

Week 5, Day 1

II Chronicles 21:1-20

2 Chronicles 21 New International Version (NIV)

21 Then Jehoshaphat rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David. And Jehoram his son succeeded him as king. **2** Jehoram's brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat, were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariahu, Michael and Shephatiah. All these were sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. **3** Their father had given them many gifts of silver and gold and articles of value, as well as fortified cities in Judah, but he had given the kingdom to Jehoram because he was his firstborn son.

Jehoram King of Judah

4 When Jehoram established himself firmly over his father's kingdom, he put all his brothers to the sword along with some of the officials of Israel. **5** Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. **6** He followed the ways of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord. **7** Nevertheless, because of the covenant the Lord had made with David, the Lord was not willing to destroy the house of David. He had promised to maintain a lamp for him and his descendants forever.

8 In the time of Jehoram, Edom rebelled against Judah and set up its own king. **9** So Jehoram went there with his officers and all his chariots. The Edomites surrounded him and his chariot commanders, but he rose up and broke through by night. **10** To this day Edom has been in rebellion against Judah.

Libnah revolted at the same time, because Jehoram had forsaken the Lord, the God of his ancestors.

11 He had also built high places on the hills of Judah and had caused the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves and had led Judah astray.

12 Jehoram received a letter from Elijah the prophet, which said:

"This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: 'You have not followed the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or of Asa king of Judah. **13** But you have followed the ways of the kings of Israel, and you have led Judah and the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves, just as the house of Ahab did. You have also murdered your own brothers, members of your own family, men who were better than you. **14** So now the Lord is about to strike your people, your sons, your wives and everything that is yours, with a heavy blow. **15** You yourself will be very ill with a lingering disease of the bowels, until the disease causes your bowels to come out.'"

16 The Lord aroused against Jehoram the hostility of the Philistines and of the Arabs who lived near the Cushites. **17** They attacked Judah, invaded it and carried off all the goods found in the king's palace, together with his sons and wives. Not a son was left to him except Ahaziah, the youngest.

18 After all this, the Lord afflicted Jehoram with an incurable disease of the bowels. **19** In the course of time, at the end of the second year, his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great pain. His people made no funeral fire in his honor, as they had for his predecessors.

20 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He passed away, to no one's regret, and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

Hebrews 6:14-16 New International Version (NIV)

14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." **15** And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

16 People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument.

The biblical scholar Herbert Lockyer begins his section on King Jehoram with a quote from Scottish minister Robert Murray M'Cheyne: "O God, for grace to live, so that when dead, I shall be missed."¹ It was not so with Jehoram.

We could step away from this passage simply with the knowledge that Jehoram was a really, really bad king. While we could leave it there, God has given us His word to teach us and instruct us in which way we should go, and if we look a little closer at this sad life, three things stand out.

First, Jehoram didn't trust in God. Though he had a good father who carefully placed order in the Kingdom before he died, blessed each of his sons with money and position, and crowned Jerhoman as King, it wasn't enough. Jehoram's insecurity and envy of his own brothers caused him to take things into his own hands. Rather than trust God like his father Jehoshaphat had, he murdered those he perceived to be rivals. Not trusting brings out the worst in us.

Second, Jehoram didn't worship God. His wife was a daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, the notorious, wicked twosome of Israel. She introduced her husband to all kinds of pagan worship and evil practices. He not only embraced them, he lead his country astray. There will always be alluring and enticing options around us that will want to pull us away from Christ. The problem is that when a heart leaves the God who loves it to serve the one who hates their very soul, destruction follows.

Finally, Jehoram didn't respond to God's rebuke. Discipline is love. Jehoram is like the child who was grounded over and over. First, his keys were taken away, then phone, then all media in the house, but he just sank deeper and deeper into defiance. Though God was reaching out to him through circumstances like war and illness, he would not listen. What would have happened if Jehoram had humbled himself after receiving the letter? Scripture shows time and again, God would have forgiven him, and his ending could have been much different.

Are you trusting God or trying to take matters into your own hands?

Do you worship God alone?

Has God rebuked you? Respond in humility, not defiance. He loves you.

¹ Lockyer, Herbert, D.D, R.S.I., F.R.G.S. *All the Kings and Queens of the Bible*; Tragedies and Triumphs of Royalty in Past Ages, Jehoram. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1989, p. 123.

Week 5, Day 2 Read II Chronicles 22:1-9

2 Chronicles 22:1-9 New International Version (NIV)

Ahaziah King of Judah

22 The people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, Jehoram's youngest son, king in his place, since the raiders, who came with the Arabs into the camp, had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign.

2 Ahaziah was twenty-two^[a] years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri.

3 He too followed the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him to act wickedly. **4** He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, as the house of Ahab had done, for after his father's death they became his advisers, to his undoing. **5** He also followed their counsel when he went with Joram^[b] son of Ahab king of Israel to wage war against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth Gilead. The Arameans wounded Joram; **6** so he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds they had inflicted on him at Ramoth^[c] in his battle with Hazael king of Aram.

Then Ahaziah^[d] son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to Jezreel to see Joram son of Ahab because he had been wounded.

7 Through Ahaziah's visit to Joram, God brought about Ahaziah's downfall. When Ahaziah arrived, he went out with Joram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the Lord had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab. **8** While Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he found the officials of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's relatives, who had been attending Ahaziah, and he killed them. **9** He then went in search of Ahaziah, and his men captured him while he was hiding in Samaria. He was brought to Jehu and put to death. They buried him, for they said, "He was a son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart." So there was no one in the house of Ahaziah powerful enough to retain the kingdom.

Week 5, Day 3

2 Chronicles 22:10-12

Athaliah and Joash

10 When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family of the house of Judah. **11** But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes who were about to be murdered and put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Because Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of the priest Jehoiada, was Ahaziah's sister, she hid the child from Athaliah so she could not kill him. **12** He remained hidden with them at the temple of God for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.

I grew up with three brothers who loved Star Wars. I married a fanatic and had two sons who also love everything about George Lucas' creation. So, I have become a fan myself. Yet, I won't watch Episode Three. If you don't know, there is a scene in it where all the padawans, or little up and coming jedi, are destroyed by Anakin. It symbolizes a complete turning over to the "dark side." Shockingly, we have a similar moment here in Scripture. Queen Athaliah, determined to take the throne herself, sends thugs to kill all the family of Judah. The littlest princes among them are gathered in one place.

But there is a foil to her plan. This evil queen has one person in her home who is good and brave. Jehosheba, a princess daughter of Jehoram, sees what is about to happen and rescues her young nephew and his nurse. Somehow, she takes little Joash and hides him in the temple.

How did she do it? We know very little about this heroine. We know she grew up in a home filled with strife and even murder. She lived in a country punished by war. Her father had been a wicked man, and if Athaliah was not her mother, then she was a wicked stepmother that would give Disney writers a run for their money! We don't know much else, except that she was married to a priest named Jehoiada. She lived in the temple and served the Lord. We don't know how Jehosheba survived the corruption of her home, if she had always loved the Lord in spite of her surroundings, or if she encountered the truth when she married Jehoiada. Either way, she is a shining example of the theme of this whole series. It does not matter how we started, or where we came from, it matters what choices we make, and how we finish.

Did you grow up in a less than desirable home? Were those who were supposed to care for you cruel? Were the ones who were supposed to teach you how to live the very people who taught you how to destroy your life? If that is the case, I am very sorry. It isn't fair. But there is good news. You don't have to be like them. You are not destined to repeat their actions.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV

Week 5, Day 4 Read II Chronicles 23:1-10 & Ephesians 6:10-18

2 Chronicles 23:1-10 New International Version (NIV)

23 In the seventh year Jehoiada showed his strength. He made a covenant with the commanders of units of a hundred: Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zikri. 2 They went throughout Judah and gathered the Levites and the heads of Israelite families from all the towns. When they came to Jerusalem, 3 the whole assembly made a covenant with the king at the temple of God.

Jehoiada said to them, "The king's son shall reign, as the Lord promised concerning the descendants of David. 4 Now this is what you are to do: A third of you priests and Levites who are going on duty on the Sabbath are to keep watch at the doors, 5 a third of you at the royal palace and a third at the Foundation Gate, and all the others are to be in the courtyards of the temple of the Lord. 6 No one is to enter the temple of the Lord except the priests and Levites on duty; they may enter because they are consecrated, but all the others are to observe the Lord's command not to enter.^[a] 7 The Levites are to station themselves around the king, each with weapon in hand. Anyone who enters the temple is to be put to death. Stay close to the king wherever he goes."

8 The Levites and all the men of Judah did just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. Each one took his men—those who were going on duty on the Sabbath and those who were going off duty—for Jehoiada the priest had not released any of the divisions. 9 Then he gave the commanders of units of a hundred the spears and the large and small shields that had belonged to King David and that were in the temple of God. 10 He stationed all the men, each with his weapon in his hand, around the king—near the altar and the temple, from the south side to the north side of the temple.

Ephesians 6:10-18 New International Version (NIV)

The Armor of God

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **11** Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. **12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. **13** Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. **14** Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, **15** and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. **16** In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. **17** Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Week 5, Day 5

2 Chronicles 23:11-20 New International Version (NIV)

11 Jehoiada and his sons brought out the king's son and put the crown on him; they presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him and shouted, "Long live the king!"

12 When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and cheering the king, she went to them at the temple of the Lord. 13 She looked, and there was the king, standing by his pillar at the entrance. The officers and the trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and musicians with their instruments were leading the praises. Then Athaliah tore her robes and shouted, "Treason! Treason!"

14 Jehoiada the priest sent out the commanders of units of a hundred, who were in charge of the troops, and said to them: "Bring her out between the ranks^[a] and put to the sword anyone who follows her." For the priest had said, "Do not put her to death at the temple of the Lord." 15 So they seized her as she reached the entrance of the Horse Gate on the palace grounds, and there they put her to death.

16 Jehoiada then made a covenant that he, the people and the king^[b] would be the Lord's people. 17 All the people went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.

18 Then Jehoiada placed the oversight of the temple of the Lord in the hands of the Levitical priests, to whom David had made assignments in the temple, to present the burnt offerings of the Lord as written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and singing, as David had ordered. 19 He also stationed gatekeepers at the gates of the Lord's temple so that no one who was in any way unclean might enter.

20 He took with him the commanders of hundreds, the nobles, the rulers of the people and all the people of the land and brought the king down from the temple of the Lord. They went into the palace through the Upper Gate and seated the king on the royal throne.

Yesterday you read that the Priest Jehoiada, husband of Jehosheba, kept little Joash for seven years. When the time was ready, Jehoiada enlisted all the Levites and men who served God to stage a coup against Athaliah and restore the rightful King to the throne, even though he was still a child.

It is quite a dramatic scene. I can just picture Athaliah screaming, "Treason!" Jehoiada seemed so sure and confident in his plan. I think he was confident, but not in himself or his plan. He was confident in God. God had promised David that his heir would sit on the throne forever. Little Joash, hidden away in the temple, was the only living heir. Though in human understanding the odds seemed stacked against Joash, they were not out of God's hands. Jehoiada knew that all things are possible with God and that God does not break his promises.

God still keeps his promises. Jesus, the 28 times great grandson of David is now enthroned forever in Heaven. He has made promises to us as well.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33, NIV.

When the odds are stacked against us, and we face battles with the enemy of our souls, Satan, we must remember Jesus' promise. He has won. He has triumphed over death and sin. Though things at times seem hopeless, He has a way. Trust in His plan.

