

## Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 23, Part 2

### 2 Kings 11-13, Part 2

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The repairing of the temple. And once again, I've talked to you numerous times about this. Proportion is significant in the Bible.

And we've got here, basically 16 verses on trying to get the temple repaired. I wonder why the narrator gives that much space to this event. What do you think? I think you're absolutely right.

I think it is no accident that the books of Kings begin with Solomon. And clearly, as far as the narrator is concerned, the most significant thing he did was build the temple. And now, at this crisis moment, finally, finally, the Baal threat is brought to an end.

I'm sorry, not the idolatry threat, but the Baal threat is brought to an end. The story that we started clearly back in 1 Kings chapter 17 with Elijah coming on the scene. So, we've given all of these chapters, 21 chapters, to about 40 years, 40 years of crisis. Is Baal going to replace Yahweh? Is the Yahweh story going to come to an end? Now we say, oh, well, I couldn't happen.

Oh, yes, you could. The story would have been very different. Yahweh wins, and he is going to win.

But how the story might have gone could have been very, very different. So, I think it's exactly right that, yes, now at this moment, the repair of the temple has been evidently in disrepair as Baalism has snuck down from the north and taken over even in Judah. Symbols matter.

The Bible has a very ambivalent attitude toward symbols. And this is in a bit telegraphing what I want to say, but that's all right. On the one hand, symbols are vital as far as the Bible is concerned.

God knows that we are body and spirit. And you got to do things with tangible, physical, visible stuff because that's part of who we are. So, on the one hand, symbols are vital.

On the other hand, symbols are deadly because they can replace the life that they're supposed to symbolize. I've never forgotten a friend who's a graduate of the seminary. He's now gone to the Lord.

But he was appointed to the original Akron Plan Methodist Church. The Akron Plan that was developed in Akron, Ohio, had the sanctuary in something of a triangle. The pulpit was at the apex of the triangle and the pews then were circular around it.

The little country church where I grew up was on the Akron Plan. Well, these people worshipped their building, and they were as dead as a stone. They told him, we're really unhappy with your preaching.

He said, why? You preach the Bible too much. Well, what do you want me to preach? The newspaper. Well, eventually, he got moved.

And about three years later, that building burned to the ground. One of his friends called him up and said, where were you the night that fire started? He had a good alibi, fortunately. But guess what? They raised multi-millions of dollars and rebuilt that thing exactly as it was.

Symbols are deadly. They're vital, but they're deadly. Okay, that having been said, now look at this story.

It's bizarre. I don't know another word for it. So, Josh says.

And notice what it says. This will be important for our further discussion. Josh did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

During all the years that Jehoiada, the priest instructed him, Oops. Oops.

Hang on to that. So, verse four. We don't know the year.

We don't know whether this was right away or maybe after four or five years or what we don't know. Josh told the priest to collect all the money that had been brought as sacred offerings to the temple of the Lord. The money was collected in the census, the money was received from personal vows, and the money was brought voluntarily to the temple.

Let every priest receive the money from one of the treasurers, then use it to repair whatever damage is found in the temple. Right? We're going to pay attention to this symbol of the presence of Yahweh in our midst. Good for them.

But by the 23rd year of King Joash, the priests still had not repaired the temple. Huh? What? What's going on? Why not? What happened? They didn't have a building committee. Yes? Yes? I'm going to be a little facetious here and relate to what was just said.

But there is validity to the idea of the separation of church and state. The priests are responsible for this. Why didn't they do it? Yes, that's one possibility.

That's one possibility. They are serving themselves. As will be told later on in the chapter and reminded from Leviticus, the sin offerings and the guilt offerings, those go to the priest.

That's the priest's salary. The grain, the meat, those things, those go to the priest. But as we know from Samuel, that was kind of boring.

We're told in Samuel that the priests were tired of boiled meat. They wanted the juicy stuff. They wanted the first cuts.

No longer the ribs. They wanted the sirloins. So, yeah, maybe that's what's going on.

Here's a way to supplement our income. How about other thoughts? Why weren't they doing it? Yes, yes, yes. Their covenant.

What else? Pardon? They weren't builders. Exactly, exactly. They didn't know what they were doing.

They weren't contractors. They weren't architects. They weren't designers.

They're out of their depth. Now, here's the next question. Why did it take so many years to figure it out? Who dropped the ball? Somebody didn't follow up, yeah.

Joash didn't follow up. This says to me, and maybe more than it should, but it says to me that Joash himself was not an independent thinker and worshiper. That thing about he did what was right as long as Joash had told him what to do.

I won't point any fingers. Especially not one at me. But it's very easy to have a dependent relationship with another Christian.

My fire burns as long as I'm close to another hot fire. But there's no independent spiritual life here. I like the illustration that I heard many, many years ago.

Are you a thermostat or a thermometer? Do you change the temperature around you, or do you merely reflect it? I have the feeling that Joash was a reflector. Now, I don't know quite what to think about Jehoiada. The Bible doesn't have a bad word to say about Jehoiada.

But what was he doing? I suspect perhaps he was just overly busy. He was trying to manage the restoration of the spiritual life of the country and a lot of other stuff and

he simply didn't have time. But again, as I said, there is, as we've said, there is a vital connection between symbol and life.

Life and symbol. They must not get out of hand. On the other hand, this is especially true after they return from exile.

Why bother to build the temple anyhow? Building the temple can be a way of inspiring your own faith. Is it a replacement for your faith? No. But it can be a way of firing it.

So, they give the money. They take it out of the priest's hands. They take it out of the preacher's hands and put it in the hands of the building committee.

Now, let me remind you of something else. Remember the building of the tabernacle? Who was in charge of that? A layperson named Bezalel is the first person in the Bible to whom it is specifically said he was filled with the Holy Spirit—a layperson.

Again, I think there is such a danger to the professionals and the spectators. You see that, first of all, in the Bible with Aaron. It's fascinating to me there is not one positive thing said about the person of Aaron in the Bible.

About the high priesthood, yes. But Aaron? I think it's precisely to make sure we never think that Aaron is the savior. But there it is.

Aaron, make us a God who will lead us out of this desert. And Aaron says, OK. Tear those gold earrings off.

Strong words. Tear those gold earrings off. Give them to me.

And then you sit down and shut up and watch an Egyptian seminary-trained guy at work. That's the living Oswald version. They had nothing more to do.

Aaron made this thing. Lied about it when Moses asked him who made it. But I think what we're seeing here, very subtly, is the fact we're all called.

We're all called. And when it's taken out of the hands of the professionally religious and put into the hands of others who are, I don't think it's accidental, and we're told they didn't have to have an account kept of them because they acted with complete honesty. Yes.

The work of God's temple is not the work of the professionally religious. It's the work of all God's called people, people who are characterized by godly integrity.