

## Cleaning House: Joash

Lenten Midweek #4 – 03/15/23 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: 2 Chronicles 24:1-4, 17-25 Pastor Keith Besel

### **Introduction**

✘ Last week, we took a look at the reign of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah who made a marriage alliance with King Ahab of Israel. At the end of last week's Bible text we heard that Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram became king. And because of a marriage alliance with King Ahab and Queen Jezebel's daughter, Jehoram "walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done..." (2 Chr. 21:6).

→ Well, Jehoram's first act was to kill all six of his brothers to ensure that he had no rivals to the throne. Jehoram reigned eight years, during which he led Judah in the worship of other gods. 2 Chronicles 21:20 tells us that he died in agony, "and he departed with no one's regret".

### **I. The Temple in Disrepair**

✘ After Jehoram, his youngest son, Ahaziah, reigned for only one year, with his mother, Athaliah giving him guidance and advice. Then chapter 22:10 tells us that Athaliah "arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah". This woman was just as wicked as her mother Jezebel, and, if it is possible, even more ambitious; even more bloodthirsty, willing to kill even her grandsons so that they could not threaten her ability to reign as Queen.

→ Throughout this time, the house of God, the temple had been plundered by the royal family, desecrated, and ignored.

→ It's interesting throughout the book of 2 Chronicles that the condition and use of the temple serves as an accurate indication of the spiritual state of Judah as a kingdom. Whenever the king is far from God, the people are far from God, and the temple is then abused and abandoned. So, with the help of these evil kings and their families it doesn't take long for the temple to fall into utter disrepair.

### **II. The Temple Cleansed then Desecrated**

✘ It ends up however that Athaliah did not actually kill all of the royal family. Ahaziah's sister, Athaliah's sister-in-law was actually able to rescue Ahaziah's infant son as his brothers were about to be killed and hide him away with her husband, Jehoiada in the temple because he was the priest at that time. So for six years this boy, Joash lived in hiding with his aunt and uncle in the temple.

→ You may wonder how the evil queen never saw him, but remember Athaliah paid no attention to the temple, especially since all of the silver and gold had been taken out by the evil kings.

✘ Then when Joash was seven-years-old Athaliah was executed and Joash was brought out by his uncle Jehoiada, the priest and was declared to be king. Now chapter 24:2 tells us, "Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest". That's an odd, but very important phrase, because it hints at difficulty to come. But not yet, because Jehoiada lived to be 130-years-old. So, as long as he was being counseled by his uncle, Joash did what was righteous.

→ During that time, Joash initiated a major renovation and cleaning of the temple. He restored the temple to its rightful purpose and offered burnt offerings to the LORD again. Joash was zealous for the project that took many years before it was finally completed. For as long as Jehoiada was the priest, worship was restored in Solomon's temple.

- ⊗ Eventually though, Jehoiada died, and the other counselors were only interested in flattering Joash, paying him “homage” (v.17). They convinced him to abandon the house of the LORD and serve the Asherim and false idols. So, the LORD’s house that Joash spent so much time renovating, cleaning, and restoring was now desecrated as they used it to worship dead idols.
  - ➔ If you haven’t picked up on it yet, Joash was a weak king, blindly following others rather than standing upon faithful principles. And so, verse 18 tells us that he brought the full wrath of God.
- ⊗ First God sent prophets, but Joash paid them no attention. God’s Word was rejected; therefore God’s prophets were rejected, which meant God’s attempts at turning the kingdom of Judah back was rejected too. Finally, Jehoiada’s son, the priest Zechariah (the author of one of the books of the Bible), came to make God’s appeal to the king. Zechariah was Joash’s cousin – actually more like a brother, because he and Joash had grown up together in the temple. Surely, you would think, if anyone could get through to Joash, it would be Zechariah.
  - ➔ Verse 20 tells us that “the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah” and he prophesied to the people, asking, “Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper?” But Joash would have none of it, conspiring with the princes against Zechariah. And as verses 21-22 recount for us, while God’s prophet and priest stood in the court of God’s holy temple which Joash had restored, they stoned Zechariah. And as he was dying, Zechariah cried out, “May the Lord see and avenge!”
- ⊗ The temple had been restored so that sacrifices could be made to God. Blood was supposed to be shed in its courts, but not by murder. This newly cleaned temple was so quickly defiled by the people’s wonton contempt of God’s Word and the violent slaughter of Zechariah.

### III. A King NOT Focused on the Building

- ⊗ What a waste of such a beautiful and holy building. But even the holiest of all buildings, if it is completely void of steadfast faith, is nothing but an ordinary building. Kings often become famous for their grand building projects. The Great Pyramids, Nebuchadnezzar’s hanging gardens in Babylon, and President Eisenhower’s Interstate System are good examples of projects that brought lasting fame to their sponsors. In Holy Week, even Jesus’ disciples commented about Herod’s temple, “What wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” they said (Mk. 13:1), even as Jesus said it would one day be destroyed in response. So any pride Joash may have had in the temple was all in vain once he rejected God’s Word and Spirit, who dwelt within it.
  - ➔ In fact, Solomon’s temple, which Joash spent so much money and time restoring, was destroyed some 250 years later when Nebuchadnezzar overran Jerusalem and leveled the temple. It was later rebuilt in the time of Ezra and expanded by King Herod. But again that great temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, the very thing that Jesus said would take place.
- ⊗ Kings built impressive temples, and kings destroyed them. But as we see here tonight, even the kings who built and cleansed temples could be led astray; to the point of even turning away from the God whose presence dwelt in that temple.
  - ➔ How does such a thing happen? It starts whenever the king and/or people turn away from the Word of the LORD. Then they turn away from the purpose of the building itself. You see, when people focus so intently upon the building, their eyes are no longer fixed upon the God whose grace made the temple a holy place for people to meet with God and reside in His glory.
- ⊗ So obviously we need a better king than Joash. We need a King who will restore the temple and never let it fall into disrepair. We need a Messiah who will save His people from their sins. We need Jesus, the descendent; the Son of Joash.

#### IV. Jesus' Murder and the True Temple

⌘ Remember, Jesus was also in the temple as an infant. His life was threatened by the same King Herod that expanded the temple, and He was taken to safety by Mary and Joseph. Then as a young man, Jesus' parents found Him about His Father's business and at home in His Father's house. In fact, zeal for His Father's house consumed Him, so that He would cleanse the temple by overturning the money-changers' tables and setting the animals free. Yes, Jesus restored the temple to its proper use. It was a house of prayer; it was a place to meet God in His gracious presence; a place to receive the forgiveness of sins.

➔ But our King, the Son of David, was still so much more than that. You see, His body; His own flesh and blood is the temple; the very place where God, in all of His glory lives! John the Baptizer saw the Holy Spirit descend and remain on Him. So, just as the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle and Solomon's temple; just as the Holy Spirit clothed Zechariah the priest, the Holy Spirit made Jesus' body His temple. And as our Epistle Reading says tonight, it is through His blood that we have access before the gracious throne of God.

➔ God sent His prophets to prepare Judah for the coming Messiah. But just as the Judeans rejected the prophets of old, the Pharisees and lawyers of Jesus' day rejected not only the prophet John, but the very Son of God. In Luke 11:47-51 Jesus said, "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. 'Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.'"

⌘ Indeed, all the innocent blood from Abel to Zechariah cried out in vengeance as God declared in His covenant with Noah, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in His own image" (Gen 9:6). Remember also Jesus' parable in which God sent one servant after another to His vineyard. The tenants mistreated and rejected them. Finally, God sent His Son, but He too, was killed in cold jealousy. As King Joash conspired to kill the priest Zechariah, it was the chief priests who conspired to send the Son of Joash; Jesus to His death.

➔ But here's where the comparison differs: when the Judeans sent their King, the Son of David, to death, He became the mediator of a new covenant. Thanks be to God Jesus' sprinkled blood speaks a better word than the blood of Zechariah. Jesus did not cry out from the cross for vengeance, but instead, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). Jesus' blood speaks forgiveness and peace to all who have sinned. His blood washes the stain of sin away today and into eternal life.

⌘ Yes, we need a King who can provide a temple which will survive, one that is not subject to the whims of politics. We need a temple that is beyond the reach of princes and sinful people. We need a temple that can never be destroyed; one where we can always come into God's presence. And friends, THE Son of Joash has restored God's Temple to perfection; for all eternity!

#### V. Temple Eternally Clean in Christ

⌘ Our King, the Lord Jesus, took the very temple of God into His own body, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," John 1:14 says. "And (there in Jesus) we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

→ Although His body was destroyed, Jesus saw no corruption, but instead, in three days, God's temple was rebuilt. His body; God's holy temple will never be destroyed again; never desecrated, for it is eternally clean. Now and forever Jesus continues to be the only refuge for sinners. His body and blood are given to His believers as the pledge of the new covenant; which is salvation by grace.

✘ In this eternal temple we worship in spirit and truth. Yes, in Jesus alone we have life eternal. Amen.