

Dr. August Konkell, Chronicles, Session 20

Punishment of Pride, Jehoash

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This is Dr. August Konkell in his teaching on the books of Chronicles. This is session 20, Punishment of Pride.

We left off our study with Ahaziah who was the son of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was a king who was entirely enmeshed with Ahab, the king of Israel, and therefore his rule was very negative for Judah. The reign of Ahaziah was very short, only one year, because he was killed in the raid of Jehu when he went to see Ahab after he was recovering from his war with the Arameans.

So, this really left Jehoram's wife Athaliah as the reigning queen. And Athaliah, of course, made it her ambition to try to exterminate all of the descendants of David since her own son Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram, was now dead. She was going to engineer a whole change in the rule of Judah.

That was prevented by the intervention of a priest who saved one of the descendants of David named Jehoash. Jehoash's reign, as long as he is under the director of the priest, is very, very good. But we call this the punishment of pride because Jehoash, once the priest has died, goes entirely his own way, and his kingdom and his reign falls entirely under judgment.

So, the Chronicler begins with Athaliah's attempt to exterminate all of the descendants of David, but that is aborted by the rescue of Jehoash. So, the Chronicler then goes on to tell about the way in which Jehoash is preserved by being hidden. At such time, when he's about seven years old, the priest, in very careful provision, gets a security round about the temple so that there can be a coronation of the new king.

So, the gatekeepers, the people who are protecting the temple and protecting the palace, are all assigned particular duties to protect the boy who is to become the king. When Athaliah, who is nearby in the palace, which is adjacent to the temple, hears all the commotion that is going on, she comes to investigate. And, of course, at that point in time, she is arrested under the direction of the priest, and she is put to death.

So, at that point, the priest, the people, and the king enter into a covenant. This became the most significant event because it was a preservation of the dynasty of David. And it is a restitution of the covenant that David had with God and with the people.

So, there is a purification of worship, and there is the installation of Jehoash, which begins a new era for Judah. At this point in time, then, the nation of Judah, the tribe of Judah, is separated entirely from its alliances, which had been in place with the north under Jehoshaphat and under the influence of Ahab. So, we have the reign of Jehoash here under the high priest.

And this part of the story of Jehoash is very, very good. There is a purification of the temple, and funds are raised to raise the temple. Now there was a certain levy that was required of Levites for the support of the temple.

But of course, the Levites weren't very happy about their levy for the support of the temple being used as an additional cost in order to support the repairs. So, the story is here, as it is in Kings, about Jehoash creating a collection box. This collection box was placed at the gate of the temple, the temple court.

When people came to the temple to worship and to bring their offerings, they could give an additional offering into this collection box, which was funds just to support the temple. Kings, as well as the chronicler who followed Kings at this point, reports how this was very successful. There were more than enough funds to support the temple, restore it, and make it all that it was supposed to be.

That is the good part of the story of Jehoash. But then the priest passes away. And Jehoash, once he's no longer under the tutelage of the priest, goes his own way.

Here is where the judgment of pride really comes about because Jehoash does not humble himself before God. In fact, immediately upon the death of the high priest, the temple is compromised under foreign influence. Jehoash is beginning to act as any secular king would act, which might seem to make politically good sense, but they aren't really representing the temple and what it is all about.

And of course, from the chronicler's point of view, this is very, very negative. Now, Zechariah, the son of the high priest, comes to Jehoash with a warning about the fact that the judgment of God is going to come upon this negligence of the temple and this reversal of all the good that has taken place previously. Jehoash doesn't respond well to this and has Zechariah killed.

It may be that there's a reference to this in the New Testament, where Jesus talks about how you've killed all of the prophets from Abraham to Zechariah or something like that. And so, that really is a book of Genesis. And because in the Hebrew Bible, Chronicles is the last book in the Bible, there's a reference here to this prophet being killed.

It really is striking that the father of this priest, who was entirely responsible for preserving, as an infant, raised him until he was seven years old and then tutored

him in all the ways of the Lord. It really is ironic that this king could now so reverse that he would put to death the son of the man who had saved his life and preserved the kingdom. You might wonder, how do these things happen? The answer to the Chronicler would be quite simple.

When you don't understand the kingdom of God, when you start to make this your kingdom, when you don't understand that what you are to represent is the kingdom of God, when you think that you rule by your power and by all of your skills, then you suddenly turn to atrocious kinds of acts that, looking on from the outside, are just unthinkable. Why would you put to death the successor and the son of the man who has saved your life? But that is what it does, and of course, there are consequences. Jehoash's rule doesn't come out as he might have hoped as he starts to rely on himself and his power.

One of the crises that he faces is the attack of the Arameans. Now, at this point in time, the nation of Assyria, which is going to become such a threat a little bit later on, is really not very influential in the area of Canaan and Palestine, nor is Egypt, which was at sometimes a very influential power. And so that gave nations like the Arameans a window of opportunity to expand their own influence and their own power.

And there's no doubt that what the Arameans were interested in was access at the port of Eziongeber, which we have mentioned quite a number of times in these sessions because that was a great economic advantage in the opportunity that it provided for international trade, which is always the basis of our prosperity and our well-being. So, the Arameans were invading the territory that would belong to Joash, that territory on the east side of the Jordan. Hazael attacked to regain that territory, but clearly, what had happened also in the meantime was that the actions of Joash had created a lot of dissent and conflict within his own realm.

This, of course, is quite understandable. To have moved from being the one who was guided by the high priest to killing his son would create a lot of resentment. And Joash is killed by a conspiracy within his own court.

And so that leads us then to the reign of his son Amaziah. The reign of Amaziah is somewhat like the reign of Joash in that it has its good points, but it also ends in the disaster of judgment because there is not the following of the chronicler's principles. Of course, one can find social and political reasons for all of these things, but the chronicler has no interest in all of those because he's clear in his mind that God is in charge of all of these things, in spite of all the conspiracies of court and everything else.

He knows that this isn't the throne of Joash or the throne of Amaziah. This is the throne of God. Whatever these people may do, God is still on his throne, and God's

purpose of establishing his covenant to redeem his people is going to be fulfilled and established.

And of course, his evidence of that is their very survival, their very existence in the province of Yehud in his time. But what we see with the reign of Amaziah, who succeeds his father, is that he does consolidate his power, but the compromise is in his war against Edom. Now, this is some of the same extended warfare that his father had been involved in, seeking to have control over these trade routes and shipping routes.

And so Amaziah goes back to doing what had been done previously by Jehoshaphat, and which had led to the utter disaster of Athaliah, the mother of the king, to try to exterminate all the line of David. Well, Amaziah goes back to that same route. Now, from a political point of view, that made perfectly good sense because Israel was a much greater military power, a much greater influence, and much more capable of intervening in the case of a war against Edom.

But then, when Amaziah is successful in that war, he wants to establish an extension of his boundary against the Israelites. And so, he actually provokes a war against the king of Israel, and the king of Israel is very blunt. The king of Israel tells him, by way of a metaphor and by way of a story, that this is pure foolishness.

You are no match for Israel, the power that you have used in an alliance against Edom. But that doesn't deter Amaziah, because he's convinced of his own greatness. And so, he ends up in this disastrous war against Israel, which is described in some detail by the chronicler as to how he was defeated, and Israel invaded Judah all the way to the walls of Jerusalem and really humiliated the whole of the tribe, the whole of the state of Judah.

So Amaziah's reign ends in a complete disaster, with him held hostage by a foreign power. This is just another example in the chronicler's presentation of all the events that trusting in yourself and trying to make something of your own power in establishing your own kingdom doesn't work. It didn't work for Joash and doesn't work for Amaziah.

That is the wrong approach to things. So here are two examples that the Chronicler gives us on the negative side. Those who don't humble themselves, at least at the end of their reign, they don't humble themselves.

They don't seek the face of the Lord. And then, of course, their unfaithfulness leads to their total demise in ignominy. That is the lesson that the chronicler wants his readers to learn and to remember.

Unfaithfulness always has its price.

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