

Kings and Prophets 14-10-30b

Let's resume our study now. We're in 2 Chronicles chapter 24 and 2 Kings chapter 12, which are really sort of parallel, but sort of dwelling in Chronicles at the moment, just for variety. And we've seen the difference, the contrast between Jehoshaphat's reform, specifically, and Joash's reform.

And what I find sort of sad personally, and this is just me and nothing against other churches and programs and terminology, whatever they want to use, but it has become sort of a staple of building programs in some denominations, where if we want to collect money to do the building, we have the chest of Joash. And we put the chest of Joash up here and, you know, you want to come and drop money in the chest of Joash so that we can add. This was kind of a ubiquitous thing.

Any Baptist church, especially, that wanted a building program, they'd get anything from a cardboard box to a really nice deal and put a lid on it with a hole and here's our chest of Joash. And there'd be a thermometer on the wall, here's how much we've given. Well, you know, you have to judge cases individually, but as a syndrome, here's my question.

When's the last time you saw a priority of Jehoshaphat program, a program of Jehoshaphat program in a church instead of the chest of Joash? We're not going to worry about building a building. We're not going to worry about adding a steeple. We're not going to worry about this, that and the other until we have built our spiritual infrastructure and we're going to have a Jehoshaphat program where we're going to go in and beef up our whatever it might be, Sunday school.

We're going to add a study night during the week. We're going to improve and enhance the studies that we already have in the word of God. We're going to focus on that.

We're going to improve scripture memory. We're going to really focus on trying to live out the word of truth on a daily basis. Let's have a Jehoshaphat program.

I don't hear nearly as many of those as I do. Here's yet another. There's been so many chests of Joash.

It's kind of like finger bones from the Apostle John or something. All of these relics that they have in churches scattered all over the Orient and Europe and everything else. If you assembled all of the different bones of the apostles, you could get like 40 guys instead of 12.

We've got the jaw bone of Saint Thaddeus. We've got the knee cap from Nathaniel. We've got the pinky from James the Less.

They've got all these different relics and things. If you assembled all the chests of Joash, you could probably rebuild the biblical temple from the ground up. But where is the emphasis on

what counts? You can't take a church building with you.

You can take a building in the soul, an edifice in the soul, something that is built up, a treasury, a repository of understanding. We talk about these things like they're abstract. Well, the truth or doctrine or biblical knowledge or whatever.

But this really boils down to that with which we think. How do we think when we encounter people, when we encounter situations, when there's a decision point, when we have to choose between priorities, between objectives, between how to spend our time, how to spend our money, what to do, what conditions and guides our thinking? Well, this is where the Jehoshaphat priority has to be pursued, has to be cultivated, has to be energized. Notice Jehoshaphat didn't sit there on the throne and wait 23 years and say, well, did anybody ever go out and teach those Bible classes? Did anybody ever get out there to the gate and talk to those judges? I'm just kind of curious.

It says he went out. He went out among the people, set aside his kingly estate and went out to make sure it was being done. He invested himself in it the way the Lord Jesus, the genuine capital K King, went out among the people, sat in boats, sat on hillsides, sat in houses, sat anywhere people would gather and listen and invested himself in the communication of the truth.

And he does that with us today. Are we listening with a heart for application? It is one thing to listen. It is something else to put into practice.

I was listening to the radio as I battled my way through traffic this morning. And there is a, and I don't remember the guy's name. Let's say, let's say he's named after a car part, like a MacPherson strut.

I'm going to call him MacPherson. It was mixed something, but he's got, you know, MacPherson's manner. And it's a, you know how at Halloween they have a spook house and a haunted house.

You wander around enough neighborhoods and somebody will have fixed their house up to be a little spook house. And you bring the little kids in there and somebody jumps out and says, boo, and they cry and you give them candy to give them a sugar fix and, and all as well. Well, they said, you know, this isn't enough anymore.

We need to genuinely frighten people. There are guys who have come back from Afghanistan. They've seen it all.

They're just numb and they want an adrenaline rush this. I'm just telling you what they said on the radio. I'm thinking seriously, you, you, that wasn't enough.

You, you want more. So what they do is they, they, they put people through experiences that genuinely scare them. They interviewed some people coming out of it.

And, and these are, you know, adults who ought to know better and their voices are quavering. They're in tears. They, it, it shakes them up to their core.

It's, it's way worse than the worst scary movie you've ever seen. They do it on purpose. They, they bundle them up and put them in coffins and bury them and run off and leave them and make them eat all kinds of horrendous things.

One of them got shut down out in New York because they were having, they were doing things that you hear about down at Gitmo that people got in trouble for. They were doing this to people who signed up for this because they get them to sign a waiver. Well, they can just have their way.

And these people enjoy seeing if they can get people to lose control of their bodily functions by, by scaring them so badly that they're just a complete wreck and mess. And people there, there's a, there's a waiting list of over 17,000 people to get into these scary things. Now, why do I bring this up? What are people pursuing? Why do people bungee jump? Why do people put these Rocky the Squirrel suits on and, and try to fly through canyons? You know, some of those people are just a long, long streak on the side of the canyon now, or they're a very small point of impact on some jut of rock that they couldn't quite clear.

You can watch the little helmet cam films on YouTube. You can see people, you know, waiting for him to come by. They're just inches off the ground.

They're just, they got nothing but these little Rocky the suits flying down. Why do people do this? Because they have become insensate. Their capacity for life, capacity for love, capacity for happiness, capacity to be still and appreciate the wonder of God's creation isn't there.

Not only can your conscience be seared with a hot iron, but through overexposure and overstimulation, you lose the ability to feel, to enjoy. You lose your capacity for life to just enjoy the company of another person sitting there saying nothing. We have this constant need for stimulation.

Why do you think everybody is walking around with something in front of their face, giving themselves, you know, carpal neck syndrome and carpal thumb joint syndrome? Why is that? I can't be alone with my own thoughts. I must have the voices of others, the texts of others, the thoughts of others, the activities of others, whatever happened to be still and know that I am God peace. I leave with you my peace.

Jesus says, I give to you not as the world gives. I give you a peace that passes all understanding, a quiet serenity and happiness that requires nothing from the outside. I don't need Jehoiada whispering in my ear.

I have the companionship of the Lord God of the universe in my soul. Instead, we have people cultivating something from the outside. This is what the various forms of Eastern meditation that are now in our school systems from preschool all the way through undergraduate and

graduate classes in university, where as a part of the curriculum, you are instructed to sit and empty your mind and focus either on a blank spot or on an object and wait for something from the outside to come and fill.

Listen, if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and you've got the word of God that is alive and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, if you're sitting still for very long, the word of God ought to be emanating forth. Even when you're sitting still, it judges the thoughts and intents of the heart. It organizes our sensory experiences.

It tells us what is right and what is wrong. It declares to us God's handiwork and the glory of God. If you're looking at something, you're not waiting for something to come in and fill your mind or give you an idea.

That's just cultivating demonic influence. And that's exactly what happens when people empty their minds. Remember what Jesus said about coming to the house and the floor is clean and swept and the guy brings back seven just like him.

That's what these people are actively seeking. Why? No ideas of their own, no presence and power of God in their lives. And sadly, even believers are falling for this under the confused misapprehension that this is spirituality and that it is of God.

And it is Satan masquerading as an angel of light and coming in and leading them by the nose farther and farther from the light and from the truth. These things are important. This Old Testament study, looking at Joash and his mistake, his exoskeleton of spiritual strength from Jehoiada that falls away when the guy dies and he's just glop on the inside.

He's like jello inside a mold. You pop the mold off, it's only a few seconds and there's nothing left of Joash. And look at what happens to him.

In verse 18, the people left the house of the Lord God of their fathers. Notice verse 18, that house that they spent all that money on and all that time and had that big program to furbish and gild and reconstruct and shine up and, you know, make or try to restore back to its former glory. One thing I noticed is unlike when Solomon built it, there's no Shekinah that descends and fills it.

God doesn't say, boy, I'm sure glad you patched the cracks and repainted and put the doorknobs back on and swept out the corners and threw out a few of these idols and things that accumulated. Here I am in the Shekinah coming back and dwelling and here I am making fresh promises and assurances to my people. God's nowhere to be found.

After the death of Jehoiada, verse 17, verse 18, they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers. What good is the house if nobody comes to it? Big house, nobody stay. Big house, nobody worships.

Great house, but there's no spiritual vitality. They served wooden images and idols. Remember

that funny passage we saw where a guy cuts down a log and he cuts it in half, puts part of it in the fire to cook his dinner, and the other half he carves it in an idol, bows down and worships it.

So ridiculous, but that's what these people do. Wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their trespass. Why doesn't wrath come upon the northern kingdom because of their trespass? What's the difference? These people should know better.

They are within earshot of all of that great Bible teaching under Jehoshaphat and the people who learned and grew and taught and trained their children and their grandchildren in the days of Jehoshaphat. They know better. They ought to know better.

The presence of God ostensibly is on His holy mountain. There's no excuse for these people to be doing this and they do it anyway. And God's wrath falls upon them.

So there is always warning before judgment. He sent prophets to them to bring them back to the Lord. These prophets testified against them, but they would not listen.

Does God speak to us and we just don't listen? We like to think that's not the case. However, if we are not spending time during the week reflecting back on what God says in His word, we see it in Bible class, we see it when we review our memory verses, we see it when we think about it, reflect upon it in our hopefully daily prayers and devotions, whatever you want to call your quiet time. That's God speaking to us through His word.

Are we listening or is that just a perfunctory exercise? I don't want to be missed. I don't want to be thought unspiritual, so I'm going through all the motions. But hear me now.

If it is not making a difference, if we aren't thinking differently, if we aren't more patient, more kind, more long-suffering, more gentle, more faithful, more humble, more self-controlled, those elements of the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, have more peace in our souls, if the same things still rattle us that have always rattled us, if the same things give us a sense of depression or inferiority or frustration or whatever else it may be that trips us up, if we're not making progress, guess what? We're not making progress, and the word of God is designed to build. Building is progress. We ought to be getting better.

We're always going to sin, but we ought to be sinning in unique and original ways now, not the same old ones. Let's learn something new. We build and solidify.

Now we can sin at a higher level, and God can teach us at that level, and we become strong, and we become impervious, and our nature finds some other way to express itself, and we work on that, but each time we learn, every time the bone breaks and mends, it's stronger at that point, and there's something else that needs work. We don't want to constantly be banging our heads against the same old errors because of what? God sends his word, but they would not listen, circle it, underline it, put a star beside it. I don't want that to be me.

Whatever my shortcoming, whatever I get judged for at the judgment seat, I don't want it to be

that I, Samuel Curtis Hall, was exposed to the word of God, and I did not listen. You can't get anywhere if you don't listen. Child running out in the street, chasing something, car's coming, stop.

Don't listen. What's going to happen? Listening is the fundamental first step for any progress. If you do not listen, you cannot be taught.

You can't learn. You can't grow. You cannot mature.

You cannot bear fruit. You cannot fulfill any of the purposes of God if you do not listen. You can hear without listening.

This happens when you're listening to me from time to time. You hear, and the reason I know this, because there are other occasions where I am the listener and somebody else is the speaker, and I just tune it out. I come back when I hear people laughing or when I catch a word that's interesting to me, but I tune out.

Something will be said. My mind, like a dumb dog, chases a rabbit off into the weeds, and then I come back eventually. You can hear without listening, right? Don't tell me you're listening 100% of the time.

I know you're not. I don't either. Nobody does.

But listen to me when I say, and I mean listen, don't just hear me, listen. That end of verse 19, this is everything that is wrong with believers in the world today. We do not listen to the voice of God when it is speaking to us.

They would not listen. And look at what happens. The Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest.

Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest. Now, this guy is not Jehoiada the priest, but because he is descended from a priest, what does that tell you? He's a Levite. What is the job of the Levites in the Old Testament economy? They are the dedicated staff for daily instruction.

Prophets are occasional. Prophets are circumstance, event-based. Priests are the daily representatives of the things of God.

They perform the sacrifices and offerings. They ensure that the service of the house of God is performed for daily instruction. Now, they don't necessarily need to be spirit-filled to carry out the ashes, relight the fires, slaughter the animals, haul off the entrails, all the other things that they do, hewing wood, hauling water, sweeping up, washing the ephods, shoveling out all the dried blood and so on that is cankering up the place.

You don't have to be spirit-filled for that. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon Zechariah for two reasons. One, he is in a position to speak and be heard.

And secondly, he is susceptible. He is amenable. He is a man with the courage to stand up and speak the message when it needs to be spoken.

This isn't overwhelming. This is not the dumb donkey being taken over by God and used as a voice. Zechariah is a good man.

The Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, the priest, who 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? Why do you transgress the commands of God, commands of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He also has forsaken you. This is why I can confidently state from the Word of God, you can lose the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can lose the presence of God the Father, and you can even lose the influence of God's Holy Spirit.

You don't lose His presence or His seal, but you can lose His influence. You can quench His presence both individually and collectively. So they fell on their faces before the Lord and said, O Lord, we have sinned.

What were we thinking? Let's get back to the days of Jehoshaphat. Where are those righteous judges? Where are those faithful prophets and teachers who canvassed the land, bringing to us the meaning of the Word of Truth, helping us understand who we are and why we are here? O Lord, we have sinned. We fall on our faces before You.

We claim the promise in 2 Chronicles 7, that if we will fall on our faces and confess our sins, You will hear from heaven and heal us and heal our land. We claim Your promise, O Lord, and we express our gratitude to You. No.

Instead, they conspired against Zechariah and at the command of the king, at the command of the king, they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord. What was the first part of this whole chapter dedicated to? Let's build up a wonderful edifice of the house of the Lord and right in front of it, they kill Zechariah. Now, turn with me for our closing thought to Matthew chapter 25.

The Lord Jesus faced a generation that was similarly insensate, seeing they see, but they do not perceive, hearing they hear, but they do not understand. The heart of this people has grown calloused. So, as He addresses them, He's going to give them some Old Testament examples.

Turn back to chapter 23. Remember the woes that He pronounces to the Pharisees in, for example, 23, 23, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay tithes of spices, but you neglect the weightier matters of the law. Verse 25, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Clean the outside of the cup, inside you're full of extortion and self-indulgence.

Verse 27, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You're like whitewashed tombs, beautiful outwardly, inside full of dead men's bones. Beautiful temple on the outside, no heart for God on the inside. Verse 29, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You build the

tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous.

You say, If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. This is what we like to say. I wouldn't make the mistake that those Old Testament people made.

I wouldn't make the mistake of Joash. I wouldn't make the mistake of these kings in the north that we have seen. But we do.

You are witnesses against yourselves. You are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of your father's guilt.

Serpents, verse 33, brood of vipers, how can you escape the condemnation of hell? How can you escape the condemnation of fire? This isn't the lake of fire. This is the destruction of everything your life has produced. These men are believers, scribes and Pharisees.

You can't be a hypocrite if you never were a crit. If you never were good, you can't be a departed one. Hypocrite means you claim a thing and you don't fulfill it.

They believe in God, but the service of God is of their own making. And we are rife with that today. Prophets, wise men and scribes, some of them you will kill and crucify.

Notice this is the very thing that we are seeing in 2 Chronicles 24. Indeed, I send you prophets, wise men and scribes, some of them you will kill and crucify, some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, son of Adam and Eve, to the blood of Zachariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. It doesn't say Zachariah the son of Jehoiada, does it? It says Zachariah the son of Berechiah.

So what's interesting about this is that there have been several solutions proposed for this statement by the Lord Jesus. Let me give you them quickly. Some people say that the Zachariah referred to here is the Zachariah of the birth narrative, the father of John the Baptist.

And that because John the Baptist later was so notorious as one who called out Herod and called people broods of vipers and talked about the axe being laid through the trees, that his father was executed by these men. And Zacharias, the husband of Elizabeth, who talked to Gabriel and was struck mute and so on, that this is the guy. This suggestion was made as early as Origen, way back 1800-1900 years ago.

And this lines up with the speculation that John himself may have been raised out in the wilderness by Essenes or somebody else because his father was martyred. There's no evidence for that. Some people say this is Zachariah, the Old Testament prophet, the penultimate book of the Old Testament, Zachariah Malachi.

But you've got the same issue there in the sense that that Zachariah is the son of Iddo and he is named as such in Nehemiah and the days of Ezra and so on. They claim that possibly he's just unknown. We don't know who this Zachariah is.

That's possible. But there are three other solutions that all pretty much revolve around our Zachariah, the son of Jehoiada. One proposal is that Jehoiada was actually his grandfather.

Remember the great age at which he finally dies, 130. And if this is a young man, and it is common in the scripture to attribute someone as being the son of his most prominent near ancestor, so that some sons of the original 12 sons of Jacob, there are generations that are skipped in those genealogies. I won't go into all of that.

But that this is the Zachariah in 2 Chronicles, and Jehoiada is his grandfather. Berechiah is his unnamed father. What intrigues me about that idea is that the Lord Jesus would consciously avoid mentioning Jehoiada and instead mention the father who raised Zachariah to have the courage to stand up and deliver this prophecy knowing it was at the risk of his life and in fact giving his life in the service of God in delivering the message.

And that the Lord Jesus calls out the father by name because he knows who it was. It's also possible that Berechiah is another name for Jehoiada himself. As we know, many of these individuals had more than one name.

Again, that would be something the Lord would know. The third thing that's also somewhat intriguing is that there is an early change made by a copyist in one of the earliest copies of Matthew. Someone perhaps even consciously changed this, Jerome, who was also extremely early.

Remember the Hexapla, the Greek, Latin, Aramaic, and Syriac, and so on. I forget all the languages that are in the Hexapla, but it's six different parallel columns. But Jerome said that there was a Hebrew version of Matthew that is now lost.

And in this Hebrew version, which was used by people he called the Nazarenes, he said, and of course, Matthew, a lot of those people are from Galilee. Jerome said that a Hebrew version of Matthew in his day said, in this gospel, the Nazarenes use, we find son of Jehoiada instead of son of Berechiah. It could have been an error created when that early, if Matthew actually wrote the original in Aramaic and it was translated and there's some evidence to that effect, then somebody might have goofed it.

It is my feeling that however Berechiah came into this passage, the only Zachariah I know of that Scripture says was killed in the temple courtyard is the one in 2 Chronicles 24. And my money is on him as the one the Lord Jesus refers to. And I'll tell you why.

You may have heard the argument, and this is my last point, that the Lord Jesus, in talking about the blood of Abel to the blood of Zachariah, was more or less vouching for the integrity and inspiration of the entire Old Testament. Because in the Hebrew arrangement of books, you

would have Genesis through Zachariah, and that they felt like the Zachariah that was the prophet of the book in the Minor Prophets, that Jesus was vouching for it. Well, I think there could be some truth to that.

This would be a telling blow, talking to scribes and Pharisees. But here's the thing. In the Hebrew arrangement of books, Zachariah Malachi isn't the way it ends.

Remember Tanakh, Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim. Guess what the last book is of the Ketuvim? Chronicles. Chronicles is the last book of the Hebrew Bible.

So if you want to say from Genesis to Malachi, so to speak, the Lord would pick Abel, and he would pick Zachariah. He's the last guy martyred in this way in the book of Chronicles, and we're close to the end. Abel close to the beginning, Zachariah close to the end.

So I would suggest that the Lord is telling us something by consciously omitting Jehoiada. Jehoiada isn't all that and a bag of chips, perhaps. The Lord does not mention him by name.

Shined up the outside. What's the Lord's point? It's against that kind of thing. He's not going to hold up Jehoiada.

And wouldn't it be an irony that the scribes and Pharisees would get hung up on, well, wait a minute, Zachariah was the son of Jehoiada. Jehoiada was one of us. He's a good guy.

He was buried in honor and with the kings and completely missed the point. It's so typical of the Lord Jesus to just put that little, little stinger right at the end, little hook right at the end. Are you going to listen or are you going to be distracted and deflected? Here's the point for us.

Are we going to listen to what the spirit says to the church throughout the word of God, and especially here in this passage? It isn't a matter of appearances. It isn't a matter of making sure we look good in front of other believers, shining up the outside of the temple at great expense with the chest of Joash. It is a matter of the Jehoshaphat type of reform.

We're going to see this happen one more time in the days of Jeremiah before we're through. But this is what we want to do in our own temple, in our own kingdom of Judah, in our own souls, ensure that we are listening. When the word of God comes and rebukes and corrects and instructs, we want to hear and heed and be changed.

There is no point in the facade. You're going to stone the prophet right in front of that facade. You're going to murder the man of God, delivering the message of God in the shadow of this stuff that Joash and Jehoiada shined up at great expense.

That doesn't cut it. The word of God, alive and powerful, sharp as a two-edged sword, that's what cuts it. That's what gets to the very center of us.

That's what changes us. And that's what will give us peace. That's what will give us an inheritance in the kingdoms that are to come.

The light of the glory of the can shine through us to the world. But that's the only way it's going to happen. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how powerful it is, the life-changing ability it has within us. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will use it effectively.

We'll keep it constantly before our minds. We'll instruct, rebuke, correct, and teach us through it so that we can, in fact, be the body of Christ, the Lord Jesus, on this earth in the time that remains to us, that we can reflect your glory, that the Shekinah will once again shine forth from your temple and convict and draw those who are lost and those who are far from you to yourself. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.