



Second Kings - Chapter Twelve

III 2 Kings 11:1-12:21 - Joash (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Twelve

King Jehoash was basically a good king and set about returning the people of Judah to the Lord. However, he did not rid the country of the high places where some people still made offerings to the Lord rather than coming to the temple. He also set about having the temple repaired for it had been neglected for many years. After some delays the work was undertaken.

When King Hazael of Aram came up against Jerusalem King Joash decided to pay him rather than face him in battle and the Aramæans withdrew from the city. After a forty year reign, Jehoash was killed by two of his servants and his son Amaziah ascended to the throne.

III.d 2 Kings 12:1-16 - The Temple Repaired

Jehoash would prove to be a good king restoring the temple following years of neglect. However, he did not have the high places removed and he allowed the priests to delay the work of restoring the temple.

¹ In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash began to reign; he reigned for forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba.

² Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all his days, because the priest Jehoiada instructed him. ³ Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away; the people continued to sacrifice and make offerings on the high places.

2 Kings 12:1-3

In the seventh year of Jehu was 835 BC.

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

Jehoash did what was right. King Jehoash is also known as Joash. He was a relatively good king who rejected idolatrous worship, which contrasts with the verdict on the idolaters Jehoram and Ahaziah in 2 Kings 8:18 and 8:27, but the high places were not taken away.

The high places is the standard translation of the Hebrew *bamot*, but it is not clear that height, whether natural or artificial, was an intrinsic feature of these worship sites. The idea is simply that of publicly accessible structures, including unenclosed altars and temples with altars, within which or on which offerings were made to God or the gods. The continuation and proliferation of these local places of worship, as opposed to the one place of worship described in Deuteronomy Chapter 12, is one of the main concerns of the authors of 1-2 Kings; refer to 1 Kings 22:43, and 2 Kings 14:4, 15:4 and 15:35. Solomon begins by tolerating worship of the Lord at these places and ends up being drawn into full-blown apostasy: <<***Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrificed to their gods***>> (1 Kings 11:7-8). Solomon's example was later followed by many in Israel and Judah; for example, 1 Kings 12:28-31 and 2 Kings 21:3-9.

Because the priest Jehoiada instructed him. This does not imply that Jehoash 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 Jehoash became less pious and was less influential in bringing the nation before God. His failure to remove the high places indicates that Jehoash 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. It seems that the people had become strangely attached to worshipping God in such ways that to remove them could have led to open dissent against the king. Doing what is right is never going to be easy.

⁴ Jehoash said to the priests, 'All the money offered as sacred donations that is brought into the house of the Lord, the money for which each person is assessed – the money from the assessment of persons – and the money from the voluntary offerings brought into the

house of the Lord, ⁵ let the priests receive from each of the donors; and let them repair the house wherever any need of repairs is discovered.’

2 Kings 12:4-5

Let them repair the house. 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 here. 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; i.e. the half shekel each Israelite older than the age of twenty had to pay every year (Exodus 30:11-16); and monetary equivalents for things dedicated to God, that is, the money from the assessment of persons - a kind of property tax based on the personal assessment of each individual; refer to Leviticus 27:1-25.

The money from the voluntary offerings brought into the house of the Lord refers to a special fund-raising campaign similar to that initiated by Moses, at God’s command, in Exodus Chapter 35, where people also give from the heart. These were freely given offerings over and above the required donations.

⁶ But by the twenty-third year of King Jehoash the priests had made no repairs to the house. ⁷ Therefore King Jehoash summoned the priest Jehoiada with the other priests and said to them, ‘Why are you not repairing the house? Now therefore do not accept any more money from your donors but hand it over for the repair of the house.’ ⁸ So the priests agreed that they would neither accept more money from the people nor repair the house.

2 Kings 12:6-8

Why are you not repairing the house? For more than twenty years, and probably for some considerable time before that, the priests and Levites had been collecting the income but had used it for themselves rather than using it for the purpose that the king had decreed and in line with their responsibilities for maintaining the temple.

Building projects take a long time and renovating an old building is almost always more difficult and expensive than building a new one. Nevertheless, it

appears that King Jehoash had to wait a very long time until the damages of the temple were repaired. The work was going far too slowly.

Hand it over for the repair of the house. King Joash got to the heart of the problem - the building project was plagued by poor administration and financial mismanagement. 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. Joash's initial plan was to leave the matter to the priests themselves (vv.4-5). But this plan fails because, it is implied, the priests are not eager to spend good money on mere buildings, even though they are well provided for through the normal sacrificial system; refer to Numbers 5:5-10. Joash himself therefore takes control of the project, ensuring that the income goes directly to the workmen appointed to supervise the work.

So the priests agreed that they would neither accept more money from the people nor repair the house. At first this verse seems strange. However, one interpretation is that the priests realised they were not fulfilling their role as guardians of the temple and the Tanakh adds the comment in parenthesis that they would not personally undertake the work. This indicates, quite rightly, that such work needed the expertise of appropriately skilled tradesmen.

⁹ Then the priest Jehoiada took a chest, made a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar on the right side as one entered the house of the Lord; the priests who guarded the threshold put in it all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord. ¹⁰ Whenever they saw that there was a great deal of money in the chest, the king's secretary and the high priest went up, counted the money that was found in the house of the Lord, and tied it up in bags. ¹¹ They would give the money that was weighed out into the hands of the workers who had the oversight of the house of the Lord; then they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders who worked on the house of the Lord, ¹² to the masons and the stonecutters, as well as to buy timber and quarried stone for making repairs on the house of the Lord, as well as for any outlay for repairs of the house.

2 Kings 12:9-12

Then the priest Jehoiada took a chest, made a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar on the right side as one entered the house of the Lord. Under the direction of King Jehoash, 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.

¹³ But for the house of the Lord no basins of silver, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, or any vessels of gold, or of silver, were made from the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, ¹⁴ for that was given to the workers who were repairing the house of the Lord with it. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ The money from the guilt-offerings and the money from the sin-offerings was not brought into the house of the Lord; it belonged to the priests.

2 Kings 12:13-16

But for the house of the Lord no basins of silver, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, or any vessels of gold, or of silver, were made from the money that was brought into the house of the Lord. Joash's achievements, after all his efforts, are somewhat disappointing: only a very humble restoration of the temple has taken place, and it stands as a poor reflection of its former glory described in 1 Kings Chapters 6 and 7. Once again the reader is reminded of the 'affliction of the house of David' theme: <<*For this reason I will punish the descendants of David, but not for ever*>> (1 Kings 11:39), that has surfaced in the description of even the best of the post-Solomonic Judæan kings.

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. Through good administration of the project, they were able to find men who could be trusted to use the money wisely and honestly. The project was previously stalled, not because of a lack of money, but because of poor financial and project management, and not having the appropriate skilled workers employed on the task.

The money from the guilt-offerings and the money from the sin-offerings was not brought into the house of the Lord; it belonged to the priests. The point is made that the project succeeded without taking anything away from the priests. The temple was not repaired and refurbished at their expense; they still received money and food from the guilt-offerings and from the sin-offerings.

III.e 2 Kings 12:17-18 - Hazael Threatens Jerusalem

The Aramæans were once again at war and came up against Jerusalem. Rather than confront them, Jehoash paid King Hazael to withdraw from the city.

The Chronicler reveals that Joash turned to paganism following the death of the priest Jehoiada and the Aramæans came as judgement on him for doing so: <<*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 24:24). The Chronicler also records that Joash was wounded in the battle with the Aramæans, which may have been the reason he gave them the treasure.



Aram Captures Gilead circa 825-798 BC

The Aramæans under Hazael continued to plague Israel during Jehu's reign, eventually capturing all of Gilead from Aroer on the Arnon River to Bashan in the north. Later during the reign of Jehoash, Hazael attacked Gath on the western border of Judah, and Jehoash sent Hazael treasures from the temple of the Lord to persuade him to withdraw from attacking Jerusalem.

¹⁷ 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,
¹⁸ 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

Took all the votive gifts. The theme of affliction continues: Judah, too, is oppressed by King Hazael of Aram (2 Kings 10:32-33 describes his assault on Israel), as he turns east from the Philistine city of Gath to attack Jerusalem. This presupposes that Hazael could move at will through Israelite territory to the north, so that the campaign is best dated during the reign of Jehu's son Jehoahaz (circa 815-799 BC), who fared even worse than his father at the hands of Aram; refer to 2 Kings 13:1-7 and 13:22-23. Like King Asa, Joash knows no Solomonic peace during his rule, and tribute flows north from Israel to Aram, instead of south from Aram to Israel; refer to 1 Kings 15:18-24. Both Asa and Joash in fact empty the treasuries of the house of the Lord and of the king's house. Long past are those days when the king of Israel had 'rest on every side' as in the days of Solomon 1 Kings 5:4. Much later, following the return from Babylonian exile, the prophet Haggai foretold that one day the nations would bring their wealth to the temple: <<***For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendour, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts***>> (Haggai 2:6-8). Refer to the comments made on these verses elsewhere on the website.

At this time, the kingdom of Aram attacked Judah with an inferior army, but God used them as an instrument of judgement against the disobedient Joash. King Joash was wounded in a battle outside of Jerusalem. The Chronicler tells the story: <<***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. 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).

Instead of trusting God, Jehoash traded prior blessing - the sacred treasures of the temple - to protect his capital and kingdom against the attacking Aramæans. He was in a difficult place: wounded, with an attacking and successful army bearing down on Jerusalem. He found it hard to trust God in this difficult place because he stopped trusting God in easier circumstances long before.

III.f 2 Kings 12:19-21 - Death of Joash

Even though he was a good king and had ruled for forty years, Jehoash, again called Joash at the end of the account, was killed by two of his servants and his son Amaziah succeeded him.

¹⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ²⁰ His servants arose, made a conspiracy, and killed Joash in the house of Millo, on the way that goes down to Silla. ²¹ It was Jozacar son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer, his servants, who struck him down, so that he died. He was buried with his ancestors in the city of David; then his son Amaziah succeeded him.

2 Kings 12:19-21

Now the rest of the acts of Joash. Jehoash is once again referred to by his original name. There is no record of repentance on Joash's part. He never came back to or fulfilled his bright early promise.

The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah was a separate record from Kings and Chronicles to which the authors had access that recorded everything of significance that occurred during the reign of the kings.

His servants arose, made a conspiracy, and killed Joash in the house of Millo.

This is startling, and shows that the blessing of God long before vanished from the compromised king who began so well, but failed to finish well.

Silla was probably a neighbourhood of Jerusalem below 'the Millo', refer to the comment made on 2 Samuel 5:9, and the house of Millo was perhaps a prominent building in the Millo.