



Second Chronicles - Chapter Twenty Four

III 2 Chronicles 10:1-36:23 - The Kingdom of Judah Down to the Exile (continues)

III.g 2 Chronicles 23:8-24:27 - Joash (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Four

This chapter is loosely adapted from 2 Kings 11:21-12:21, and is supplemented with the Chronicler's own material. Joash's reign from 835-796 BC falls into two parts: a faithful period, while Jehoiada the priest was alive (vv.1-16), followed by apostasy ending in judgement (vv.17-27). The priest Zechariah spoke out against the king's apostasy and was stoned to death for doing so. Judgement came in the form of the Aramæans who sacked Judah and took most of the treasures away from Jerusalem to Damascus.

Throughout Second Chronicles, the religious character of a king can be readily gauged by his attitude toward the temple, and this is most evident in the case of Joash: in his faithful period, he is devoted to the restoration of the temple, but in his apostasy, he abandons it for idolatry (v.18). This leads directly to his death when he is murdered by his own servants.

III.g.iii 2 Chronicles 24:1-14 - Joash Repairs the Temple

Joash reigned for forty years, which meant that he died relatively young at only forty seven; in fact, he was assassinated. His main achievement in his early years was the restoration of the temple that had been neglected and even desecrated during the years of Queen Athaliah. Because of a delay by the Levites in starting the project, Joash summoned the priest Jehoiada and gave precise instructions for him to gather the tax that Moses had decreed was right for the purpose. A chest was built and placed in the temple courts and the money poured in, allowing the various craftsmen to be drafted in to undertake the work.

¹ Joash was seven years old when he began to reign; he reigned for forty years in Jerusalem; his mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba.

² Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of the priest Jehoiada. ³ Jehoiada got two wives for him, and he became the father of sons and daughters.

2 Chronicles 24:1-3

He reigned for forty years in Jerusalem. This was a long and initially blessed reign. Joash, also known as Jehoash, fell short of full commitment and complete godliness, but he did advance the cause of God in the kingdom of Judah.

Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of the priest Jehoiada. Joash was a relatively good king who rejected idolatrous worship whilst under the influence of his godly priest, which contrasts with the verdict on the idolaters Jehoram and Ahaziah in 2 Kings 8:18 and 8:27.

This does not imply that Joash only did what was right because of the priest but that he had the right education from a godly man and that is what made the difference. People will only worship God if they have had the chance to understand what that means from others who have come to know God for themselves.

Many commentators believe that after Jehoiada the priest died then Joash became less pious and was less influential in bringing the nation before God. His failure to remove the high places indicates that Joash implemented a halfway reformation and not a total reforming of Israel's worship. He did not take on the more difficult task of removing the high places; refer to 2 Kings 12:3. It seems that the people had become strangely attached to worshipping God in such ways that to remove them could have led to open dissention against the king. Doing what is right is never going to be easy.

Jehoiada got two wives for him is the Chronicler's own addition to the account in Second Kings. Jehoiada acts to ensure that the Davidic line will continue after its near destruction by making sure he became the father of sons and daughters.

⁴ Some time afterwards Joash decided to restore the house of the Lord. ⁵ He assembled the priests and the Levites and said to them, 'Go out to the cities of Judah and gather money from all Israel to repair the house of your God, year by year; and see that you act quickly.' But the Levites did not act quickly. ⁶ So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief, and said to him, 'Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the servant of the Lord, on the congregation of Israel for the tent of the covenant?'

⁷ For the children of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God, and had even used all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord for the Baals.

2 Chronicles 24:4-7

Some time afterwards Joash decided to restore the house of the Lord. This indicated the godly concern that Joash had regarding the condition of the temple. He knew that a prosperous and secure kingdom mattered little if the things of God were neglected or despised. Restore is literally 'to renew'. The temple had been despoiled by Athaliah and her family (v.7) and probably neglected before that time. He also knew that the condition of the temple was a valid measurement of the heart and passion of the people of God for the things of God. The temple was not God; but neglect and despising of the temple reflected neglect and despising of God because it was the place where he has put his name.

Gather money from all Israel to repair the house of your God. The temple of the Lord had suffered neglect during the years in which the worship of Baal was encouraged, and to neglect a temple in the ancient world was to neglect its deity and to risk his or her disapproval and the possible undermining of a king's legitimate authority to rule. This is why a king such as Esarhaddon of Assyria had servants travelling around his realm and sending him reports about the state of its temples. Three sources of income are specified as the repair project gets underway in Second Kings. Two of these represent regular temple income: payments made in relation to the periodic census of male Israelites: <<**the money for which each person is assessed**>> (2 Kings 12:4b), i.e. the half shekel each Israelite older than the age of twenty had to pay every year as stipulated in Exodus 30:11-16; and monetary equivalents for things dedicated to God, that is, <<**the money from the assessment of persons**>> (2 Kings 12:4c). This was a kind of property tax based on the personal assessment of each individual; refer to Leviticus 27:1-25. Second Kings refers to three sources of revenue, but the Chronicler specifies instead only the census tax imposed by Moses for the construction and maintenance of the tabernacle. The typological correspondence and continuity between the Mosaic tabernacle and the temple is one of the Chronicler's characteristic themes.

But the Levites did not act quickly. For some reason the Levites did not share the same passion as King Joash did for the condition of the temple. Perhaps they felt that the townspeople of the outer towns would not embrace and support this work. Nevertheless, Joash held them to account and got the work moving. Verses 5-6 offer a rare note of criticism of the priests and Levites for failing to perform their task.

Athaliah had even used all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord for the Baals. This explains why the temple was in such disrepair. It was not just normal

wear and tear due to its usage; it was a deliberate campaign against the temple and the worship of the true God prompted by Athaliah and her sons. Indeed, it had probably been in decline since the days of the last good king, Jehoshaphat. All the items of value that had been in the temple had been removed to decorate the temple of Baal. It is not clear if these treasures were then destroyed along with the temple itself in Chapter 23 or whether they were now considered desecrated and therefore unfit to be returned to the temple of the Lord.

⁸ So the king gave command, and they made a chest, and set it outside the gate of the house of the Lord. ⁹ A proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem to bring in for the Lord the tax that Moses the servant of God laid on Israel in the wilderness. ¹⁰ All the leaders and all the people rejoiced, and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until it was full. ¹¹ Whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was a large amount of money in it, the king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. So they did day after day, and collected money in abundance.

2 Chronicles 24:8-11

So the king gave command, and they made a chest, and set it outside the gate of the house of the Lord. Joash's initiative allowed the people to bring their offerings directly to the temple. Under the direction of King Joash, the priests gave the people the opportunity to give. Even willing givers should be given an opportunity. The chest was placed strategically with high visibility showing the importance that was placed on raising the funds for the building work.

All the leaders and all the people rejoiced, and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until it was full. The Chronicler wants his readers to see the temple not as a burden but as a joyful duty: <<*They still kept bringing him freewill-offerings every morning, so that all the artisans who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task being performed, and said to Moses, 'The people are bringing much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.'* So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp: 'No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.' So the people were restrained from bringing; for what they had already brought was more than enough to do all the work>> (Exodus 36:3b-7). This can be seen as they collected money in abundance. Through the careful and diligent administration of these freely given gifts, an abundance of money was gathered for

the work. God cares not only that his people give generously, but also that their gifts be diligently and carefully administered.

This outpouring of giving to the temple by the leaders and the people is reminiscent of the time when David was gathering resources for its initial building to be undertaken after his death: <<Then the leaders of ancestral houses made their freewill-offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, and the officers over the king's work. They gave for the service of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. Whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the care of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced because these had given willingly, for with single mind they had offered freely to the Lord; King David also rejoiced greatly>> (1 Chronicles 29:6-9).

Second Kings 12:6-13 indicates that part of the problem was poor and wasteful administration. Therefore King Joash got to the heart of the problem and through Jehoiada the priest he implemented a system where the money would be set aside, saved and then wisely spent for the repair and refurbishing of the temple.

The king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest. These were the two key officials in the land: one had overall responsibility for the administration of government and the other was responsible for all aspects of the temple, as well as the spiritual life of the nation.

¹² The king and Jehoiada gave it to those who had charge of the work of the house of the Lord, and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the Lord, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the Lord. ¹³ So those who were engaged in the work laboured, and the repairs went forward at their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it. ¹⁴ When they had finished, they brought the rest of the money to the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the Lord, utensils for the service and for the burnt-offerings, and ladles, and vessels of gold and silver. They offered burnt-offerings in the house of the Lord regularly all the days of Jehoiada.

2 Chronicles 24:12-14

The king and Jehoiada gave it to those who had charge of the work of the house of the Lord. A great deal of trust was placed in these supervisors, not only to ensure the work was completed to the highest standard but to do so with great

honesty: <<*They did not ask for an account from those into whose hand they delivered the money to pay out to the workers, for they dealt honestly*>> (2 Kings 12:15).

So those who were engaged in the work laboured, and the repairs went forward at their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it. God's blessing was clearly on the work, but he would not do the work for them. So the king and the priest wisely hired the right kind of workers and paid them directly, so that money would not be lost or wasted in administration.

When they had finished, they brought the rest of the money to the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the Lord. The repairs were made according to the original design, and the surplus funds were used for the temple vessels. The people were so generous, and the administration was so wise and honest, that there was an excess of money for the restoration project, money which was given to supply new articles for the house of the Lord. This was wonderful evidence of both God's blessing and man's generosity and wise stewardship.

They offered burnt-offerings in the house of the Lord regularly all the days of Jehoiada. The Chronicler specifies that Joash's revival of temple worship lasted while Jehoiada was still alive, but did not extend into his later years of apostasy following Jehoiada's death.

III.g.iv 2 Chronicles 24:15-22 - Apostasy of Joash

Following the death of the priest Jehoiada, certain officials in Judah managed to persuade the king to turn away from the Lord and to follow the pagan practices that had been set up under the influence of the house of Ahab. The Lord was angry because of this and sent prophets to speak out against them. This included Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, whom the king had executed for speaking out.

¹⁵ But Jehoiada grew old and full of days, and died; he was one hundred and thirty years old at his death. ¹⁶ And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and for God and his house.

2 Chronicles 24:15-16

But Jehoiada grew old and full of days, and died. This section is found only in Chronicles. Jehoiada's age at death, one hundred and thirty, exceeds that of Aaron: <<*Aaron was one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor*>> (Numbers 33:39), and Moses: <<*Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigour had not abated*>> (Deuteronomy 34:7).

This unusually long life for this influential priest was evidence of both God's blessing upon his godly life, and God's mercy towards King Joash and Judah. When Joash was no longer under the influence of Jehoiada, he took a definite turn for the worse, and in his mercy God delayed this as long as possible.

And they buried him in the city of David among the kings. His burial among the kings is unique for a high priest. The measure of his influence is indicated by the honoured burial place they gave Jehoiada.

¹⁷ Now after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and did obeisance to the king; then the king listened to them. ¹⁸ They abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and served the sacred poles and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs. ¹⁹ Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the Lord; they testified against them, but they would not listen.

2 Chronicles 24:17-19

Now after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and did obeisance to the king; then the king listened to them. Joash seems to have been a fundamentally weak man; he did what was right when he was under the influence of the godly Jehoiada, but when he was under the influence of these other leaders of Judah, who led the country back into idolatry, he was easily led astray from doing what was right. Without Jehoiada's influence, Joash succumbs to the evil counsel of certain leaders who identified with the old ways of the house of Ahab. As always in Chronicles, God's punishment for apostasy is not immediate but is preceded by the prophetic summons to repentance: <<*The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling-place*>> (2 Chronicles 36:15).

Charles Spurgeon comments on Joash, "All that Joash had done was to give his heart to Jehoiada, not to Jehovah. It is very easy to be outwardly religious by giving your heart to your mother, or your father, or your aunt, or your uncle, or some good person who helps you to do what is right. You are doing all this out of love to them, which is at best but a very secondary motive. God says, 'My son, give me thine heart.'"

They abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their ancestors. They only felt free to worship idols after they had forsaken the house of God. It showed both the shallowness of their commitment to God, and the preservative effect of their prior attendance.

Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the Lord; they testified against them, but they would not listen. This second sin was greater than the

initial sins of weakness and idolatry. Joash would not listen to God's prophets or the correction they brought to him. This was a common failing among the Israelites: <<*For many years you were patient with them, and warned them by your spirit through your prophets; yet they would not listen. Therefore you handed them over to the peoples of the lands*>> (Nehemiah 9:30), <<*And though the Lord persistently sent you all his servants the prophets, you have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear*>> (Jeremiah 25:4), <<*We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land*>> (Daniel 9:6), and something they would continue to do which is confirmed by Jesus in relation to his own death and resurrection: <<*He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead"*>> (Luke 16:31).

²⁰ Then the spirit of God took possession of Zechariah son of the priest Jehoiada; he stood above the people and said to them, 'Thus says God: Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has also forsaken you.'²¹ But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the Lord.²² King Joash did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. As he was dying, he said, 'May the Lord see and avenge!'

2 Chronicles 24:20-22

Then the spirit of God took possession of Zechariah son of the priest Jehoiada; he stood above the people and said to them. The speech by Zechariah is characteristic of the Chronicler's vocabulary and theology; refer to 1 Chronicles 28:9, 2 Chronicles 7:19, 7:22 and 15:2.

This prophet, the son of the influential priest, had a position of leadership as a priest. The phrase he stood above the people probably indicates that he was a leading priest, one who pronounced the priestly benediction over the assembly of Israel.

The description of the spirit of God coming upon Zechariah is significant. God pronounced judgement through a prophesying priest, Jehoiada's son Zechariah, whom the Spirit of God possessed or 'clothed'. Two of the three OT examples of this distinctive expression occur in Chronicles; the others are: <<*But the spirit of the Lord took possession of Gideon; and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him*>> (Judges 6:34), and: <<*Then the spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the Thirty, and he said, 'We are yours, O David; and with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to the*

one who helps you! For your God is the one who helps you.’ Then David received them, and made them officers of his troops>> (1 Chronicles 12:18).

Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has also forsaken you. The Chronicler includes this aspect of the account - not included in the Second Kings record - especially because this principle was relevant to the returned exiles in the day Chronicles was written. They needed to remember the principle: *<<Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you>>* (James 4:8a), and the inverse of that principle.

But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the Lord. Both the leaders and the common people conspired to murder Zechariah. They not only rejected his message, they also silenced the prophet with the words of conviction.

May the Lord see and avenge! Zechariah’s dying words were a plea to God, asking him to repay according to his justice. It is the perfect prayer of the persecuted, leaving all vengeance in the hand and wisdom of God. His dying words are an appeal for divine justice. Jesus may have used this incident as an illustration of the judgement coming on his own violent and unbelieving generation: *<<so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar>>* (Matthew 23:35).

The interval from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah encompasses all the OT biblical history. Abel was the first person murdered in the OT and Zechariah is the last murdered, since 2 Chronicles, where the murder of Zechariah is recorded, is the last book of the Hebrew canon. There is a difficulty with the phrase ‘son of Barachiah’ however, since in v.20 Zechariah is called the son of Jehoiada, while the more famous prophet, who wrote the Book of Zechariah, is the son of Barachiah, as stated in Zechariah 1:1. Possible solutions for this difficulty are offered in the comments on Luke 11:47-51.

This whole evil tragedy is filled with ironies:

- The people did not listen to the command of the Lord, but they did listen to the evil command of King Joash.
- Joash answered the kindness of Jehoiada to him with cruelty to the son of Jehoiada simply because he did not like to hear the truth.
- Zechariah was murdered in the same place where his father Jehoiada had anointed Joash as king; refer to 2 Chronicles 23:10-11.

III.g.v 2 Chronicles 24:23-27 - Death of Joash

As punishment for his apostasy the Lord allowed a relatively weak Aramæan army to come against the stronger Judæans and prevail. They removed all the treasures

from Judah and took it to their king in Damascus, leaving Joash wounded from the battle. Because he had led Judah astray and had killed Zechariah, his servants murdered him in his bed and he was succeeded by his son Amaziah.

This follows the outline of 2 Kings 12:17-21, but is mainly the Chronicler's own material. Defeat by the smaller Aramæan army is a reversal of Judah's earlier experience in 2 Chronicles 14:8-9 and a sign of divine judgement. Joash's fate is a case of measure for measure.

The account in Second Kings of this invasion differs from the Chronicler's: <<*At that time King Hazael of Aram went up, fought against Gath, and took it. But when Hazael set his face to go up against Jerusalem, King Jehoash of Judah took all the votive gifts that Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his ancestors, the kings of Judah, had dedicated, as well as his own votive gifts, all the gold that was found in the treasuries of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and sent these to King Hazael of Aram. Then Hazael withdrew from Jerusalem*>> (2 Kings 12:17-18). There is no indication of an actual battle or Joash, called Jehoash in that narrative, being injured. However, it could have been that he gave the votive gifts away after being injured and realising that defeat was inevitable.

²³ At the end of the year the army of Aram came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the officials of the people from among them, and sent all the booty they took to the king of Damascus. ²⁴ Although the army of Aram had come with few men, the Lord delivered into their hand a very great army, because they had abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors. Thus they executed judgement on Joash.

2 Chronicles 24:23-24

At the end of the year the army of Aram came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the officials of the people from among them, and sent all the booty they took to the king of Damascus. The leaders who were an unwise and ungodly influence upon Joash were the same leaders who were destroyed and had their spoil plundered.

Although the army of Aram had come with few men, the Lord delivered into their hand a very great army, because they had abandoned the Lord. Under the judgement of God, the small army of the Aramæans overcame the very great army of Judah. God promised that his obedient people would be blessed with success far beyond their numbers: <<*Five of you shall give chase to a hundred, and a hundred of you shall give chase to ten thousand; your enemies shall fall before you by the sword*>> (Leviticus 26:8), and that when disobedient, they would

suffer disproportionate defeat: <<*I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down by your enemies; your foes shall rule over you, and you shall flee though no one pursues you*>> (Leviticus 26:17), and: <<*They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though no one pursues; and you shall have no power to stand against your enemies*>> (Leviticus 26:37).

²⁵ When they had withdrawn, leaving him severely wounded, his servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son of the priest Jehoiada, and they killed him on his bed. So he died; and they buried him in the city of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings. ²⁶ Those who conspired against him were Zabad son of Shimeath the Ammonite, and Jehozabad son of Shimrith the Moabite. ²⁷ Accounts of his sons, and of the many oracles against him, and of the rebuilding of the house of God are written in the Commentary on the Book of the Kings. And his son Amaziah succeeded him.

2 Chronicles 24:25-27

His servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son of the priest Jehoiada, and they killed him on his bed. This is startling, and shows that the blessing of God had vanished long before from the compromised king who began so well, but failed to finish well. As Joash had supported those who conspired to kill Zechariah (v.21), now his own officials conspired to do the same to him in revenge for Zechariah's death. They were prompted to assassinate Joash because of the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest. Yet there may also have been the fact of the recent defeat by Aram.

They did not bury him in the tombs of the kings. His exclusion from the tombs of the kings is in pointed contrast with Jehoiada (v.16).

Accounts of his sons, and of the many oracles against him, and of the rebuilding of the house of God are written in the Commentary on the Book of the Kings. This is unlikely to be the Book of Kings that the Chronicler used as part of his source material but other records kept by scribes of all the notable events that occurred during his reign. These records are now lost to history.

The study of the story of Joash offers a striking illustration of how a weak man is easily influenced. It emphasises the need for strong individual character, which can only be created by directly dealing with God. Charles Spurgeon comments on Joash, "Yes, and there are some whose hearts are not right towards God, who nevertheless are very zealous about the externals of divine worship. It is a much easier thing to build a temple for God than it is to be a temple for God; and it is a much more common thing for persons to show zeal in repairing temples than in reforming their own manners." And again, "There

was a want of principle in Joash, and it is of that I want to warn all our friends. Do not, I pray you, be satisfied with the practice of piety without the principles of piety. It is not enough to have a correct creed; you must have a renewed heart. It is not sufficient to have an ornate ritual; you must have a holy life, and to be holy you must be renewed by the Holy Spirit. If this change is not wrought in you by the Holy Ghost, you who yield so readily to good will yield just as quickly to evil.”