, gives us cause to question whether he had as good an affection for the service of the temple as he had for the structure. Many have been zealous for building and beautifying churches, and for other forms of godliness, who yet have been strangers to the power of it. However, we commend his zeal, and blame him not for reproofing even his tutor Jehoiada himself when he saw him remiss; and so convincing was his reproof that the priests owned themselves unworthy to be any longer employed, and consented to the taking of some other measures, and the giving up of the money they had received into other hands, v. 8. It was honestly done, when they found they had not spirit to do it themselves, not to hinder other people from doing it. Another course was taken,

**1.** For raising money, v. 9, 10. The money was not paid into private hands, but put into a public chest, and then people brought it in readily and in great abundance, not only their dues, but their free-will offerings for so good a work. The high priest and the secretary of state counted the money out of the chest, and laid it by *in specie* for the use to which it was appropriated. When public distributions are made faithfully public contributions will be made cheerfully. The money that was given,

**(1.)** Was dropped into the chest through a hole in the lid, past recall, to intimate that what has been once resigned to God must never be resumed. *Every man, as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give.*

**(2.)** The chest was put on the right hand as they went in, which, some think, is alluded to in that rule of charity which our Saviour gives, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth*. But, while they were getting

all they could for the repair of the temple, they did not break in upon that which was the stated maintenance of the priests, v. 16. The trespass-money and the sin-money (which were given to them by that law, <sup><OR65></sup>Leviticus 5:15, 16) were reserved to them. Let not the servants of the temple be starved under colour of repairing the breaches of it.

**2.** For laying out the money that was raised.

**(1.)** They did not put it into the hands of the priests, who were not versed in affairs of this nature, having other work to mind, but *into the hands of those that did the work*, or at least *had the oversight of it*, v. 11. Those were fittest to be entrusted with this business whose employment lay that way. *Tractant fabrilia fabri* — *Every artist has his trade assigned*; but let not those who are called to war the holy warfare entangle themselves in the affairs of this life. Those that were thus entrusted did the business,

**[1.]** Carefully, purchasing materials and paying workmen, v. 12. Business is done with expedition when those are employed in it that understand it and know which way to go about it.

**[2.]** Faithfully; such a reputation they got for honesty that there was no occasion to examine their bills or audit their accounts. Let all that are entrusted with public money, or public work, learn hence to deal faithfully, as those that know God will reckon with them, whether men do or no. Those that think it is no sin to cheat the government, cheat the country, or cheat the church, will be of another mind when God shall set their sins in order before them.

**(2.)** They did not lay it out in ornaments for the temple, in vessels of gold or silver, but in necessary repairs first (v. 13), whence we may learn, in all our expenses to give that the preference which is most needful, and, in dealing for the public, to deal as we would for ourselves. After the repairs were finished we find the overplus turned into plate for the service of the temple, <sup><OR44></sup>2 Chronicles 24:14.

## ~~12:17~~ 2 KINGS 12:17-21

### DEATH OF JOASH, KING OF JUDAH

When Joash had revolted from God and become both an idolater and a persecutor the hand of the Lord went out against him, and his *last state was worse than his first*.

**I.** His wealth and honour became an easy prey to his neighbours. Hazael, when he had chastised Israel (~~12:18~~ 2 Kings 10:32), threatened Judah and Jerusalem likewise, took Gath, a strong city (v. 17), and thence intended to march with his forces against Jerusalem, the royal city, the holy city, but whose defence, on account of its sinfulness, had departed. Joash had neither spirit nor strength to make head against him, but gave him all the hallowed things, and all the gold that was found both in his exchequer and in the treasures of the temple (v. 18), to bribe him to march another way. If it were lawful to do this for the public safety, better part with the gold of the temple than expose the temple itself; yet,

- 1.** If he had not forsaken God, and forfeited his protection, his affairs would not have been brought to this extremity, but he might have forced Hazael to retire.
- 2.** He diminished himself, and made himself very mean, lost the honour of a prince and a soldier, and of an Israelite too, in alienating the dedicated things.
- 3.** He impoverished himself and his kingdom. And,
- 4.** He tempted Hazael to come again, when he could carry home so rich a booty without striking a stroke. And it had this effect, for the next year the host of Syria came up against Jerusalem, destroyed the prince, and plundered the city, ~~14:23~~ 2 Chronicles 24:23, 24.

**II.** His life became an easy prey to his own servants. They conspired against him and slew him (v. 20, 21), not aiming at his kingdom, for they opposed not his son's succeeding him, but to be avenged on him for some crime he had committed; and we are told in Chronicles that his murdering the prophet, Jehoiada's son, was the provocation. In this, how unrighteous soever they were (vengeance was not theirs, nor did it belong to them to repay), God was righteous; and this was not the only time that he let even

kings know that it was at their peril if they touched his anointed and did his prophets any harm, and that, when he comes to make inquisition for blood, the blood of prophets will run the account very high. Thus fell Joash, who began in the spirit and ended in the flesh. God usually sets marks of his displeasure upon apostates, even in this life; for they, of all sinners, do most *reproach the Lord*.