

## **2 Kings 12:1-21; 2 Chronicles 24:15-22**

### **The Morally Mixed Reign of King Jehoash**

Note: Joash and Jehoash are variant spellings of the same name. Jehoash is called Joash in the 2 Chronicles telling of the story.

Recall that Jehoash is the little boy who was rescued from Athaliah's murderous purge of the line of David, and was placed on the throne by the High Priest Jehoiada in the previous chapter.

**2 Kings 12:1** - "In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash began to reign; and forty years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba."

A forty-year reign was remarkable and considered a blessing.

**2 Kings 12:2-3** - "And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places."

High places were not only used for worship of idols. The Tabernacle was set up sometimes on high places, and the patriarchs had worshipped at altars built on high places. This was allowed before the Temple was established, but was no longer appropriate. Spiritually, we can't go back to knowing God only as Creator, for instance, once we realize our sin and know Him as Redeemer and Savior.

But Judah's idolatry was significantly worse than that described here. We find out what happened later in 2 Chronicles.

### **Repair of the Temple**

But first, King Jehoash set about to repair the Temple, which had fallen into disrepair under the previous reign of Athaliah.

**2 Kings 12:4-5** - "And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the LORD, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the LORD, Let the priests take it to them, every man of his acquaintance: and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found."

This describes three different funding sources -

- Each Israelite older than the age of twenty, rich or poor, was required to pay a half-shekel each year as "a ransom for his soul" since the death angel passed over them

**(Exodus 30:11-16)**

- The amount estimated by a priest whenever someone dedicates himself or his children as a vow to the Lord. (**Leviticus 27**)
- "money that a man purposes in his heart to bring" as free a will offering

Usually the priests and the Levites had reserved this income for their own support and the Temple services. Now these funds would go into repairing the Temple.

**Repairing Spiritual Breaches in the Temple**

Spiritually, one way of interpreting "repairing breaches in the Temple" can be seen as healing divisions and resentments, heresies or even simple misunderstandings in the body of Christ that hinder our love for one another and threaten the unity of the Spirit.

The "shekel of the Temple" was the only accepted coinage accepted. So "money changers" set up tables where people could exchange their local or foreign coins or their silver or gold rings or jewelry for the equivalent amount of Temple shekels.

Jesus, when asked about paying the Temple half-shekel, He had Peter pull a coin out of a fish's mouth (**Matthew 17:24-27**).

In Jesus' time, the money changers were scamming people, as well as making profit off selling sacrificial animals, which provoked Jesus to overturn their tables and accuse them of making His Father's House into a den of thieves rather than a house of prayer (**Matthew 21**)

But when the process was functioning properly, it reveals a spiritual truth.

People value different kinds of emotional psychological currency. What I value may not always be accepted by you as valid or "legal tender."

For instance, if I offend you and then ask your forgiveness, you may be expecting tears, and if I don't provide them, the offense remains. Or I may expect that you take my opinion seriously about some subject. But you may not show me the attention or response I'm expecting, and I get offended. We are not dealing in the same currency.

The only solution is to convert our currencies into the Temple shekel. We do this by going to the cross, appealing in humility to God, acknowledging our weakness. Then we know any offense is covered.

The silver of the Temple coinage represents the blood of redemption in Christ, which covers every sin and offense.

And in fact, it is repaid and restored with an additional 20 percent more!

- **Leviticus 6:2-5** - "If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbor in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbor; Or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein: Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, Or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering."

Do you have something against your brother? Are you holding a grudge? Jesus has already paid the restitution. We can receive His forgiveness and then offer forgiveness to others because the offense or harm has left us with 20 percent more than we had before!

The job of actually repairing breaches was then given to people who knew what they were doing - masons for breaches in stonework, carpenters for breaches in timber and beams. We each have our appointed gifts and offices in the Body Christ. All of us can be engaged in helping to repair breaches when we see them.

Our breaches are healed by Jesus' own stripes from the Roman whip.

If we could see that our disagreements and resentments are wounding the Body like stripes from the scourging whip making breaches on Christ's back, we would try to resolve them as quickly as possible. Don't crucify Him afresh!

### **Years of Neglect**

The wrong way to deal with a breach is to daub over it with "untempered mortar." To ignore it or provide a temporary fix that doesn't really solve the problem. (See **Ezekiel 13:10-12**) Instead of making peace, we only agree to a truce.

But after 23 years, nothing had been done. The priests and Levites had ignored the King's command.

**2 Kings 12:7** - "Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore receive no more money of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house."

It's surprising that Jehoiada the High Priest could have allowed this neglect, but he was by now extremely old and possibly not capable of oversight. And after 23 years, the king no doubt had known there was no progress. Jehoash had become extremely lax in his responsibilities.

So now the responsibility of collecting the money was taken from the priests, and arrangements were made to make it more transparent and accountable.

**2 Kings 12:9** - "But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD."

Then the money was regularly counted in the presence of court-appointed treasurers, who assured it would go toward repairs. The money was probably counted, the sum recorded, and the coins placed in bags and sealed.

**2 Kings 12:13-14** - "Howbeit there were not made for the house of the LORD bowls of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of the LORD: But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the LORD."

Athaliah had previously stripped the Temple of its vessels and utensils to place in the temple of Baal. But before spending money to create new utensils, the more important Temple breaches had to be repaired. The vessels and utensils were made later (See **2 Chronicles 24:14**).

**2 Kings 12:15** - "Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully."

The King had now put trustworthy, honest and talented men in charge of the repair project, and he didn't feel the need to micro-manage the project.

**2 Kings 12:16** - "The trespass money and sin money was not brought into the house of the LORD: it was the priests'."

Although the priests and Levites had previously failed to make the repairs, they still were allowed to receive enough from the normal sacrificial offerings to support themselves and their families.

### **The Decline of King Jehoash**

We have to go to the 2 Chronicles version now to find out how Jehoash backslides into idolatry.

- **2 Chronicles 24:15** - "But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died."

- **2 Chronicles 24:18-19** - "Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them. And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring

them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear."

What did the princes say? It's not clear. Was it a threat? Whatever the argument, Jehoash seemed ready to abandon Yahweh with little resistance - even after his repair project had been completed.

Never "hearken" to voices that tell you to turn your back on God.

### **The Murder of Zechariah in the Temple Courtyard**

One of the prophets God sent was Zechariah the son of the High Priest Jehoiada. (Note that this is a different Zechariah from the author of the book of Zechariah).

- **2 Chronicles 24:20-22** - "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. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it."

This was a heinous betrayal by the King - Jehoiada had saved Jehoash as a little child. Now he has his own son killed. King Jehoash had now come full circle - from godly shepherd of Israel to a wicked, murdering opponent of God.

(Throughout the Bible every patriarch, king and prophet displays some weakness, a bad side, pride or foolishness. The only perfect example is Jesus Himself. That's why Paul could say, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (**1 Corinthians 10:12**)).

### **The Seething Blood**

According to tradition, the blood of the murdered prophet could not be cleaned up or erased. Representing the nation's guilty conscience, the blood "seethed" and bubbled without rest. Like Cain's blood, which "cried out unto God from the ground" (**Genesis 4:10**). It wouldn't go away. Tradition says they tried to screen it off from view, but it remained seething until the destruction of the Temple.

When the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem 250 years after this, they encountered a mysterious and terrible sight in the Temple courtyard - blood seething unceasingly at a certain place among the stones.

The Babylonian general Nebuzaradan coerced the remaining priests to explain this phenomenon.

They admitted, "This is the blood of a priest and prophet who foretold the destruction of Jerusalem to Israel and they killed him (Sanhedrin 96b)."

"I will appease him!: the general said.

So he brought Torah scholars and slew them over the blood of Zechariah, but the blood did not cease [to boil]. He brought school children and slew them over Zechariah's blood, but the blood did not cease [to boil]. He brought the young priests and slew them over Zechariah's blood, but the blood did not cease [to boil] - even after he had slain 94,000 souls. He then approached Zechariah's blood and cried out – "Zechariah, Zechariah, I have already destroyed their finest, do you want me to massacre them all?" Immediately the blood ceased. "The sword of vengeance had drunk its fill."

General Nebuzaradan thought, "if this is the price for murdering just one person, what will be my fate?!" So he fled, sent his will and testament back home and then converted to Judaism (Talmud, Sanhedrin 96b).

Jesus refers to this incident when he is preaching against the scribes and Pharisees:

- **Matthew 23:33-36** - "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape the sentence of hell? Because of this, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and others you will flog in your synagogues and persecute in town after town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I tell you, all these things will come upon this generation."

(The two Zechariahs here are apparently conflated. The Zechariah in question was the son of Jehoiada; the latter prophet was the son of Berechiah)

The story of the seething blood has become part of the liturgy of the Fast of Ab for Jews up to the present day.

### **The Threat of Hazael and the End of Jehoash**

**2 Kings 12:17-18** - "Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem. And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem."

So after *repairing* the Temple and making new vessels and utensils earlier in his reign, Jehoash now *strips* the Temple again to pay off Hazael from attacking.

Finally Jehoash meets an ignoble end - his own servants murder him.

**2 Kings 12:20-21** - "And his servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and slew Joash in the house of Millo, which goeth down to Silla. For Jozachar the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, smote him, and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Amaziah his son reigned in his stead."