

The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 18: Judah's Troubled Kings

2 Chronicles 21:1-24:27

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson confronts head-on the unbiblical idea of "once saved, always saved." Joash is a sobering case study: a man rescued by God, raised in the temple, zealous for God's house, who nevertheless turned away after his godly mentor died and ended his life as a persecutor and murderer. The Chronicler also displays God's covenant faithfulness in preserving David's line through Athaliah's slaughter, pointing forward to the Christ who would come from that very line. The teacher should establish both truths firmly: God is utterly faithful to His promises, and individuals can and do fall away when they fail to make faith their own and persevere.

But the heart of this lesson is intensely personal. Many sitting in the class were raised in the church, leaning on a parent's or preacher's or spouse's faith. The aim is to make them ask the terrifying and clarifying question Joash never asked himself: is this faith actually mine, or am I borrowing someone else's? Borrowed faith feels real until the person we borrowed it from is gone. The teacher should press the class toward a faith with roots of its own (Matthew 13:21), and toward the daily mutual encouragement Hebrews commands, so that no one drifts as Joash drifted.

Handle the warnings with both gravity and hope. The point is not to terrify believers into despair but to wake the complacent and to drive every student into a deeper, personal, persevering grip on Christ, encouraged by a community that holds one another up.

Question 1

Student Question:

Jehoram murdered his brothers and led Judah into idolatry, dying unmourned and unregretted (21:4-20). What does the Chronicler want us to understand about sin, consequence, and the kind of legacy a life leaves behind?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jehoram secured his throne by killing all six of his brothers and some of the princes of Israel (21:4). He married a daughter of Ahab and walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, leading Judah into spiritual harlotry (21:6, 11). Chronicles is showing how the poison of the northern dynasty seeped into Judah through marriage and alliance.

Despite Jehoram's wickedness, Chronicles notes that the LORD was unwilling to destroy the house of David because of the covenant He had made, and because He promised to give a lamp to David and his sons forever (21:7). Even in judgment, God's covenant faithfulness restrains total destruction. This is a crucial thread that runs through the whole lesson.

Jehoram receives a letter from Elijah announcing judgment, loses his wealth and family to invaders, and dies of a horrible incurable disease of the bowels (21:12–19). The Chronicler's most damning line is the epitaph: he departed with no one's regret, and was buried in the city of David but not in the tombs of the kings (21:20).

The teaching point is the reality of sin and personal accountability. Jehoram was not the victim of inherited fate; he chose Ahab's ways and reaped their bitter fruit. A life can hold great power and still leave nothing but relief at its end. The legacy we leave is determined by the God we serve and the choices we make (Galatians 6:7–8).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin carries real consequences in this life and the next.
- Personal accountability: Jehoram chose his path and reaped its fruit.
- God's covenant faithfulness restrains judgment even on the wicked line.
- The kind of legacy a self-serving life leaves behind.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean for a person to die with no one's regret, and how does one avoid it?
- How do today's choices quietly write tomorrow's legacy?
- Where do you see God's restraining mercy even in seasons of judgment?

Question 2

Student Question:

Jehoram's wickedness was deeply shaped by his marriage into the house of Ahab. Where do you see ungodly influences shaping your own choices, and what would it cost to break free?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jehoram's downfall was bound up with his marriage into Ahab's house. The ungodly alliance reshaped his values and his worship. Influences we bind ourselves to do not stay neutral; they form us.

This question invites the student to identify the ungodly influences shaping their own decisions, whether relationships, media, workplace cultures, or habits. Like Jehoram's marriage, these often work slowly and invisibly until the damage is done.

Breaking free usually costs something: comfort, approval, convenience, or a relationship. The teacher should help the class count that cost honestly while holding out the freedom and life that come from realigning with God (Romans 12:2).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- How ungodly influences slowly reshape our values.
- Identifying the specific influences forming our choices.
- Counting the cost of breaking free from harmful entanglements.

Discussion Prompts

- What influence in your life is shaping you more than you realized?
- How do ungodly influences tend to work slowly rather than all at once?
- What would it cost you to break free, and what would you gain?

Question 3

Student Question:

When Athaliah tried to destroy the entire royal line, one baby was hidden in the house of God and the line of David survived (22:10–12). What does this preservation reveal about God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises even in the darkest hour?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

When Ahaziah was killed, his mother Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri and daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, seized power by murdering all the royal offspring (22:10). It was the most dangerous moment for the Davidic line in its history. If she had succeeded completely, the promise of an everlasting throne for David would have appeared to fail.

But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of Jehoiada the priest, stole the infant Joash away and hid him in the house of God for six years while Athaliah reigned (22:11–12). The line of David, and with it the messianic promise, survived in a single hidden child sheltered in the temple.

This is one of the great displays of God’s covenant faithfulness in Scripture. God had promised David a lamp that would not go out (21:7; 2 Samuel 7:12–16). Human wickedness raged, but the promise could not be destroyed, because it rested on God’s own faithfulness, not on human strength.

The teacher should connect this to the larger biblical story. From this preserved line would eventually come Jesus, the Son of David, in whom the everlasting kingdom is established, reigning now at God’s right hand (Acts 2:29–36; Luke 1:32–33). God’s faithfulness to a hidden baby in a dark age was ultimately faithfulness to the whole world’s salvation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's covenant faithfulness preserved through the darkest hour.
- The promise to David rests on God's faithfulness, not human strength.
- The line of David leading to Christ, the true and everlasting King.
- God's providence working through ordinary courage like Jehosheba's.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the survival of one hidden baby reveal the trustworthiness of God's promises?
- Where in your life do God's promises seem to hang by a thread right now?
- How does this episode point forward to Christ, the Son of David?

Question 4

Student Question:

When have you been tempted to think God's promises had failed because circumstances looked hopeless, and how does Joash hidden in the temple speak to that fear?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves the truth of God's faithfulness into the student's fears. When circumstances look hopeless, we are tempted to conclude that God's promises have failed. The hidden Joash answers that fear: God was at work in the dark even when no one could see it.

Athaliah reigned for six years believing she had won. But the king was alive the whole time, hidden in God's house. God's purposes were advancing precisely when they seemed defeated.

Encourage the class to bring a specific hopeless-looking situation to this text: a wayward child, a long illness, a prayer unanswered for years. The point is not that every earthly circumstance will turn out as we wish, but that God's promises never fail and He is at work even when we cannot see it (Romans 8:28).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temptation to believe God's promises have failed when things look hopeless.
- God working unseen even in our darkest seasons.
- Anchoring hope in God's faithfulness rather than visible circumstances.

Discussion Prompts

- When have circumstances tempted you to doubt God's promises?
- How does the hidden Joash speak to a situation that looks hopeless to you now?
- What is the difference between trusting God's promises and demanding a particular outcome?

Question 5

Student Question:

Jehoiada the priest risked everything to preserve the line, crown the rightful king, and restore covenant worship (23:1–21). What does his faithfulness teach us about the role of godly leadership in preserving God’s people and God’s truth?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After six years, Jehoiada the priest acted. He made a careful covenant with the commanders, organized the Levites and people, brought out the young king, crowned him, and proclaimed, long live the king (23:1–11). Athaliah was put to death, and Jehoiada led the people in renewing covenant with the LORD, tearing down the house of Baal and restoring proper worship at the temple (23:16–21).

Jehoiada is the quiet hero of these chapters. For six years he sheltered the child and waited. Then he acted with wisdom, courage, and care for both the throne and true worship. His leadership preserved God’s people, God’s promise, and God’s worship all at once.

Notice that Jehoiada did not seize power for himself, though he easily could have. He used his influence to restore the rightful king and to reestablish the worship of the LORD. Godly leadership serves God’s purposes rather than self-advancement.

For the church, Jehoiada models the kind of faithful, courageous, self-effacing leadership that preserves God’s truth across generations. Elders and teachers are charged to guard the flock and the faith handed down (Acts 20:28–32; 2 Timothy 2:2). The health of God’s people often rests on the quiet faithfulness of leaders like Jehoiada.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Godly leadership that preserves God’s people, promise, and worship.
- Faithful waiting followed by courageous action at the right time.
- Using influence to serve God’s purposes rather than self.
- Leaders guarding the truth handed down across generations.

Discussion Prompts

- What made Jehoiada’s leadership both courageous and self-effacing?
- How does the faithfulness of leaders preserve the faith for the next generation?
- Who has been a Jehoiada in your spiritual life, and have you thanked them?

Question 6

Student Question:

Jehoiada served quietly and faithfully for decades without fanfare. Where is God calling you to a steady, unglamorous faithfulness that may never be noticed but matters eternally?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jehoiada's decades of quiet service preceded his one decisive public act. Most of his faithfulness was hidden: sheltering a child, teaching a king, guarding the worship of God year after year without applause.

This question calls the student to steady, unglamorous faithfulness. Much of the most important kingdom work is unseen: raising children in the Lord, serving behind the scenes, praying, encouraging, quietly doing right when no one notices.

The teacher should affirm that God sees and rewards faithfulness that the world overlooks (Matthew 6:4; 1 Corinthians 15:58). Help the class identify the specific area where God is calling them to be a faithful, hidden Jehoiada.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The eternal value of unseen, unglamorous faithfulness.
- Long obedience without applause as the bulk of kingdom work.
- God's notice and reward of hidden service.

Discussion Prompts

- Where is God calling you to faithfulness that no one will notice?
- Why is steady, hidden obedience often harder than a single heroic act?
- How does knowing God sees change the way you serve in obscurity?

Question 7

Student Question:

Joash repaired the house of God and did what was right while Jehoiada lived, then abandoned the LORD after the priest died and even murdered Zechariah (24:1–22). What does this tragic reversal reveal about the nature of true and lasting faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Joash began wonderfully. He set his heart to repair the house of God, organized a collection, and the temple was restored (24:4–14). As long as Jehoiada lived, Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD (24:2). The good beginning was genuine in its way.

But the text gives the fatal qualifier: he did right all the days of Jehoiada the priest (24:2). After Jehoiada died, the princes of Judah came and flattered Joash, and he listened to them,

abandoned the house of the LORD, and served idols (24:17–18). The faith that had looked so strong collapsed the moment its prop was removed.

The tragedy reaches its horror when Zechariah, Jehoiada's own son, filled with God's Spirit, rebukes the people, and Joash orders him stoned to death in the court of the LORD's house. As he died, Zechariah said, may the LORD see and avenge (24:20–22). The man Jehoiada had saved murdered Jehoiada's son in the temple Joash himself had restored.

The teaching point is sharp: Joash's faith had never become his own. It was Jehoiada's faith, propping up Joash's behavior from the outside. When the prop was gone, there was nothing underneath. This is the seed on rocky ground that springs up quickly but has no root (Matthew 13:20–21). True and lasting faith must be rooted in the heart, not borrowed from another.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The difference between borrowed faith and faith with its own roots.
- A good beginning is no guarantee of a good ending.
- The corrupting power of flattery and bad counsel.
- How dependence on a person's faith collapses when that person is gone.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that Joash did right only all the days of Jehoiada?
- How can a believer tell whether their faith has roots of its own?
- Why is a good beginning no guarantee of a faithful ending?

Question 8

Student Question:

Think honestly about your own walk: are there spiritual disciplines or convictions you maintain mainly because of who is watching or guiding you rather than because they are truly yours?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns Joash's collapse into a mirror. Many believers maintain disciplines and convictions largely because of who is watching or guiding them: a parent, a spouse, a small group, a preacher. That is not necessarily wrong, but it is dangerous if the faith never becomes truly personal.

The aim is honest self-examination. Would your prayer life, your purity, your worship, your generosity survive the removal of the person who currently holds you accountable? Joash's would not.

The teacher should press gently but clearly toward making faith one's own, internalizing convictions so deeply that they hold even when no one is watching (Psalm 51:6; Colossians 3:23-24).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Examining whether our disciplines are truly ours or propped up by others.
- The difference between accountability and dependence.
- Internalizing convictions so they hold when no one is watching.

Discussion Prompts

- Which of your spiritual habits depends most on someone else's presence?
- What would survive in your faith if your closest spiritual influence were gone?
- How does a believer move from propped-up obedience to owned conviction?

Question 9

Student Question:

Scripture warns, let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12), and that we must hold our confidence firm to the end lest we be hardened by sin (Hebrews 3:12-14). In light of Joash's collapse, what does the Bible teach about the real possibility of falling away, the danger of borrowed faith, and what perseverance to the end actually requires?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and Joash provides the case study. He was rescued by God, raised in the temple, zealous to restore God's house, and yet he fell away completely, ending as an idolater and a murderer of God's prophet. Scripture treats this not as a one-time exception but as a standing warning to every believer.

Paul writes, let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12), drawing the lesson directly from Israel's history that those who began with God can perish through unbelief and sin. Hebrews warns, take care lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God, and urges, exhort one another every day so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-13). Verse 14 makes it conditional: we share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

This passage stands directly against the popular doctrine of "once saved, always saved." Joash, like the seed on rocky ground (Matthew 13:20-21) and like those described in Hebrews 6:4-6 who once shared in God's blessings, shows that a real beginning can end in real apostasy. A Christian who refuses to persevere can be lost. This is not a denial of God's grace or power; it is a recognition that God does not save us against our will or hold us regardless of our continued faith.

The root problem was borrowed faith with no perseverance. Joash never made the faith his own, and when tested by the loss of Jehoiada and the pressure of flatterers, he had no root and withered. Perseverance to the end requires a faith that is personally owned, daily nourished by God's word, and sustained within a community that exhorts one another (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24–25).

Teach this with both seriousness and hope. The warning is not meant to rob the faithful of assurance but to wake the drifting and the complacent. The same God who is faithful to His covenant promises (as He was to David's line) calls His people to faithful, persevering, personal trust, and provides the church as a community to help us hold on (Philippians 1:6 read alongside Philippians 2:12–13).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Bible plainly teaches that a Christian can fall away (Hebrews 3:12–14; 6:4–6; 1 Corinthians 10:12).
- This refutes “once saved, always saved” and unconditional perseverance.
- Borrowed faith without roots will not survive testing.
- Perseverance to the end is required and is conditional (Hebrews 3:14).
- Falling away is not God failing us but us failing to hold our confidence firm.
- The church's role: daily mutual exhortation so none is hardened by sin.
- Warning meant to wake the complacent, not to destroy the assurance of the faithful.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Joash's life challenge the idea that a believer can never be lost?
- What does Hebrews 3:14 mean by holding our confidence firm to the end?
- How can our class practice the daily mutual exhortation Hebrews commands?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking across these four chapters of troubled kings, faithful Jehoiada, and tragic Joash, name one specific way the Lord is calling you to make your faith truly your own and to persevere to the end.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the whole arc: wicked Jehoram, murderous Athaliah, God's faithful preservation of David's line, the quiet heroism of Jehoiada, and the tragic collapse of Joash. The chapters move from horror to hope to heartbreak, and through it all God remains faithful to His covenant.

Joash's own end is sober: wounded by invaders and murdered by his own servants because of the blood of Zechariah, he was buried in the city of David but not in the tombs of the kings (24:25). The man who began so well ended like Jehoram, unmourned and dishonored. The warning could not be clearer.

Invite each student to name one specific way the Lord is calling them to make their faith truly their own and to persevere to the end, whether by deepening personal time in God's word, seeking accountability, or rooting a borrowed conviction in their own heart. The goal is a faith that holds when the props are gone.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The full arc: God's faithfulness amid human faithlessness.
- The sober parallel between Joash's end and Jehoram's.
- Moving from borrowed faith to a personal, persevering grip on Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- Which figure in these chapters most challenges or convicts you, and why?
- What is the one concrete step toward making your faith your own?
- How will you guard against the slow drift that destroyed Joash?