

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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How Will You Be Remembered? (Part 8)

I Kings 14:16; II Kings 12:2; II Kings 18:5

Last month we were focusing on the *Loathing* of Joash. God was merciful in sending prophets to try to turn Joash and the people back to God, *“but they would not give ear.”* When Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, preached against their idolatry, he too was ignored. Notice what II Chronicles 24:20 says, *“And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you.”* This is one of the most sobering messages from a man of God found anywhere in the Bible. Notice that Zechariah did not try to make the people feel good. He did not try to pass over or ignore their sin. He could not because he was filled with the Spirit. This was not just the words of Zechariah. He was simply the vessel that the Holy Ghost was using. These were the words of God the Holy Ghost, and God does not look over or look past sin. It is repulsive in His sight, and it will be dealt with.

Zechariah clearly points out that they had broken the Word of God which forbade idolatry. They knew what God had said back in the book of Exodus—*“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”* Joash and the people ignored God’s Word to satisfy their own desires. God would not let them get away with it. Zechariah told them the penalty for forsaking God—God would forsake them. This sobering message should have caused Joash and the people to turn back to God. I really do not understand how they could reject this message, but they did. Instead of returning to God, they get angry at the messenger. At Joash’s command, they stone Zechariah.

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Joash was a king that followed God—as long as Jehoiada was alive. He had turned away from God, but here was Jehoiada’s son telling him what God thought of his idolatry. Joash should have said, *“Thank you,”* and returned to following God. Instead, he stoned the messenger. When you study the family relations, you will recognize that Zechariah was Joash’s cousin. You would think that because he was family, Joash would let him live. But to Joash, Zechariah was interfering with his position as king, and ordered him to be stoned. Pleasing himself and the people with idolatry was more important than God’s Word and family. How fast was the downfall of Joash!

Joash had gone from one who wanted to follow God’s Word (II Chronicles 24:6) and God’s man (II Chronicles 24:2), to one who rejected both God’s Word and God’s man (II Chronicles 24:19-21). There is much that we can learn from Joash’s life, but perhaps the best lesson is to remain faithful. May God help us to always listen to people that will proclaim the truth of God’s Word, and may we take that truth and allow the Holy Ghost to guide our life by it. May we not turn away from God. May we not be like Joash.

Sadly, I have known some who have turned away from practicing the truth of God’s Word. They would argue and say that they had not turned to idolatry as Joash did. That is true, but they have turned away from practicing Biblical separation and Biblical holiness. When confronted with their change, it is interesting to note that they often get angry just like Joash. Now in our day, they do not pick up literal stones, but they do pick up verbal stones. One who has changed often accuses the one who has remained consistent of *“narrow-mindedness”* and *“focusing on things that really do not matter.”* But what I cannot help but think is this—*“If it is in the Word of God, it matters!”* It may not be an essential element of salvation, but it is an essential element of how a believer can maintain a right standing with God! If God said it, we should endeavor to obey it. One who wants to be obedient to God will not have a problem with obeying even the so-called *“little”* commandments. The problem with most people is that they do not care about what God says. They

want to do their own thing and follow their own path. May God help us to obey **all** of His commands.

We have looked at the life of Joash and seen His Start and His Slide. Now we turn our focus to His Sadness. II Chronicles 24:23-24 records that God did what He said He would do. Through Zechariah, God said that Joash and Judah would be punished. Syria invaded Judah and Jerusalem and “*with a small company of men*” defeated “*a very great host*.” This time Judah had the upper hand in numbers, but because they had turned to idolatry, God allowed Syria to defeat them. Joash was injured in the battle and II Chronicles 24:25 records the end of Joash’s life. It says, “*And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases), his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died; and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings.*” Obviously, I cannot read Joash’s mind, but I wonder if he thought that turning to idolatry would make him a more popular king. There had to be some reason that he listened to the advisors. Regardless of the reason, Joash did not benefit from his rejection of God. If he did think he would be more popular, it backfired. The people he was trying to satisfy turned against him. His own servants killed him, and the people did not bury him among the other kings. How sad the life of Joash ends! He could have been so great, if he had remained faithful. He started out so well! Why did he not continue serving God? I cannot answer that question. I can only preach what the Bible says, and Joash was a man of change. He went from leading the people to restore the temple to leading them in idolatry. As a result, he died and was buried in disgrace. Sin and disobedience to God will never pay!

How can this apply to us? Some will respond that those who have compromised and changed their practices are among the most respected men of today. But I ask, “Among whom?” God does not respect them, nor does He approve of their actions. That is clear from the Word of God. The world and even the world’s religion may

applaud them, but I do not want the world’s approval. Do we want the world to approve of us, or do we want Jesus to approve of us? At the Judgment Seat of Christ, our labor for Christ will be judged. If we have labored for Him the way that He has told us to according to His Word, then we will hear Him say, “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*” But to receive Christ’s commendation, our labor must be done His way according to the Word of God. We can choose the world’s way and popularity and their approval, or we can choose Christ’s way and the world’s ridicule, but His approval. By God’s grace, I will choose Christ’s way.

We have looked at two kings—A Man of Contempt: Jeroboam, and A Man of Change: Joash. These are two men that we should not want to pattern our lives after. But there is one other king to consider. He is **A Man of Consistency—Hezekiah**. Hezekiah is my favorite king among all of the kings of Judah. As you can tell by my description of him, he remained faithful to God for his entire life. That is not to say that he never did wrong, because he did and God rebuked him for it. But as a whole, his life is one that each of us should endeavor to emulate.

As with the other two kings, Hezekiah’s life could make a complete message on its own, even several messages. But I am grouping these together to show the contrast in their lives, and how they are characterized as a man of contempt, a man of change, and a man of consistency. Three things stand out in Hezekiah’s life that show his consistency. The first is His Purging. II Kings 18:4 says, “*He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.*” II Chronicles 29-31 records some more details of all the purging that Hezekiah did, but we are just going to focus on this synopsis in II Kings.

One thing that stands out about Hezekiah is that he was not afraid to obey the clear teaching of the Word of God. Some of the

things that he destroys had been around for years and had become common practice. But they were contrary to God's clear Word. There is much to learn from that. We need to make sure that everything that we are doing is approved by God's Word. Some things that have become acceptable in our day may not be acceptable according to Scripture. Are we willing to rid our lives, homes, and churches of things that God says is wrong, even if tradition has said it is all right? Just because it has become common practice does not mean that we should keep doing it. **Everything** that we do in our individual lives, in our homes, and in our churches should be Scriptural. It may not be popular, but it should be right!

The first statement says "*he removed the high places.*" High places, as the term indicates, were elevated places of worship. From the study of history, it seems that all nations had some form of high place where sacrifices were offered. In Deuteronomy 12:2-4, God told the Israelites to destroy all of the places where the heathen nations had made sacrifices. In the succeeding verses (11-14), God established one place of sacrifice—it would be the city of Jerusalem and the temple. Sadly, it seems that Israel never completely obeyed God. We will pick up at this point next month.