

# SEEK THE LORD, ALL YOU HUMBLE OF THE EARTH

## “I Turn My Feet Back to Your Decrees”

by Matt Capps

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When Martin Luther sparked the Protestant Reformation by nailing his ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral in Germany, it was no coincidence that the very first thesis focused on repentance. For Luther, repentance was so central to the Christian life that this famous document began by arguing that “the entire life of believers be a life of repentance.”<sup>1</sup> This may sound odd to our modern sensibilities. In fact, it’s not a stretch to argue that the doctrine of repentance has fallen on hard times in our day because it presupposes there is something wrong with us. In our therapeutic culture, this can come across as demeaning. No one wants to admit something is wrong with them, right? Who has the right to tell me I need to change? Who has the right to tell me I don’t measure up? And repentance is needed for all of life? Come on, Luther. Isn’t that a little excessive?

We all like to justify ourselves, in every part of our being. As the father of three small children, I am reminded of this often. When confronting a child’s wrongdoing, I always notice how quickly their inner lawyer is revealed in their arguments. One common response is: “It wasn’t my fault! He started it!” We all are excellent at pointing out the faults of others, aren’t we? Another response is: “I didn’t do anything wrong!” We love to redefine right and wrong according

to our own benefit. It’s fascinating how the actions of a child reflect how controversial repentance is from an early age. Things don’t change much as we grow older; our self-justification just becomes more advanced. This is common among all humanity. You see, the way the world typically deals with sin is blame-shifting or redefinition. However, God calls His children to deal with sin by repentance.

### DEFINING REPENTANCE

Repentance is more than remorse over being caught. Repentance is deeper than regret for the consequences of sin. Repentance begins with sorrow over breaking God’s heart. But repentance doesn’t end there. Repentance is turning from sin and returning to God with a desire to follow His commands. Mark Dever put it well when he said:

What is repentance? It is turning from the sins you love to the holy God you’re called to love. It is admitting that you’re not God. It is beginning to value Jesus more than your immediate pleasure. It is giving up those things the Bible calls sin and leaving them to follow Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

When one examines Scripture, repentance is always the first step to renewal and revival. The good news is God

always initiates this renewal with a manifest call for repentance among His people. In this sense, all of God's warnings that precede final judgment are acts of mercy and grace. However, we must not presume upon His grace. Even in His long-suffering, God is also just. The Old Testament makes it clear: When people ignore God's warnings and proceed in their sin despite His summons, it always ends in judgment. Therefore, true repentance is marked by perseverance in obedience. To put it another way, sin forsaken is one of the best pieces of evidence for true repentance.

## The fruitful Christian life isn't a sinless life but a repentant life.

### REPENTANCE IN SANCTIFICATION

Now, you may be thinking, But even in my best efforts, I am not able to walk in perfect obedience! This is why Luther declared that all of life should be marked by repentance. Even from the beginning, an infant in the faith must first understand that repentance is required to understand our need for grace. As time goes on and one matures in faith, it becomes clear that the closer you get to our Holy God, the more you realize how much you need to repent. The brighter the light, the more visible the imperfections. In this way, we understand that the fruitful Christian life isn't a sinless life but a repentant life. The Christian who has stopped repenting is a Christian who has stopped growing. After all, Jesus exhorted people to produce fruit that comes from repentance (Matt. 3:8).

### THE GOSPEL IS FOR SINNERS

The gospel is such good news for sinners like you and me. Jesus came not for the

healthy but for those who knew they were sick, to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:31-32). As Christians, we know that Jesus died as the atoning sacrifice for our sin so that we could be forgiven (Luke 24:46-47). Because Jesus is the only person who has ever lived a perfectly righteous life, He is the only One who can make a satisfactory sacrifice to appease the justice of God. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the grounds of our repentance. And it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). This is good news for the entirety of our lives! Why? We can be open and honest when we repent of our sin because the Scriptures promise that our sins will be wiped out and remembered by God no more. Moreover, we are promised that when we repent, we will be refreshed by the Lord (Acts 3:19-20).

Now we see that repentance is not just the door of entry into the Christian life. Repentance is the way we go further up and deeper into our walk with God. At the end of his life, the puritan theologian John Newton was recorded as saying, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: That I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior."<sup>3</sup> You see, like Newton, we must understand that repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. Repentance recognizes that we are so sinful that we need God's grace. Faith believes that we are so loved that Christ came to show us grace. And it's because of God's grace in Christ that we can approach the throne of grace with boldness to receive mercy and find grace (Heb. 4:16). Therefore, growing in repentance is the fruit of faithfulness. And faithfulness is proven through persevering in repentance.

1. Martin Luther, "The Ninety-Five Theses: A Disputation to Clarify the Power of Indulgences (1517)," in *The Ninety-Five Theses and Other Writings*, trans. and ed. William R. Russell (New York: Penguin, 2017), 3.

2. Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 57.

3. John Newton, quoted in *John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace*, by Jonathan Aitken (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 347.



# A HUMILIATED KING

## + SESSION OUTLINE

1. A faithful king restores the proper worship of God (2 Chron. 24:4-6,13-14).
2. A forgetful king reverts to the worship of idols (2 Chron. 24:17-22).
3. A fallen king receives the judgment of God (2 Chron. 24:23-25).

Background Passages: 2 Kings 11–12; 2 Chronicles 22–24

## + WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

Faithfulness is proven over the long-term, and later lapses of faithfulness will be judged.

## + HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

Joash was a king who started well but then fell near the end of his reign and led the people away from God. Jesus is the only perfect king, the sinless Son of God who was faithful to the Father, even enduring the cross to provide forgiveness and salvation for all who trust in Him.

## + HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because Jesus has gone before us in complete faithfulness, we don't rest in momentary acts of obedience but rather seek to live in a way that is fully pleasing to the Father as long as we draw breath.

# GROUP TIME

NOTES



## INTRODUCTION

**SETTING:** Ahab, king of Israel, and his wife, Jezebel, brought great wickedness and idolatry into the land, leading their people far astray from the one true God. And Ahab's influence spread to Judah when his daughter, Athaliah, married Jehoram, the king of Judah. Through the word of Elisha, a general from Israel named Jehu brought judgment upon all the house of Ahab, killing the wicked kings of both kingdoms who were descended from him. The power vacuum in Judah was quickly and violently filled by Athaliah, the queen mother, but even she did not escape God's judgment and was replaced by the rightful king, Joash.

**DISCUSS:** What are some aspects of life on earth that can only be tested and proven over time? (friendships; certain scientific and mathematical theories; financial strategies; some medical procedures; the efficacy of pharmaceuticals; the effects of a system of government; the strength of one's memory; the results of life choices)

**TRANSITION:** Another aspect of life that must be proven over time is the reality of one's faithfulness. The kings of Judah and Israel were a masterclass of faithfulness and unfaithfulness in action. Some kings were clearly one or the other. Some were a mixture of both. But the pivot from which a faithful king turned unfaithful hinged on pride. If you think highly of yourself, you will lose your grip on what matters—you will lose your focus on God. In Isaiah 57:15, God tells us where He dwells: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit." It's tempting for kings to try to reach that high and holy place, but they cannot get there unless they follow the better path of humility, where God waits with open arms.

**OPTIONAL QUESTION:** Why is it so difficult to humble ourselves? (too high of a view of ourselves; a desire to be seen as great; sin; the world we live in prioritizes pride)



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# POINT 1

## A FAITHFUL KING RESTORES THE PROPER WORSHIP OF GOD (2 CHRON. 24:4-6,13-14).

NOTES

### THE LEVITES

God selected the tribe of Levi to maintain the religious duties of the tabernacle and, eventually, the temple (Num. 3:11-13). Only selected men from the family of Aaron, however, were to offer the sacrifices in the tabernacle and temple as priests. Thus, all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.

### ATHALIAH

The daughter of wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of Israel and the wife of King Jehoram of Judah (2 Kings 8:16-18). Her son, Ahaziah, became king of Judah but was soon assassinated, so she had all his heirs but one executed, and she usurped the throne. She ruled Judah for seven years until the priest Jehoiada led a revolt to execute her and to name Joash as king (2 Kings 11). She was the only female monarch to sit on David's throne, though she was not of David's royal lineage.

**4** After this Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD. **5** And he gathered the priests and the Levites and said to them, "Go out to the cities of Judah and gather from all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that you act quickly." But the Levites did not act quickly. **6** So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief and said to him, "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the servant of the LORD, and the congregation of Israel for the tent of testimony?" . . . **13** So those who were engaged in the work labored, and the repairing went forward in their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it. **14** And when they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the LORD, both for the service and for the burnt offerings, and dishes for incense and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD regularly all the days of Jehoiada.

**READ:** Ask two volunteers to read aloud **2 Chronicles 24:4-6** and **13-14** from their Bibles.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 4-6** commentary to explain the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

The temple of the Lord had been **raided** and ravaged by an ungodly queen, but young King Joash saw to it that the temple would be **repaired** and restored with the help of the Levites and his **people**.

**DISCUSS:** What are some excuses people might have for delaying spiritual restoration in their lives and churches? (easier not to rock the boat; spiritual restoration likely would mean sacrificing the fulfillment of personal desires; don't know where to begin; a misguided belief that God no longer cares about them)

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 13-14** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Joash and Jehoiada served well in their **kingly** and **priestly** duties, respectively. They restored and filled the temple and led the people to **worship** the Lord as He had commanded.

**TRANSITION:** Joash led his people well in this early stage of his reign. But his godly influence, it seems, was tied exclusively to his godly mentor, Jehoiada. And after that mentor died, Joash led in an entirely different direction.

## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 4-6** / In the life of God's people, specifically the Southern Kingdom of Judah, nothing was more important than the temple. Chart the story and you will see that as the temple went, so went the people. It was the center of their life with God, and their faithfulness was played out in His presence. When King Joash sought to **"restore"** the temple, it was a sign to God's people that a faithful one was on the throne.

Joash had good reason for doing such a wonderful thing. The temple was his early childhood home. When he was an infant, his grandmother Athaliah usurped the throne and sought to annihilate all the royal heirs. Joash's aunt and uncle took him and hid him from Athaliah for the first six years of his life (2 Chron. 22:10-12). Protected in the bowels of the temple, Joash grew up in the arena of worship, surrounded by the mercy and grace of God. But the temple itself during that time was raided and neglected by Athaliah.

In Joash's seventh year, his uncle, the priest Jehoiada, overthrew Athaliah and set things right by crowning Joash, David's descendant, as king. Moving from the shadows of the temple to the spotlight of the throne, it was now time for Joash to reign over God's people (23:1-24:3).

Safe from the threat of violence and securely seated on the throne, Joash looked at his old home and saw its need. With the power to do something about its dilapidated condition, Joash's faith sprung into action. But not all were accommodating.

Joash asked **"the priests and the Levites,"** the proper responsible parties, to collect a yearly offering to fund the temple's repairs and to do so quickly. But for some reason, they delayed instead. For twenty-three years, these spiritual leaders ignored this responsibility from their king and to their Lord (2 Kings 12:6). So Joash commanded his uncle, Jehoiada, the high priest, to make it happen. An ancient Mosaic tax was

recalled, and the people rejoiced to contribute to the restoration of the Lord's temple (2 Chron. 24:6-11).

**VERSES 13-14** / Under Joash's command, Jehoiada succeeded in raising the necessary funds, which were used to purchase supplies and to hire craftsmen—stonecutters, carpenters, blacksmiths, and coppersmiths—to restore the temple to its former glory (2 Chron. 24:12; see also 2 Kings 12:11-12). They did their work well, and the repairs progressed until finally, after two decades of waiting, the work was finished and the temple was **"restored"** and **"strengthened."** The money left over was then brought to Joash and Jehoiada, who used the remaining silver and gold to make articles and utensils for use in the ministry of the temple. In addition to repairing the building, the ritual sacrifices were renewed, such that **"burnt offerings"** were regularly made by the priests in the temple all the days of Jehoiada's life.

These two influential men—Joash and Jehoiada—were faithful together before the Lord. They rebuilt what was torn down, restored what was broken, and repaired what was wounded. These actions were the most natural thing in the world for their roles in Israel, the kind of work a king and a priest ought to be about. They were acting here as types of Christ to come, serving God's people in priestly and kingly ways to usher people into God's presence. God's temple was their priority, and God's worship was their focus. By all external accounts, they not only completed but abounded in the work of the Lord, and God was glorified in Judah. This indeed was a great start to the reign of Joash.

Perhaps the right man was now on the throne, another man after God's own heart, a promised son of David, a just and righteous king, a foreshadow of Jesus, the greater King to come. Joash worshiped God. He worked for God. He served God's people. We see the outward appearance, and it was good, but God sees the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).

# POINT 2

## A FORGETFUL KING REVERTS TO THE WORSHIP OF IDOLS (2 CHRON. 24:17-22).

**17** Now after the death of Jehoiada the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king. Then the king listened to them. **18** And they abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs. **19** Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the LORD. These testified against them, but they would not pay attention. **20** Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, “Thus says God, ‘Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.’” **21** But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. **22** Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah’s father, had shown him, but killed his son. And when he was dying, he said, “May the LORD see and avenge!”

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **2 Chronicles 24:17-22** from his or her Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 17-18** commentary to explain the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Joash’s life exemplifies the truths that faithfulness is played out over **time** and that **bad** company corrupts **good** morals (see 1 Cor. 15:33).

**DISCUSS:** What are some things we can do to avoid the wayward path Joash took with his life? (be faithful in spiritual disciplines; pray without ceasing; stay in the Word; be faithful in the church; seek out mentors and accountability partners; be faithful to the Lord in relationships with others; search our hearts with the Lord’s help for lingering idols; work out our salvation, knowing that the Lord is working in us to do so [Phil. 2:12-13])

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 19-22** commentary to address the depth of Joash’s fall in spite of God’s faithful investment in His people through the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

**ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #62:** *Deity of the Holy Spirit:* The Holy Spirit is the Third **Person** of the Trinity, possessing the **fullness** of deity like the Father and Son. His deity can be seen in the fact that He is eternal (Heb. 9:14), **omnipresent** (Ps. 139:7-8), the creator and giver of life (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30; John 3:5-7), and directly identified with the Triune God (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

**TRANSITION:** The Lord saw Joash’s descent, and He would avenge His servant.

NOTES

### VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Every man in the state of nature makes an idol of himself; exalts himself when he should advance God; minds himself more than he minds God; aims at himself, when he should aim at God; rests in himself, when he should depend upon God; loves himself more than God; honours himself more than God; seeks himself more than God; would have that ascribed to himself, which is to be ascribed only to God; would have himself eyed, admired, praised more than God. Self-conceit, self-love, self-seeking, they are all secret strains of idolatry, and ourselves are naturally our own idols.”<sup>1</sup>

—David Clarkson  
(1622-1686)

## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 17-18** / Things in Judah were going well, for a time, specifically, for as long as the high priest Jehoiada lived. But when he died, everything changed. Jehoiada had done what was good in Israel: protecting the rightful king, installing that king, and helping to restore the temple (2 Chron. 24:15-16). We also see that his godly influence, while he was alive, kept Joash in line.

After Jehoiada died, **“the princes of Judah”** came to Joash to pay him homage as king. What did they say to the king? Whatever it was, it was persuasive enough to get Joash to listen to them, to abandon his former focus on the Lord, and to press on to different arenas of worship. Perhaps this turning point in Joash’s reign was a slow fade, or maybe, as the chronicler seems to suggest, it was an immediate about-face. No matter the time frame, the important point is that King Joash led Judah to drift from the worship of God to the worship of idols. That drift started in his own heart, and as the leaders of the nation went, so went the people. We tend to become what our leaders are.

The chronicler tells us what happened in blunt terms. They **“abandoned”** the temple and the God of their ancestors, and instead, they went after **“the Asherim and the idols.”** Here was a tragedy of the greatest order. Notice that God did not abandon them; they abandoned Him. God had not moved; they did. The temple of the Lord was before them, repaired and open, but their hearts sought out false gods.

Asherah was a fertility goddess of the Canaanites and closely associated with the more familiar idol Baal. It may sound odd to our modern ears that anyone would leave the Lord to worship idols, but it still happens today. Our idols may not be carved structures, but they are idols nonetheless. Whatever our hearts love more than God is an idol. Whatever we live for in competition to God is an idol. We may struggle with the perception, but idol worship is still the biggest religion around.

The temple Joash had worked so fervently to repair, he later abandoned. The place of holy worship to the Lord, his early childhood home, he left in favor of unholy worship. And the God under whose grace and mercy he grew up, he rejected for the fruitless service of idols. That treacherous act had grave consequences. God’s **“wrath”** was against Joash and Judah and Jerusalem, for they were guilty. Once again, it all came down to worship. One of life’s most significant lessons jumping from the page is that our worship is far more important than we tend to believe. We are what we worship. It defines and directs our hearts.

**VERSES 19-22** / What was God’s response to His people’s abandonment of worship in the temple? We already saw that God’s wrath was set against the people. But then He did something surprising, at least from our perspective—the Lord **“sent prophets among them.”** It would be a tragedy to miss the importance of this statement. Instead of dismissing those who abandoned Him, as we likely would, the Lord mercifully sent them messengers to correct and call them home. Yet the people still would not listen.

The chronicler mentioned one prophet in particular to highlight just how far Joash and the people had fallen. **“The Spirit of God”** came upon **“Zechariah,”** Jehoiada’s son and Joash’s cousin. This “Spirit” was not an angel or an afterthought; the “Spirit of God” is God Himself, the Third Person of the Trinity. The one true God of Israel was invested in the physical and spiritual well-being of His people.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Zechariah declared the truth of the national situation with boldness: Because Judah was disobeying, they were suffering. And Zechariah’s reward for his obedience—a pile of stones. In his pride, King Joash chose to forget **“the kindness”** Jehoiada had shown him so he could murder Jehoiada’s son and maintain the ignorance of his idolatry. Therefore, true to Zechariah’s final cry, the Lord would **“avenge.”**

# POINT 3

## A FALLEN KING RECEIVES THE JUDGMENT OF GOD (2 CHRON. 24:23-25).

NOTES

**23** At the end of the year the army of the Syrians came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus. **24** Though the army of the Syrians had come with few men, the LORD delivered into their hand a very great army, because Judah had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash. **25** When they had departed from him, leaving him severely wounded, his servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest, and killed him on his bed. So he died, and they buried him in the city of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings.

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **2 Chronicles 24:23-25** from his or her Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 23-24** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Joash, the leaders, and the people of Judah incurred the wrath and judgment of God for their rebellion. The **sovereign** and **holy** Lord used a **pagan** people to judge Joash for his sin.

**DISCUSS: What does God's response to Joash's rebellion teach us about God's character?** (God is merciful and just at the same time; God is patient in His judgment and merciful to call people to repentance; God's wrath and judgment do not negate His promises; God will not allow sin to go on unhindered forever; God is holy no matter what method of judgment He chooses; God is true to His word, whether that includes blessings or curses)

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSE 25** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Joash began faithfully, then forgot tragically, and therefore was judged justly. He died for his rebellion. But one day, the promised King—Jesus—would come. He is **eternally** faithful and died in our place, taking on the judgment we deserve. **Believe** in Him and be **saved!**

**DISCUSS: What should a life of faithfulness look like for a believer in Jesus Christ?** (daily, sustained obedience to God's Word; regular repentance for sin; a desire to tell others about the salvation available through faith in Jesus; warning others of the consequences of sin with a heart filled with truth and love; loving God and loving others in the name of Jesus Christ)

### THE SYRIANS

The Arameans, also known as Syrians, were a loose group of towns and tribes northeast of the kingdom of Israel that fought together when needed and disbanded when needed. King Hazael and his son, Ben-hadad, oppressed both Israel and Judah in the ninth century BC. Their major city was Damascus, and their major contribution in history was the Aramaic language.

## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 23-24** / Zechariah's dying prayer was soon answered by the Lord in stages. The first stage involved the Syrian army. It sounds like a fictional story—judgment coming after an omen is spoken—but it is history. The Syrian army entered Judah and Jerusalem, destroyed their leaders, and sent the plunder away.

The Syrians must have wondered how it could possibly have been such an easy battle. The Syrian army wasn't a big one, only a **"few men"** against Joash's **"very great"** army. How could they have achieved such an upset victory? The answer is simple: **"the LORD."** Even a small army with the power of God behind them will defeat the largest army in the world who does not have the Lord with them. And Joash's army was powerless because they **"had forsaken the LORD."** In their history, Israel had often been the underdog undergirded by the strength of the Lord, but on this occasion, they suffered defeat for their sin.

Here we step into the mystery of God's work in the world. Joash and the people of Judah had abandoned the Lord, and they had conspired together to murder the Lord's prophet. According to Zechariah's dying prayer, these charges demanded the Lord's justice. Because the Lord is just, He acted to punish these offenders.

God used the Syrian army to bring His judgment upon Judah. Does this implicate God in doing evil since the Syrians were a pagan people? By no means! In His sovereignty, in a way we can't quite understand, God could use the Syrian army without getting His hands dirty. The Syrians attacked of their own accord, but it was the will of God that they do so. Human responsibility and divine sovereignty are both upheld in these events. The Syrians were not good people, and they would be judged themselves (Isa. 17:1-3; Amos 1:3-5). But on this day, it was God's people who would see judgment by the decree of God. The sovereign God uses even those who don't know Him to accomplish His purposes.

Joash's problem wasn't strategic or tactical but theological and spiritual. He had abandoned the God of his ancestors and led his people to do the same, so the Lord handed them over to the Syrians. Instead of resting in the goodness of God, they looked out at the world and considered it better. They left the Lord their God, and for this reason, **"judgment"** was executed against Joash in particular.

To abandon the Lord is the greatest act of treason possible, and it would be unjust of God not to bring judgment. Sin has consequences, and though that sounds like bad news, it is actually very good news. God is a God of justice who will one day set all wrong things right.

**VERSE 25** / One stage of God's judgment was complete; two more remained. Judah had suffered an illogical military defeat, which resulted in the deaths of the leaders who persuaded Joash to pursue idols instead of the one true God. Joash himself also was severely wounded, but the Syrians left him alive.

For stage two, Joash was assassinated by two of **"his servants"** while he lay on his bed. Joash had abandoned the Lord to go after idols—dead things—and since we are what we worship, he too became a dead thing. The two conspirators, sons of Ammonite and Moabite women (24:26), murdered the king because he had conspired to kill Zechariah. These sons of foreigners showed more regard for Jehoiada than the wayward king who was raised by him. And for stage three, a dishonor in death, Joash was not buried with the other kings of Judah.

A promising young king of Judah once again ended with rebellion against God, and God faithfully judged him. But one day, the faithful King would come, live a perfect life, and take upon Himself all our sins at His death. And because of Him—because of Jesus—by faith in Him, we can be saved from the judgment our sins deserve and dwell forever in the presence of the Lord.

# MY RESPONSE

Because Jesus has gone before us in complete faithfulness, we don't rest in momentary acts of obedience but rather seek to live in a way that is fully pleasing to the Father as long as we draw breath.

NOTES

## HEAD:

Joash shows how important right thoughts of God are to our lives. Early in his life, he experienced the wonderful gifts of God: grace, mercy, protection, salvation. He seemed to make the worship of God a priority not only in his life but also in the lives of his people. Then something happened. He abandoned his first love. What came into his mind when he thought about God was something other than who God really is. Let us be sure we think rightly about God. Everything else depends upon it.

**What comes into your mind when you think about God? What thoughts need to be examined more closely, and how will you do that?**

## HEART:

A story like Joash's can evoke all kinds of feelings, can't it? We may feel joy, anger, anxiety, and confusion in the span of a few verses. This narrative confronts our thoughts about how God works in this world. Joash abandoned God and chose judgment instead of the mercy of God, not considering repentance and a return to the Lord. Joash stopped seeing God as worthy of worship and followed his own path instead. We don't have to follow in his footsteps. We have another King, Jesus, to look to. He is the faithful One who will lead us on the right path.

**Where does your path of life diverge from the faithful path Jesus has paved? What sinful patterns of idol worship do you need to repent of?**

## HANDS:

The judgment of God can create a wide variety of emotions in us. Perhaps it conjures up fears that you are deserving of judgment and cannot stand on the final day when you appear before Him. Maybe it is an aspect of God you'd rather not think about because it feels ungodly for Him not to be loving to everyone all the time. But the judgment of God is a very profound biblical truth. Our sins are not hidden from Him, and He has the right and responsibility to judge our hearts. What, then, are we to do? We can run from Him to our doom or we can come to Him in repentance and faith. He calls us to come—not so He can slam us down but so He can apply the sacrifice of Christ to our sinful souls and save us (see Matt. 11:28-30).

**For whom is the Holy Spirit leading you to play the part of Zechariah, to warn and call them to repentance that they might be saved through faith in Jesus Christ?**

## VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Like milk that turns sour, Joash never returns to his former wholesomeness. However, we remember that only with death do we reach the point of no return. While there is life, there is always the hope that by the grace of God, even a curdled life can be reinvested, or turned into *rasgullas*, the Bengali sweet made with sour milk."<sup>2</sup>

—Havilah Dharamraj

## POINT 1: A FAITHFUL KING RESTORES THE PROPER WORSHIP OF GOD (2 CHRON. 24:4-6,13-14).

### + COMMENTARY

“The term restore (‘renovate’, REB, NEB) marks the beginning and end of the first part (vv. 4, 12). This word really means ‘renewal’, and is most often used of personal renewal (Pss 51:10; 103:5; Lam. 5:21), being applied to buildings only in 2 Chronicles 15:8 (the temple altar) and Isaiah 61:4. The idea of ‘giving new life’ to buildings also occurs in 1 Chronicles 11:8, and verse 14 implies that this includes the use to which they are put as much as the physical task of reconstruction.”<sup>3</sup>

### + COMMENTARY

“The author of Chronicles follows the same pattern in his account of Joash’s reign as he does for those of Amaziah and Uzziah, Joash’s successors. The description starts with a period of obedience that brings blessing, describes an important event that unleashes a change in attitude, and then presents a period characterized by disobedience and resultant punishment . . . All three of them did good things and were obedient, but unfortunately all finished in disobedience.”<sup>4</sup>

### + ILLUSTRATION

In the BBC show *The Repair Shop*, people bring in long-neglected family heirlooms to a team of expert craftsmen who can restore the items to their former glory. The team members at the shop are skilled in nearly everything, and the work they do always leaves jaws on the floor. It’s the kind of show that feels good because it is good. We all love a restoration project.

Restoration is at the heart of God’s plan in the gospel. When Joash set out to restore the temple, he was participating in the kind of work God was doing and will do in this broken-down world. In the end, God will not completely delete all the good that exists. Instead, He will make all things new and restore creation to its original glory. He will restore what is broken and refurnish what is empty. God’s restoration work will come finally and fully at the end of this age. But His work starts the moment a person believes in His saving grace in Jesus Christ. His best work is not done on buildings or in far-off lands but in the hearts of every believer in every place. That includes in you. The irony of Joash’s work is that as he was restoring the temple, he missed the restoring work God was willing to do in his heart if he simply opened himself to the Lord.

# EXTRA

## POINT 2: A FORGETFUL KING REVERTS TO THE WORSHIP OF IDOLS (2 CHRON. 24:17-22).

### + COMMENTARY

“The Chronicler began this portion of his record with a three step scenario which he added to the account of Kings. First, after the death of Jehoiada leaders paid homage to Joash and the king listened to them (24:17). Apparently, Jehoiada’s influential role in the royal court was now fulfilled by these officials. 24:25-26 suggests that some of these new advisors may have been foreigners. These new advisors turned Joash away from God. Like other kings, Joash proved to be unfaithful once his kingdom was secure . . . Second, Joash and these officials abandoned the temple . . . and worshipped Asherah poles and idols (24:18). The Chronicler described this infidelity with one of his important theological terms: abandoned . . . He repeated this same word . . . later in this story (24:20, 24) with the meaning that Joash and the officials had flagrantly violated their covenant loyalty to God. This violation was illustrated by the fact that Joash now did just the opposite of what he had done earlier in his life (see 24:4-14). The king who had restored the temple now abandoned it. Third, as a result of their rebellion, God’s anger came upon Judah and Jerusalem (24:18b). It is not altogether clear whether the Chronicler meant that God began to punish Joash with specific covenant curses, or if he merely meant that divine wrath was stirred against the king. In all events, Joash and his leaders had provoked God against them. The king’s path was leading to judgment. The Chronicler shifted abruptly in his depiction of Joash. A greater contrast could hardly be imagined. He followed this course to illustrate the striking difference between obedience leading to divine blessing and disobedience leading to divine judgment.”<sup>5</sup>

### + ILLUSTRATION

The author of Hebrews used a vivid image in the second chapter. After the presentation of Jesus as better than angels and His message as better than every other, the author urged his readers not to drift from the gospel (Heb. 2:1-3). Drifting isn’t a problem reserved only for those people back then. Not only is it a real potential issue, but it may also be the issue facing all of us today. Drifting, for all its danger, is incredibly easy to do. We could say Joash was a drifter. When Jehoiada died and others came in with alternative messages, he wasn’t anchored enough to stay true to God’s word. Like a ship on the high seas caught in a storm, he drifted away from the intended goal. Instead of fighting the drift, he kept the sails up and went where the wind blew.

Perhaps you feel you are drifting as well. You have been going wherever life takes you, and you sense a distance from God. What do you do now? Here’s the simple answer: Come to Jesus. Deep inside, we barely believe He will have us again, but His Word assures us that He will. All we have to do is come in repentance and faith, and He will give us rest. He will be our Savior, just as He promised. He will bring us back to Himself, no matter how far we have drifted. This coming to Jesus takes humility. But if you’re drifting on the open seas of life, what makes you think you’re the expert on your life anyway? Don’t allow the anchor of pride to keep you from sailing back to Jesus as He calls out for you to return.

## POINT 3: A FALLEN KING RECEIVES THE JUDGMENT OF GOD (2 CHRON. 24:23-25).

### + COMMENTARY

“In order to show that this invasion of the Syrians was a divine judgment, it is remarked in ver. 24 that the Syrians, with a small army, gained a victory over the very large army of Judah, and executed judgment upon Joash . . . In the war Joash was badly wounded; the Syrians on their withdrawal had left him behind in many wounds . . . Then his own servants, the court officials named in ver. 26, conspired against him, and smote him upon his bed. In 2 Kings [12:]21, the place where the king, lying sick upon his bed, was slain is stated. He met with his end thus, “because of the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest” which had been shed. The plural [“sons” is likely] a rhetorical plural, which says nothing as to the number, but only brings out that Joash had brought blood-guiltiness upon himself in respect of the children of his benefactor Jehoiada . . . Upon the murdered king, moreover, the honour of being buried in the graves of the kings was not bestowed.”<sup>6</sup>

### + ILLUSTRATION

We look at this world and see only as human beings can see. The mighty overtake the weak. The big swallow up the small. The insignificant yield to the popular. Like the prophet Samuel as he stood before Jesse’s sons, we are those who look upon the outward appearance. But God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). He sees what we cannot. That day in Jesse’s field, God plucked David out of the pasture and set him up for the throne. This shepherd boy was an unlikely king. He didn’t look the part. He was small and apparently so overlooked that he wasn’t even invited to the lineup when Samuel asked Jesse to see his sons. But God saw his heart.

When the Arameans came upon Jerusalem at the turn of the year, Joash didn’t fear them. They were small in number (2 Chron. 24:24), and Joash had a vast army. But God saw something no one else saw. It was not the size of any army that made the difference; it was the posture of the hearts of the leaders of Jerusalem. It’s so easy to look out on the world and see things as they appear to be. But God is always doing something deeper than our physical eyes can detect. He is working in a million ways that we can’t see. When that Aramean army came, it was judgment time for Joash and for all those who steered the flock of God away to dangerous idols. We see only in part, but God sees the whole. He sees all that is hidden.

#### References

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3. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Books of the Chronicles*, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. Andrew Harper (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872), 419-20.
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