

A Parade of Heirs

II Kings 11-16; II Chronicles 22-28

Introduction

An article from a well known magazine reads,
The world is too big for us. There is too much going on; too many crimes; too much violence. Try as you will, you get behind in the race – it's a strain to keep pace, and still, you lose ground. Science empties its discoveries on you so fast that you stagger beneath them in hopeless bewilderment. The political world is news seen so rapidly, you're out of breath trying to keep pace with who's in and who's out. Everything is high pressure. Human nature can't endure much more!

So writes, the *Atlantic Journal*, dated 1833.

Has it ever occurred to you that there has never been an easy time to live a godly life? Take the most godly person from any chapter in human history and you will discover that they struggled to be distinctive disciples just as you struggle.

The apostle Paul lamented that fact in the book of Romans, in the last half of chapter 7, when he said,

For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

While there has never been an easy time to live for God, there will never be a better time than now. And God, the master Teacher of all time, has a way of teaching that truth through flesh and blood. He never asks us to become something without giving plenty of examples, and He never warns us about becoming

something without showing the illustration of a wasted life.

In the books of Kings and Chronicles, God preserves for us the stories of kings and queens. It is a royal review that is intended by God, not to just fill up space. He did not just like the sound of sixty-six books; He did not say, "There's a ring to that number that I like, so let's collect some more history and make up another book." He intends to transform our lives by revealing to us the lives of others – some who failed and some who obeyed.

We are going to review twelve chapters from the books of II Kings and II Chronicles today. These two books provide biographical material of the same people, much like the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke provide similar material of the disciples and our Lord.

The Daughter of Jezebel Reigns - Athaliah

The royal review begins with the death of Jehu. Do you remember him? By his courageous reign, Jezebel is slain, the prophets of Baal are executed, and there is peace in Israel for nearly thirty years.

Jehu then dies and we discover that there is a living descendant of Ahab and Jezebel who has been waiting all of these years for revenge. It is a woman named Athaliah, who is the daughter of Jezebel. And how like her mother she is!

Notice II Kings, chapter 11, verse 1.

When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she rose and destroyed all the royal offspring.

She is killing all heirs to the throne so that she herself can reign. Continue to verses 2 and 3.

But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and placed him and his nurse in the bedroom. So they hid him from Athaliah, and he was not put to death. So he was hidden with her in the house of the Lord six years, while Athaliah was reigning over the land.

This killing spree for power, by the way, has eternal implications. Joash was the last living descendant of David. If he were put to death, the covenant promise of God that He would keep a descendant of David on the throne in Judah would be broken. Furthermore, the royal line of David would have ceased. And that line needed to stretch all the way to a carpenter named Joseph, who was a descendant of David. Joseph would adopt the son of his virgin wife, giving that little Messiah boy the legal right to sit on David's throne.

Warren Wiersbe put it well, when he wrote, "This is the seed of Satan trying to exterminate the seed of God."

The daughter of Baal is trying to wipe out the son of God. She failed, however.

When Joash turned seven years of age, a godly priest named Jehoiada, brought him out of hiding. Notice verses 12 through 14.

Then he brought the king's son out and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony; and they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, "Long live the king!" When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people in the house of the Lord. She looked and behold, the king was standing by the pillar, according to the custom, with the captains and the trumpeters beside the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced and blew trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, "Treason! Treason!"

Skip to verse 16.

So they seized her, and when she arrived at the horses' entrance of the king's house, she was put to death there.

This would make a great mini-series or a best selling novel. In fact, if you think about it, it is a best seller! The only difference is that this is not fiction.

Principle: The plans of God are never crushed by the plans of Satan

The principle of truth of this story is:

The plans of God are never crushed by the plans of Satan.

To our generation, according to Matthew, chapter 16, verse 18b, Jesus Christ has promised,

. . . I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

The Boy Who Became the King - Joash

So, at the age of seven, a young boy, who had been hidden from the wicked queen, ascends the throne. I want to pick up his story in the book of II Chronicles.

Notice, in chapter 24, that Joash is aided by a godly priest named Jehoiada. Look at verses 1 and 2.

Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Zibiah from Beersheba. Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord . . .

(Isn't that great? Then notice the haunting words of the next phrase.),

. . . all the days of Jehoiada the priest.

There are a couple of problems with this.

- First, a person's walk with God should not be tied to the convictions of someone else.

I do not want to be unfair. We can only imagine how much a little boy needed the help, guidance, and encouragement of a godly, mature man. What a wonderful blessing Jehoiada was in the life of Joash.

However, this is like the child who is raised in a godly home, with all the godly examples and rules to protect and provide. Then, as soon as that child leaves home to go to college, they turn away from the Lord. You cannot believe this is the same child. The problem is, they had behaved the way they had only because their convictions, ways, preferences, lifestyle were tagged into what their world said for them to do.

When they left to stand on their own, they fell. That is what happened to Joash.

- Secondly, it is important for a person to be accountable to someone else.

Joash will fail when the influence of a godly man is removed. Notice verses 15 through 18a.

Now when Jehoiada reached a ripe old age he died; he was one hundred and thirty years old at his death.

Notice how great a man Jehoiada evidently was, according to verse 16.

They buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done well in Israel and to God and His house.

Now, underline the next word “but,” in verse 17.

But after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and bowed down to the king, and the king listened to them. They abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers . . .

As long as Jehoiada lived, he provided godly counsel to this boy as he grew up. But, when Jehoiada was gone, Joash is listening to the other political leaders of his day. The phrase that they “bowed down to the king,” means that he invited them for counsel and direction.

The question is, “Who are you listening to? Who counsels you? Are there godly people who have the right to give you hard advice? Who are you accountable to?”

As hard as it is to imagine, Joash rebels against God over the next years of his reign. In fact, he rebels to such an extent that he will even take the life of another godly prophet who dared to confront him with the truth of his sin. Even more tragic is the fact that the godly prophet who confronted him was Jehoiada’s own son.

Principle: An unaccountable lifestyle is an invitation to spiritual disaster

The overpowering principle that every one of us are warned of today, is:

An unaccountable lifestyle is an invitation to spiritual disaster.

**The King Who Left His Heritage -
Jehoahaz**

Now, halfway through the reign of Joash, Jehu’s son became king in nearby Israel. By the way, remember that the nation is divided into northern and southern kingdoms. Samaria is the capital city of the northern kingdom, which is referred to as Israel. Jerusalem is the capital city of the southern kingdom, which is referred to as Judah.

You will need to remember all of this for the test! If you really were to take a test and were asked to tell which kings were godly and which were ungodly, you could answer “ungodly” beside the name of every king and get a ninety-five on the test.

Why did God go to all the trouble of preserving the biographies of ungodly men? To warn us, as well as encourage us, to live godly lives.

Now, let us go back to II Kings, chapter 13, and pick up the story with the new king of the northern kingdom. His name is Jehoahaz. Look at verse 1.

In the twenty-third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu became king over Israel at Samaria, and he reigned seventeen years.

The most intriguing thing about Jehoahaz that you immediately pick up on, is that he is the son of Jehu. The first thing I thought was, “Alright!” Jehu, the courageous king whom God used during his reign to defeat Baal, had a son! What that son must have seen! It is about time we get another king like that on the throne!

So, the son of Jehu takes the throne, and then comes the shock of the words of verse 2.

He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel sin; he did not turn from them.

Principle: A spiritual heritage does not necessarily insure a spiritual future

The overwhelming principle that comes from this man’s brief reign is this:

A spiritual heritage does not necessarily insure a spiritual future.

This is a warning to everyone, and most of all to myself, the eighth generation minister from my family. If you have had a godly past, it does not guarantee a godly future.

I have talked to people who have said, “Yea, well, my grandfather was a preacher.”

So what! What are you?

It is not only a warning, it is also an encouragement. Some of you might say, “Oh I wish I had had godly parents. I wish a grandparent on one side of my family had lived for God.”

A spiritual heritage is a wonderful thing and if you had it, do not ever take it for granted. However, if you did not have it, do not be discouraged into believing you are not as usable in the work of God as another. Isn't it wonderful that your spiritual gift, or gifts, did not come from your parents? When you trusted Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God invested in you a gift that you are to give back to Him through service in His church.

One additional point that I would like to insert is that if you did not have a godly heritage, that does not mean you cannot start one. Begin that heritage with your own life right now! Take your family tree and replant it. As David wrote, in Psalm, chapter 1, verse 3a, plant it,

. . . like a tree firmly planted by streams of water . . .

The King With a Half-Hearted Religion - Amaziah

Now go back to II Chronicles, chapter 25, for the brief biography of a king with a half-hearted religion. Look at verses 1 and 2.

Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. He did right in the sight of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart.

The word translated “whole” could be rendered “loyal”. Yes, Amaziah followed the Lord God of Israel, but as a young man, he had some doubts. Those seeds of doubt would later sprout and you find Amaziah, in the latter part of the chapter, worshiping both God and false gods.

He is rebuked for his double-mindedness. He had feet firmly planted in mid-air. He wanted a foot in paganism and a foot in Judaism.

In the final verses of the II Chronicles biography of Amaziah, he is said to have turned away from following the Lord.

Principle: Half-hearted commitment in the present will become whole-hearted failure in the future

The overriding principle of Amaziah's story is this:

Half-hearted commitment in the present, will become whole-hearted failure in the future.

The King Who Would Be Priest - Uzziah

Now, back to II Chronicles, chapter 26, to the story of a king who started his reign wonderfully. His name is Uzziah, which is sometimes spelled Azariah. He solidified and made incredible improvements to the southern nation.

The prophets who served during King Uzziah's reign are Zechariah and Isaiah. You may remember the passage, in chapter 6, verse 1a of Isaiah, where Isaiah writes,

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted . . .

This king who began so well, is the King Uzziah to which Isaiah referred. The problem was that this king was not satisfied with just being a king. Uzziah wanted to act as a priest as well.

Notice, however, how well King Uzziah began, according to verses 4 and 5.

He did right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Amaziah had done.

(that is, everything about Amaziah that was godly, Uzziah followed in the same manner),

He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him.

There is an interesting insight into the personality of this man in the last part of verse 10, when it says,

. . . for he loved the soil.

Now the good news turns bad. Notice verses 14 through 16.

Moreover, Uzziah prepared for all the army shields, spears, helmets, body armor, bows

and sling stones. In Jerusalem he made engines of war invented by skillful men to be on the towers and on the corners for the purpose of shooting arrows and great stones. Hence his fame spread afar for he was marvelously helped . . .

(note this),

. . . until he was strong. But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

Uzziah had it made; he had reached the top of the heap! But when he became strong, he fell.

A book in my library that is nearly one hundred fifty years old reads,

God has two ways of trying men, one in the furnace of affliction, the other in the refining pot of prosperity, and this is much the harder trial of the two. Affliction tends to humble and soften and subdue; but in prosperity, self-esteem, self-reliance, self-satisfaction, self-will and pride are prone to spring up with a rank luxuriance. The scriptures teach us the danger of prosperity, and the inability of the human heart to drink a full cup of success without becoming intoxicated by success.

Sometimes success is the worst thing that can ever happen to a person. That is because it comes with the lure of pride and independence. You are served; you are on top, but that brings great temptation.

That is the siren song of our culture. That is the pursuit of this world system. Climb up that ladder; get to the top; be successful; visualize it all. It is no coincidence that Frank Sinatra's hit song, "I Did It My Way," has been recorded by more artists in the last twenty years than any other song.

The truth is, we do not like restrictions; we do not like limits; we do not like to be told, "No." We honor the independent spirit. We say things like, "There isn't anything you can't do, if you put your mind to it. You're the controller of your fate. Have it your way!"

Uzziah did it his way. His refusal to follow God's word concerning worship opened the door to disobedience to the word. And the creation of a self-styled worship became such an obsession for him that it ultimately, destroyed his life.

Perhaps you have heard the story of Hetty Green who was America's greatest miser. She died in 1915, leaving, to the amazement of all who knew her, a portfolio of cash and stock worth more than one million dollars. She never enjoyed anything she had. In fact, every day she ate cold oatmeal – oatmeal because it was cheap and cold because she said it cost too much to heat it on the stove. Her son injured his leg and eventually lost it by amputation, because Hetty wasted so much time looking for free medical help that the boy was not examined and helped early enough. What a waste.

Principle: It is possible to become so discontent with what we have that we lose the ability to enjoy what it

There is an important principle to remember from this story:

It is possible to become so discontent with what we have that we lose the ability to enjoy what it.

Have you ever noticed this principle in your own life? We have been so blessed. If you took our country, even your own experience this morning – the fact that you had something to eat, you are in the minority. The fact that you were able to put something on your body today that you did not wear yesterday, puts you in the minority globally. But because we are lured by more stuff, more possessions, more things, we sit in our homes and fester over that which we do not have. We have to have one more thing, and more than likely, we will sell it at next year's yard sale.

Uzziah had it all, but was not happy. Uzziah wanted to burn incense like the priests! Notice verses 18 through 21a.

They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the Lord God."

(What great courage these priests displayed! But notice, in the next verse, that Uzziah is not used to being told, "No."),

But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy

broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord; beside the altar of incense.

(Leprosy was God's typical fashion of pronouncing judgment.),

Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the Lord had smitten him. King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the Lord. . . .

The man who had it made, threw it all away – to the point that he could not enjoy anything he had.

Finally! A King Who Followed God - Jotham

Now, finally, there is the story of a king who followed God! Did you ever think it would happen?? His name is Jotham. Look at II Chronicles, chapter 27, verses 1a and 2a.

Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, . . . He did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Uzziah had done; however, he did not enter the temple of the Lord. . . .

I cannot help but chuckle at that. His father was smitten in the temple with leprosy, so the son never goes near the temple. Evidently it never inhibited his commitment to the God of Israel!

It is as if Jotham will never forget the day his father became a leper. He will never forget the fact that his father failed in that one area of temptation. And Uzziah was not the only king who sinned by acting as a high priest. It is as if Jotham wants to stay as far away from his father's temptation as he possibly can.

That is not a bad idea! It also brings up the wonderful point that just because your father failed in some area does not mean that you are obligated to fail in that area too. God's power has the ability to break the cycle of generational examples. Perhaps today, you are living proof that Christ can free someone from the wickedness that surrounded them in their childhood home.

Principle: It is possible to live an obedient life in spite of a disobedient parent

The principle in this could be put this way:

It is possible to live an obedient life in spite of a disobedient parent.

Now notice the last part of verse 2.

But the people continued acting corruptly.

This time the king is godly, but the people are not. Jotham will order his life after the ways of the Lord, even though everyone around him says, "Look, the way things are done is this way. This is the way you live, Jotham. This is what you can get away with. You don't have to be so fanatical in following the God of Israel. Just look at our lives."

The people acted corruptly, but look at verse 6.

So Jotham became mighty because he ordered his ways before the Lord his God.

Principle: It is possible to live a godly life in the midst of an ungodly people

There is another principle from this godly king's biography:

It is possible to live a godly life in the midst of an ungodly people.

Do not ever fall into the trap of thinking that your culture has to rewrite your character. The question is, "Will you order your ways before the Lord your God?"

In the past month, news of the deaths of two men reached my ears and impacted my heart. One was a man who had preached for decades. I had heard him preach and he was an outstanding expositor. He pastored the church where my wife and I were members before I went to seminary in Dallas. He was also a leading figure in the Baptist Bible Fellowship movement. A few years ago, his double life was exposed. He left the ministry and, after learning that his partner had embezzled, he fell into depression. Two weeks ago, alone in a graveyard, he took his own life. Around the same time, another man died. His name was Jack Wyrzten, the creator of Word of Life clubs, Word of Life Institute, camps and other ministries that reach around the world. He finished the race well.

These were two men, two leaders who had two totally different ways to end the race. That is what we

are given in our stories today, only from centuries earlier. These stories are of the lives of real men. The testimonies of people who followed them tell us that some turned their back and some ordered their ways to the Lord. It is one thing to begin well; it is another thing to end well. I want to end well, don't you?

A Message From the Royal Review

One closing message; one closing challenge that comes from the pages of this royal review, in the form of a question, is:

If the pages of your biography were completed today, how would it end?

Some of you today, may need to ask the Lord to finish the present chapter of your life, which could be

entitled, "faithlessness . . . compromise . . . disobedience," and begin a new chapter called, "confession . . . submission".

How would you write the last chapter of your life from this past week? I am not asking for perfection, but what about progression? Would the last few lines read, as has been said of the ones we have studied today,

- they turned from following the Lord, or
- they lived for the Lord only as long as they lived in the home of someone else, or
- they followed the Lord only half-heartedly, or
- they ordered their ways before the Lord and followed Him with a loyal heart?

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 4/28/1996 by Stephen Davey.

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