

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings

Lesson 18: Joash Repairs the Temple; Israel Declines -- 2 Kings 11:1–14:29

The lamp is flickering. That is the only way to describe the situation at the opening of 2 Kings 11. Athaliah, the mother of the slain king Ahaziah, has done something no one in the royal line had ever attempted: she has seized the throne herself and, to secure it, has ordered the execution of every member of the royal family. She intends to extinguish the house of David entirely. And for a moment, reading the text, you feel the weight of what that would mean. Not just the end of a dynasty. The end of God's promise. God had told David that his house would endure, that a son from his line would reign forever. If Athaliah succeeds, the promise dies with the last prince.

But there is one person who does not comply. Jehosheba, a sister of the slain king, takes the infant Joash and hides him. For six years, while Athaliah reigns and the Davidic line appears dead, a baby grows up hidden in the house of the Lord. The temple of God, the very house that Solomon built and that represented the covenant between God and His people, becomes the hiding place of the covenant's future. It is one of the most arresting images in all of Kings: the heir to the Davidic promise, tucked away from a murderous usurper, growing toward the day when a priest named Jehoiada will judge the time right.

When Jehoiada acts, he acts with precision and courage. He brings the commanders of the guard into covenant, arms them, stations them through the temple, and on the appointed Sabbath brings out the seven-year-old Joash, crowns him, gives him the testimony, and anoints him king. The people clap and shout. Athaliah rushes into the temple, sees the king standing by the pillar, tears her clothes, and cries 'Treason!' But it is too late. The covenant has been renewed. The rightful king is on the throne. And the priest who made it happen gives a generation of faithful mentorship that shapes the young king's best years.

These four chapters (11–14) carry the history of both kingdoms through a generation of mixed faithfulness. Joash begins well and repairs the Lord's house, but drifts badly after Jehoiada dies. The northern kingdom slides under Jehoahaz and Jehoash. The great prophet Elisha dies. Amaziah of Judah has moments of obedience followed by proud overreach. And yet through every failure, through every incomplete reform and every wandering heart, God's promise to David holds. The lamp does not go out. It is not a triumphant chapter of history, but it is a chapter of faithfulness, and the faithfulness is not Israel's. It is God's.

Group Discussion: Jehoiada the priest mentored the young king Joash for decades, and the Scripture says Joash did right 'all his days because Jehoiada the priest instructed him' (2 Kings 12:2). What does this suggest about the power of a godly mentor in a person's spiritual life, and what responsibility does that lay on experienced believers toward younger ones in the church?

Personal Reflection: Second Kings 12 records that Joash was faithful while Jehoiada lived and then turned away when his mentor was gone. Is your faithfulness to God primarily sustained by

the presence of someone else, a mentor, a spouse, a small group, or does it have its own root in your personal relationship with God? How would you honestly answer that question?

Read 2 Kings 11:1-14:29

Study Questions

1. Read 2 Kings 11:1-3. Athaliah attempts to destroy the entire royal family of Judah. What is at stake theologically in her act, and why is the survival of even one infant from the house of David more significant than merely a political succession question?
2. Jehosheba risked her life to hide the infant Joash. She acted when doing nothing would have been easy and self-protective. Think of a time when faithfulness required you to act with personal cost or risk, rather than simply staying silent or stepping back. What made the difference in whether you acted?
3. Read 2 Kings 11:4-21. Jehoiada the priest organizes the restoration of Joash to the throne with careful planning, bold action, and covenant renewal. What does his role in this moment reveal about the calling of those who serve God to act with both courage and wisdom when God's purposes are at stake, and why does the covenant renewal (verse 17) matter as much as the political coup?
4. Jehoiada did not merely put a king on the throne; he renewed the covenant between God, the king, and the people. His influence shaped Joash's entire productive reign. Who has functioned as a Jehoiada in your life, and what specific things did they do or say that most shaped the way you understand your relationship with God?

5. Read 2 Kings 12:1–16. Joash organizes the repair of the Lord's house. The project stalls under the priests who were receiving the money without doing the work, so Joash devises a new system through a collection box that funds direct payment to the workers. What does Joash's persistence in repairing the house of God, including his willingness to change the system when it was failing, reveal about the kind of faithful stewardship God's people are called to exercise toward what has been entrusted to them?
6. The temple repairs required Joash to notice what was being neglected, care enough to press the issue repeatedly, and redesign the system when it was not working. Is there something in the life of the local church you attend, a ministry, a responsibility, a relationship, or a practice of worship, that you can see is deteriorating or neglected, and what would faithful stewardship on your part look like in response?
7. Read 2 Kings 12:17–21 and 13:1–7. After Jehoiada dies, Joash turns away from God, even killing Jehoiada's son Zechariah when he prophesied against the king's idolatry (2 Chronicles 24:20–22). Joash then buys off Hazael rather than trusting God, and is eventually assassinated by his own servants. What does the collapse of Joash's faithfulness after Jehoiada's death reveal about the difference between a faith rooted in a mentor's influence and a faith rooted in a personal, internalized relationship with God?
8. The northern kingdom under Jehoahaz is described as oppressed because 'the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them continually into the hand of Hazael' (13:3), yet when Jehoahaz pleaded with God, God heard and gave Israel a deliverer. What does this cycle of sin, oppression, cry, and deliverance tell us about God's character, and how does it speak to your own experience of seasons where distance from God resulted in a kind of emptiness that finally drove you back to Him?

9. Read 2 Kings 11:1–3 and 13:14–23 alongside 2 Samuel 7:8–16 and Luke 1:30–33. God promised David that his house and kingdom would endure forever and that a son from his line would reign on an everlasting throne. Through Athaliah's murderous purge and Israel's repeated failures, God preserved the Davidic line. How does this faithful preservation find its ultimate and final fulfillment in Jesus Christ, and why is it important to understand this as the complete and sufficient fulfillment of God's promise rather than as a partial fulfillment awaiting a future political restoration of national Israel?

10. Looking across 2 Kings 11–14, from Athaliah's failed attempt to extinguish the Davidic line, to Jehoiada's faithful mentorship, to Joash's repairs of the temple and his later decline, to Elisha's final prophecy even on his deathbed: name one truth about God's faithfulness or one truth about how faith is formed and sustained that has stayed with you most from this passage, and describe one specific step you will take this week to act on it.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: 2 Samuel 7:8–16, God's covenant with David establishing an everlasting house and kingdom, the promise Athaliah's purge threatened and God preserved; 2 Chronicles 24:15–22, the fuller account of Joash's decline and the killing of Jehoiada's son Zechariah, which Jesus references in Matthew 23:35; Psalm 89:1–4 and 30–37, a meditation on the certainty of God's covenant with David even when his descendants fail; Luke 1:30–33 and Acts 2:29–36, the New Testament announcement that Jesus of Nazareth, son of David, is the final and complete fulfillment of the Davidic promise, now reigning at God's right hand

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