

Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 23, Part 1

2 Kings 11-13, Part 1

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We're looking this evening at two men, Joachim and Jehoahaz. And in a real sense, there's so much to be delighted in at these guys, and yet, at the same time, there's much to be grieved about. As Danny and Micah mentioned, we're thinking about a divided heart, and the impact of a divided heart.

The price that a divided heart costs. So, we begin by looking at the crowning of Joash. It's fascinating that Athaliah, the wife of Ahaziah, excuse me, the mother of Ahaziah, the wife of Joram, reigned for seven years after her husband died, and yet the Bible has virtually nothing to say about that.

There are those who would say, well, that's because of the male bias of the Bible. I don't think so. It's because the Bible understands her to be a usurper.

She never was, in any official kind of way, made queen or ruler. She simply took it upon herself. Again, as I said previously, we don't know whether she was Jezebel's daughter or not.

We do know that she was the daughter of Ahab and the granddaughter of Amri. Amri, the one who had started that dynasty, and Ahab then carried it on. We see in her, I think, one of the more shocking people in the Bible.

Because the instant she hears that her son is dead, her first move is to wipe out all of her children and grandchildren. Now, let me ask you, why would she have done that? Why would she have taken such a dreadful move? What do you think? A threat to her power. All right, a threat to her power.

I'll go there, but I wonder, how could little kids be a threat to her power? Little kids grow up. Little kids grow up, yes, yes. She reacted to the way that Ahab and his family were wiped out.

All right, as a kind of vengeance. Yes, yes. Because who is it she's getting rid of? What dynasty is she trying to wipe out? The Davidic dynasty, that's exactly right.

I think that this is probably the bottom line. Okay, okay. Jehu has wiped out the dynasty of my uncle, my father, and my grandfather and set himself up.

So, I'm going to wipe out the dynasty of David. Well, that's pretty dangerous. When God has indeed given David a promise of eternal kingship, it's fairly dangerous to set yourself up in opposition to him.

So, she's pretty successful. How successful is she? Seven years' worth. That's all, yes, yes.

God saves the Davidic dynasty, but how? Through a baby. Through a baby. How easy it would be to say, Oh my goodness, the dynasty is over.

She has won. She's gotten rid of everybody. There's nothing left except this little bitty baby.

That's all God needs. That's all God needs. And you see that theme running through the Bible.

David, excuse me, Abraham. And it's just a baby. That's all.

Hannah. The Judge's period has come down and down and down to disaster. And it's just a baby.

A little kid named Samuel. God has heard. And so, it goes through the book.

God's weakness is stronger than human strength. All it takes is a baby. But it took something more than that, didn't it? Who else did it take? A priest and his wife.

But Jehoshabab, 11:2. The daughter of King Joram and the sister of Ahaziah took Joash, son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the royal princes. Who is she? She's evidently not the daughter of Athaliah. But she's who? The sister of Ahaziah.

She is the sister of the king who just got himself killed by Jehu. She's the daughter of Athaliah's husband, Joram. So, what's her motive? What's her motive? She's going to keep that Davidic dynasty alive, even at the risk of her own life.

She stole him away from among the royal princes who were about to be murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah so he would not be killed. How much are God's promises worth to you? To me? Well, I mean, it's hopeless.

Here's this mighty queen arrayed against us. She's obviously got all of her court on her side, and they're slaughtering everybody. What shall we do? Again, I ask you.

How much are God's promises worth? Well, God can take care of his own promises. Ah, ah. But God chooses to act through you and me.

The question is, are we ready? See, God never gives a ten-minute warning. The word came: Ahaziah had been killed, and Athaliah went into action. And Jehoshua had to be ready.

She couldn't sit down and say, well, I wonder whether I really want to risk my life at this or not. I wonder whether this really matters or not. I wonder.

We have to be ready before the moment. If we're not ready before the moment, it will be too late. But this woman was ready.

And in the moment she took action. So, seven years have passed. Look at the preparations that Jehoiada made.

He got the guards together. He brought them into the temple of the Lord. He made them take a covenant or enter into a covenant and take an oath.

This is what you do. There are three companies going on duty on the Sabbath. A third of you guarded the palace, a third of you were at the surrogate, and a third were at the gate behind the guard, taking turns behind the temple.

That's one company. The other two are going off duty. Don't you do it.

You station yourselves around the temple. So, one of these companies guards the palace, and the other two that should have gone off duty guard the temple. Why this preparation? Why these details? You're all very silent tonight.

You haven't done your homework, obviously. Or if you have, you're just shy. Why? Why these detailed preparations? Right.

He didn't want anyone killed in the temple, so he got to protect the temple territory. Why else? Yes.

I think that's exactly right. Again, this is a dreadfully risky moment. If one of those three battalions of guards would go with Athaliah, they're in big trouble.

Now again, what does this say about us? Why didn't Joah just trust God? I mean, God can be trusted. All right. There's nothing to say he wasn't trusting God.

That's right. Yes. He trusted God enough to act.

What we're seeing, I would argue, is this marvelous synergy between God and his people. God is at work, but he is at work through us. Sometimes this business of trust God is just a cover-up for laziness.

I don't want to take action. I don't want to risk myself. So, okay, God, it's all up to you.

And God says no. I'm going to work, but I have chosen to work through you. So, careful planning can be, can be, I say, a substitute for trusting God.

I'm going to do all this stuff because who knows what God's going to do. But on the other hand, not carefully planning can, as I say, simply be laziness. It's this marvelous thing that God has done for us when he says, I want to use you.

I want to use you to accomplish my good purposes. My goodness. What dignity he's given to us.

He knows there's a good chance we're going to mess up, but somehow, that's all right with him. It seems as though he'd rather the thing got a little messed up with us than work fine without us—my goodness.

We're that significant to him. And so, the planning all works. So, they brought the boy out and put the crown on him.

Now, I want you to notice, in Bible study, repetition is a big deal. And there's a repeated word here that is very significant. It is the word covenant.

He made a covenant with the guards. What does he put in the little boy's hands? The covenant. Yes.

There it is again. A copy of the covenant to Joash. Down a little farther, verse 17.

He made a covenant between the Lord, the king, and the people that they would be the Lord's people. This guy is hung up on covenants.

What's the point? I had that one coming. OK. Why is this repetition of the covenant in this context? Faithfulness to God.

Remember, remember now, Baalism has been destroyed in the north. But for seven years, it has been going gangbusters in Judah. So, the question is faithfulness from God and faithfulness to God.

We've talked about it a bit before, but what's Baalism about? Why worship Baal? Who is Baal? What does Baal represent? He's the storm God. He's the God of the rain. He's the God of fertility.

So why do you worship Baal? To get what you want. To get these forces upon which life itself depends. To get them in a form that you can manipulate.

It's about making the gods do my will. What is the covenant about? Doing God's will. It's about putting myself in a relationship, not of manipulation, but of trust.

I trust you to supply my needs. I trust you, and I will live a life like yours. I trust you, and I will walk arm in arm with you in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Wow. Does God get anything out of this? Oh, yes, he does. He gets us, which is what he wants.

So here we are at this point, and I'm belaboring this a little bit, but here we are at this point where God says, and I've had a couple of opportunities recently, I may have mentioned it here, thinking about the great turning point in E. Stanley Jones' life when he was at the end, and God asked for all of Stanley. And Stanley said, but that's all I've got. And God said, but I'll give you my all.

And Stanley Jones said I've been hugging myself ever since at making such a good deal. My all for his all. In a real sense, that's what a covenant is.

You enter into a covenant with God, you give him your all in return for his all. What a deal. What a deal.

So, I don't think it's at all accidental that this covenant is being stressed and repeated here in this context. Now, the people immediately went and tore down the Temple of Baal. Verse 18, All the people of the land went to the Temple of Baal and tore it down.

They smashed the altars and idols to pieces and killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, in front of the altars. Wow. Why hadn't they done it before now? There was Athaliah, that's true.

It was risky. It was dangerous. What worries me here is, was this an expression of their covenant with God? Maybe it was.

I pray it was. Or was it just a riot? We've had reason to think in the last eight or nine months about mobs. Mobs can do good things and they can do bad things.

In this case, they happened to do a good thing, but I wonder. Part of the reason for my wondering is what we're going to see next.