

# CHAPTER 24

We have here the history of the reign of Joash, the progress of which, and especially its termination, were not of a piece with its beginning, nor shone with so much lustre. How wonderfully he was preserved for the throne, and placed in it, we read before; now here we are told how he began in the spirit, but ended in the flesh.

**I.** In the beginning of his time, while Jehoiada lived, he did well; particularly, he took care to put the temple in good repair (v. 1-14).

**II.** In the latter end of his time, after Jehoiada's death, he apostatized from God, and his apostasy was his ruin.

- 1.** He set up the worship of Baal again (v. 15-18), though warned to the contrary (v. 19).
- 2.** He put Zechariah the prophet to death because he reproved him for what he had done (v. 20-22).
- 3.** The judgments of God came upon him for it. The Syrians invaded him (v. 23, 24). He was struck with sore diseases; his own servants conspired against him and slew him; and, as a mark of infamy upon him, he was not buried in the burying-place of the kings (v. 25-27).

## <del>2</del> 2 CHRONICLES 24:1-14

### THE TEMPLE REPAIRED

This account of Joash's good beginnings we had as it stands here <del>2</del> 2 Kings 12:1, etc., though the latter part of this chapter, concerning his apostasy, we had little of there. What is good in men we should take all occasions to speak of and often repeat it; what is evil we should make mention of but sparingly, and no more than is needful. We shall here only observe,

- 1.** That it is a happy thing for young people, when they are setting out in the world, to be under the direction of those that are wise and good and faithful to them, as Joash was under the influence of Jehoiada, during

whose time he *did that which was right*. Let those that are young reckon it a blessing to them, and not a burden and check upon them, to have those with them that will caution them against that which is evil and advise and quicken them to that which is good; and let them reckon it not a mark of weakness and subjection, but of wisdom and discretion, to hearken to such. He that will not be counselled cannot be helped. It is especially prudent for young people to take advice in their marriages, as Joash did, who left it to his guardian to choose him his wives, because Jezebel and Athaliah had been such plagues, v. 3. This is a turn of life which often proves either the making or marring of young people, and therefore should be attended to with great care.

- 2.** Men may go far in the external performances of religion, and keep long to them, merely by the power of their education and the influence of their friends, who yet have no hearty affection for divine things nor any inward relish of them. Foreign inducements may push men on to that which is good who are not actuated by a living principle of grace in their hearts.
- 3.** In the outward expressions of devotion it is possible that those who have only the form of godliness may out-strip those who have the power of it. Joash is more solicitous and more zealous about the repair of the temple than Jehoiada himself, whom he reproveth for his remissness in that matter, v. 6. It is easier to build temples than to be temples to God.
- 4.** The repairing of churches is a good work, which all in their places should promote, for the decency and conveniency of religious assemblies. The learned tell us that in the Christian church, anciently, part of the tithes were applied that way.
- 5.** Many a good work would be done that now lies undone if there were but a few active men to stir in it and to put it forward. When Joash found the money did not come in as he expected in one way he tried another way, and that answered the intention. Many have honesty enough to follow that have not zeal enough to lead in that which is good. The throwing of money into a chest, through a hole in the lid of it, was a way that had not been used before, and perhaps the very novelty of the thing made it a successful expedient for the raising of money; a great deal was thrown in and with a great deal of cheerfulness: they all rejoiced, v. 10. An invention to please people's humour may sometimes bring them to their duty. Wisdom herein is profitable to direct.

6. Faithfulness is the greatest praise and will be the greatest comfort of those that are entrusted with public treasure or employed in public business. The king and Jehoiada faithfully paid the money to the workmen, who faithfully did the work, v. 12, 13.

## 2 CHRONICLES 24:15-27

### JOASH SLAIN BY HIS SERVANTS

We have here a sad account of the degeneracy and apostasy of Joash. God had done great things for him; he had done something for God; but now he proved ungrateful to his God and false to the engagements he had laid himself under to him. *How has the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed!* Here we find,

1. The occasions of his apostasy. When he did that which was right it was *not with a perfect heart*. He never was sincere, never acted from principle, but in compliance to Jehoiada, who had helped him to the crown, and because he had been protected in the temple and rose upon the ruins of idolatry; and therefore, when the wind turned, he turned with it.

1. His good counsellor left him, and was by death removed from him. It was a mercy to him and his kingdom that Jehoiada lived so long — 130 years (v. 15), by which it appears that he was born in Solomon's time, and had lived six entire reigns before this. It was an encouragement to him to go on in that good way which Jehoiada had trained him up in to see what honour was done to Jehoiada at his death: *They buried him among the kings*, with this honourable encomium (perhaps it was part of the inscription on his grave-stone), that *he had done good in Israel*. Judah is called *Israel*, because, the other tribes having revolted from God, they only were Israelites indeed. Note, It is the greatest honour to do good in our generations, and those who *do that which is good shall have praise of the same*. He had done good towards God; not that any man's goodness can extend unto him, but he had done good towards his house, in reviving the temple service, <sup>4238</sup>2 Chronicles 23:8. Note, Those do the greatest good to their country that lay out themselves in their places to promote religion. Well, Jehoiada finished his course with honour; but the little religion that Joash had was all buried in his grave, and, after his death, both king and kingdom miserably degenerated. See how much one head may sustain, and

what a great judgment to any prince or people the death of godly, zealous, useful men is. See how necessary it is that, as our Saviour speaks, we *have salt in ourselves*, that we act in religion from an inward principle, which will carry us on through all changes. Then the loss of a parent, a minister, a friend, will not involve the loss of our religion.

**2.** Bad counsellors got about him, insinuated themselves into his affections, wheedled him, flattered him, *made obeisance* to him, and, instead of condoling, congratulated him upon the death of his old tutor, as his release from the discipline he had been so long under, unworthy a man, a king. They tell him he must be priest-ridden no longer, he is now discharged from *grave lessons and restraints*, he may do as he pleases: and (would you think it?) the princes of Judah were the men that were so industrious to debauch him, v. 17. His father and grandfather were corrupted by the house of Ahab, from whom no better could be expected. But that the princes of Judah should be seducers to their king was very sad. But those that incline to the *counsels of the ungodly* will never want ungodly counsellors. They *made obeisance to the king*, flattered him into an opinion of his absolute power, promised to stand by him in making his royal will and pleasure pass for a law, any divine precept or institution to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding. And he hearkened to them: their discourse pleased him, and was more agreeable than Jehoiada's dictates used to be. Princes and inferior people have been many a time thus flattered into their ruin by those who have promised them liberty and dignity, but who have really brought them into the greatest servitude and disgrace.

**II.** The apostasy itself: *They left the house of God, and served groves and idols*, v. 18. The princes, it is likely, had a request to the king, which they tell him they durst not offer while Jehoiada lived; but now they hope it will give no offence: it is that they may set up the groves and idols again which were thrown down in the beginning of his reign, for they hate to be always confined to the dull old-fashioned service of the temple. And he not only gave them leave to do it themselves, but he joined with them. The king and princes, who, a little while ago, were repairing the temple, now forsook the temple; those who had pulled down groves and idols now themselves served them. So inconstant a thing is man and so little confidence is to be put in him!

**III.** The aggravations of this apostasy and the additions of guilt to it. God *sent prophets to them* (v. 19) to reprove them for their wickedness, and to tell them what would be in the end thereof, and so *to bring them again unto the Lord*. It is the work of ministers to bring people, not to themselves, but to God — to bring those again to him who have gone a whoring from him. In the most degenerate times God *left not himself without witness*; though they had dealt very disingenuously with God, yet he sent prophets to them to convince and instruct them, and to assure them that they should find favour with him if yet they would return; for he would rather sinners should *turn and live* than *go on and die*, and those that perish shall be left inexcusable. The prophets did their part: *they testified against them*; but, few or none *received their testimony*.

**1.** They slighted all the prophets; they would not give ear, were so strangely wedded to their idols that no reproofs, warnings, threatenings, nor any of the various methods which the prophets took to convince them would reclaim them. Few would hear them, fewer would heed them, but fewest of all would believe them or be governed by them.

**2.** They slew one of the most eminent, *Zechariah the son of Jehoiada*, and perhaps others. Concerning him observe,

**(1.)** The message which he delivered to them in the name of God, v. 20. The people were assembled in the court of the temple (for they had not quite left it), probably on occasion of some solemn feast, when this Zechariah, being filled with the spirit of prophecy, and known (it is likely) to be a prophet, stood up in some of the desks that were in the court of the priests, and very plainly, but without any provoking language, told the people of their sin and what would be the consequences of it. He did not impeach any particular persons, nor predict any particular judgments, as sometimes the prophets did, but as inoffensively as possible reminded them of what was written in the law. Let them but look into their Bibles, and there they would find,

**[1.]** The precept they broke: “*You transgress the commandments of the Lord, you know you do so, in serving groves and idols: and why will you so offend God and wrong yourselves?*”

**[2.]** The penalty they incurred: “*You know, if the word of God be true, you cannot prosper in this evil way; never expect to do ill and fare well. Nay, you find already that because you have forsaken the Lord he hath*

*forsaken you, as he told you he would,”* <sup>15925</sup>Deuteronomy 29:25; 31:16,17. This is the work of ministers, by the word of God, as a lamp and a light, to expose the sin of men and expound the providences of God.

(2.) The barbarous treatment they gave him for his kindness and faithfulness in delivering this message to them, v. 21. By the conspiracy of the princes, or some of their party, and *by the commandment of the king*, who thought himself affronted by this fair warning, they stoned him to death immediately, not under colour of law, accusing him as a blasphemer, a traitor, or a false prophet, but in a popular tumult, *in the court of the house of the Lord* — as horrid a piece of wickedness as perhaps any we read of in all the history of the kings. The *person* was sacred — a priest, the *place* sacred — the court of the temple (the inner court, *between the porch and the altar*), the *message* yet more sacred, and we have reason to think that they knew it came from the spirit of prophecy. The reproof was just, the warning fair, both backed with scripture, and the delivery very gentle and tender; and yet so impudently and daringly do they defy God himself that nothing less than the blood of the prophet can satisfy their indignation at the prophecy. *Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and tremble, O earth!* that ever such villany should be committed by men, by Israelites, in contempt and violation of every thing that is just, honourable, and sacred — that a king, a king in covenant with God, should command the murder of one whom it was his office to protect and countenance! The Jews say there were seven transgressions in this; for they killed a priest, a prophet, a judge, they shed innocent blood, and polluted the court of the temple, the sabbath, and the day of expiation: for on that day, their tradition says, this happened.

(3.) The aggravation of this sin, that this Zechariah, who suffered martyrdom for his faithfulness to God and his country, was the son of Jehoiada, who had done so much good in Israel, and particularly had been as a father to Joash, v. 22. The affront done by it to God, and the contempt put on religion, are not so particularly taken notice of as the ingratitude there was in it to the memory of Jehoiada. He remembered not the kindness of the father, but slew the son for doing his duty, and what the father would have done if he had been there. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse.

(4.) The dying martyr's prophetic imprecation of vengeance upon his murderers: *The Lord look upon it, and require it!* This came not from a

spirit of revenge, but a spirit of prophecy: *He will require it.* This would be the continual cry of the blood they shed, as Abel's blood cried against Cain: "Let the God to whom vengeance belongs demand blood for blood. He will do it, for he is righteous." This precious blood was quickly reckoned for in the judgments that came upon this apostate prince; it came into the account afterwards in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans — their misusing the prophets was that which brought upon them ruin without remedy (<sup><4836></sup>2 Chronicles 36:16); nay, our Saviour makes the persecutors of him and his gospel answerable for the blood of this Zechariah; so loud, so long, does the blood of the martyrs cry. See <sup><4235></sup>Matthew 23:35. Such as this is the cry of the souls under the altar (<sup><4160></sup>Revelation 6:10), *How long ere thou avenge our blood?* For it shall not always go unrevenged.

**IV.** The judgments of God which came upon Joash for this aggravated wickedness of his.

**1.** A small army of Syrians made themselves masters of Jerusalem, destroyed the princes, plundered the city, and sent the spoil of it to Damascus, v. 23, 24. God's people, while they kept in with God, had often been conquerors when the enemy had the advantage of the greater number; but now, on the contrary, an inconsiderable handful of Syrians routed a *very great host of Israelites, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers*, and then they were not only put upon the level with their enemies, but opposed them with the utmost disadvantage; for their God not only departed from them, but *turned to be their enemy and fought against them*. The Syrians were employed as instruments in God's hand to *execute judgments against Joash*, though they little thought so, <sup><2306></sup>Isaiah 10:6, 7, and see <sup><6230></sup>Deuteronomy 32:30.

**2.** God smote him with great diseases, of body, or mind, or both, either like his grandfather (<sup><4218></sup>2 Chronicles 21:18), or, like Saul, an evil spirit from God troubling him. While he was plagued with the Syrians he thought that, if he could but get clear of them, he should do well enough. But, before they departed from him, God smote him with diseases. If vengeance pursue men, the end of one trouble will but be the beginning of another.

**3.** His own servants conspired against him. Perhaps he began to hope his disease would be cured — he was but a middle-aged man and might recover it; but *he that cometh up out of the pit shall fall into the snare*. When he thought he should escape death by sickness he met it by the

sword. They slew him in his bed *for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada*, by which it should seem that he did not only slay Zechariah, but others of the sons of Jehoiada for his sake. Perhaps those that slew him *intended* to take vengeance for that blood; but, whether they did or not, this was what God intended in permitting them to slay him. Those that drink the blood of the saints shall have their own blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. The regicides are here named (v. 26), and it is observable that the mothers of them both were foreigners, one an Ammonitess and the other a Moabitess. The idolatrous kings, it is likely, countenanced those marriages which the law prohibited for the prevention of idolatry; and see how they resulted in their own destruction.

**4.** His people would not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings because he had stained his honour by his mal-administration. *Let him not be written with the righteous,* ~~1998~~ Psalm 69:28. These judgments are called *burdens laid upon him* (v. 27), for the wrath of God is a heavy burden, too heavy for any man to bear. Or it may be meant of the threatenings denounced against him by the prophets, for those are called *burdens*. Usually God sets some special marks of his displeasure upon apostates in this life, for warning to all to *remember Lot's wife*.