

OLD TESTAMENT FIGURES

Jehoiada the Priest

The priest who could give a boy everything except the one thing he needed

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, March 13, 2022
PASSAGES	2 Chronicles 23:1-24:22; 2 Chronicles 21:4-20; 2 Chronicles 22:1-11; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Romans 6:9-10; Ephesians 3:16-17; Psalm 23; Genesis 3:8-9
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:00:33 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Jehoiada saved a child from a murderous queen, crowned him, mentored him and handed him a reformation. He could not hand him a faithful heart. That is the one thing no mentor, no parent and no priest has ever been able to give — and it is precisely what Christ, the priest who does not die, comes inside to do.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Jehoram killed his own brothers to secure a throne that was never his to secure. As Matt put it, that is “a way of establishing yourself in the kingdom that should belong to the Lord.”
- ◆ Jehoiada’s conspiracy was not loyalty to a boy. It was loyalty to what God had promised David about his line — faithfulness to Yahweh worked out in a political crisis.
- ◆ He raised Joash alongside his own son Zechariah, and could have put Zechariah on the throne instead with almost no resistance. He didn’t.
- ◆ Scripture does not say Joash did right all his life. It says all the years of Jehoiada the priest. The behavior was real; the conviction underneath it was borrowed.
- ◆ Faithfulness is not only tested by hardship. The officials of Judah came and paid homage, and flattery finished what persecution never started.

- ◆ Judah's whole story runs on this cycle — a faithful figure, then a funeral — which leaves a longing for a prophet, priest and king who stays, and who can reach the inside.
- ◆ Anything a person can copy, or software can imitate, cannot be the core of being a Christian. The core is internal, and it is his work.
- ◆ God is the pursuer, not the sulker. “Adam was the one hiding from God. God was the one pursuing Adam” — and Matt closed on the asymmetry: he wants to make his home in your heart more than you want him to.

► 1:00:33

Matt is a few weeks into working through Old Testament figures and major events, and this one lands in the thick of Chronicles, where the kings of the north and the kings of the south pile up and it is genuinely easy to get lost in the weeds of names. He picked this story because it summarizes the whole back-and-forth motif of faithfulness and unfaithfulness in one family — and because the person holding it together is not a king at all, but a priest who married into the royal house.

A family tree you need a chart for

► 1:02:52

Start with Jehoshaphat — a reformer in Judah, and a man with a memorable enough name to stick. He dies honored. His son Jehoram takes the throne, and the first thing he does is kill all of his brothers with the sword, along with some of the princes of Israel. Matt asked the obvious question anyway: why would a king do that? To remove the rivals and keep the crown. “This is a way of establishing yourself in the kingdom that should belong to the Lord.”

Jehoram walks in the ways of the house of Ahab and marries Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. He dies of a stomach disease, no fire is burned in his honor, nobody regrets his departure, and he is not buried in the tombs of the kings. His youngest son Ahaziah becomes king — the older brothers having been killed in a raid — and the text says plainly that his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly. Then Jehu's reform reaches Ahaziah, and he dies too.

► 1:06:00

What a grandmother might be expected to do here is protect whatever royal remnant is left. Athaliah goes the other direction.

“Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah. But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king’s sons who were about to be put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom.”

2 CHRONICLES 22:10-11 ↗ (ESV)

Jehoshabeath is Ahaziah’s sister. Her husband is Jehoiada the priest. Between them they hide the baby somewhere in the temple complex, and for six years the kingdom believes the royal line is dead while the heir grows up in the house of God. It is, Matt noted, an epic way for a reformer to be raised.

The year Jehoiada took courage

► 1:09:11

“But in the seventh year Jehoiada took courage and entered into a covenant with the commanders of hundreds... And all the assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And Jehoiada said to them, ‘Behold, the king’s son! Let him reign, as the Lord spoke concerning the sons of David.’”

2 CHRONICLES 23:1-3 ↗ (ESV)

The commanders are named — Azariah, Ishmael, Azariah, Maaseiah, Elishaphat — and Matt thought the recognition was earned, because what they did was brave and dangerous and honorable all at once. They moved through Judah, gathered the Levites and the heads of households, and brought the who’s who of the kingdom to Jerusalem to conspire, in a good way, with a priest and a seven-year-old.

The clause that matters is the last one. “As the Lord spoke concerning the sons of David” is not a tag line. It reaches back to God’s promise to David that his line would be established — a promise that, at this moment, is visibly not happening. So Jehoiada is not merely objecting that Athaliah is wicked, or that a grandmother murdering her grandchildren is monstrous. There is a third reason underneath: God said something, and Jehoiada intends to cooperate with it.

► 1:12:07

They crown the boy. The celebration is loud and impossible to hide; Athaliah hears it, tears her clothes and shouts treason, but the men are with Jehoiada, and she is put to death. Then they keep going — Jehoiada makes a covenant between himself, the people and the king that they should be the Lord’s people, and

the crowd goes to the house of Baal and tears the altars and images to pieces. Yesterday to today is an enormous difference. And the seven-year-old, Matt pointed out, is almost certainly not the main actor here; he is probably standing there thinking about lunch. The player with the gravitas is the priest.

A young king who seems to catch it

► 1:13:50

“Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother’s name was Zibiah; she was from Beersheba. Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years of Jehoiada the priest.”

2 CHRONICLES 24:1–2 ✂ (NIV)

For a while the reform bug looks like it has taken. Joash decides to restore the temple, tells the priests and Levites to go collect the money due annually and adds “do it now.” When the Levites drag their feet — which includes, awkwardly, uncle-dad — the young king summons Jehoiada himself and asks why the tax imposed by Moses has not been brought in. Chests are set out, treasure comes in, masons and carpenters are hired, and the repairs proceed according to God’s original design. As long as Jehoiada lived, burnt offerings were presented continually in the temple. Intergenerational reformation, running on all cylinders.

The man who could have put his own son on the throne

► 1:16:34

Here is the detail Matt wanted the room to sit with. Jehoiada and Jehoshabeath had their own children, and Joash grew up with their son Zechariah as a brother. Which means the man pulling every string in Judah had an obvious alternative available. Everyone already knew Athaliah was killing relatives; one more missing heir would have surprised nobody — he could have blamed her, or simply let her do it. Given the family tradition, it would not even have been difficult.

He didn’t. Joash was David’s descendant, and Jehoiada cared about that because he cared about God. Something internal was driving him — he could have gotten away with murder, literally, and instead he did the right thing and raised another man’s son as his own.

After the funeral

► 1:17:54

Jehoiada dies at an old age, which after everything reads like mercy. And then the officials of Judah come and pay homage to the king, and he listens to them. They abandon the temple and worship Asherah poles and idols. God sends prophets — more than one — and the people will not listen.

Matt flagged how the temptation arrives: “Faithfulness will not always be tempted and difficult. It could be a temptation through sweet words.” Being flattered by the officials of your own kingdom is a dangerous thing to experience.

► 1:19:15

The reformation gene surfaces in the next generation instead — in Zechariah, the brother Joash grew up with.

“Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, ‘This is what God says: Why do you disobey the Lord’s commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you.’ But they plotted against him, and by order of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the Lord’s temple. King Joash did not remember the kindness Zechariah’s father Jehoiada had shown him but killed his son, who said as he lay dying, ‘May the Lord see this and call you to account.’”

2 CHRONICLES 24:20–22 ↗ (NIV)

“You will not prosper” may land on exactly what they were after. Matt’s guess at the motive: “Maybe that was one of their motivations — we have Yahweh, but if we also have this stuff, maybe we’ll really be cooking with gas.” The Asherah poles were not a replacement so much as a hedge, and the verdict on a hedge is blunt — because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you.

Matt did not rush past how much this costs. Zechariah is publicly confronting his own brother, which is never fun, and Joash may know deep down that he is right, which only makes it worse. And the betrayal runs both ways: my father went out of his way to raise you. The answer is not merely “I am leaving the family enterprise.” It is “I do not like being told the truth, so we will make that stop by killing you.”

“All the years of Jehoiada the priest”

► 1:22:08

Go back to that line. It does not say Joash did what was right all his life. It says all the years of Jehoiada the priest. As long as he had the mentor, he did the right thing.

And you could not have told the difference from the outside. Joash appeared to want the temple repaired; he was the one pushing it. Was he half-hearted the whole time? Was he doing it to please his family, or because Judah looked to his uncle and deviating might have cost him the throne? Matt refused to pretend he knew. What he drew out instead is that you cannot read the inside of a person off the outside of their behavior.

► 1:23:29

“Jehoiada, for all his care and effort, couldn’t give Joash faithfulness.” He could give him a home. Safety from grandma. Mentorship, food, a mother in his wife, a brother in his son, a crown, a throne, people who would protect him. He could not reach into the boy’s heart and put there the thing that would make him faithful to God.

The shape of the whole story

► 1:24:10

Joash is not very different from Israel herself. God makes a nation out of a dead end — Abram and Sarai, barren and too old, doubly impossible — because he wants a family and intends to be their God. Then watch the handoffs. Moses, the mountain, the fire, a desire to obey; then Moses dies. Joshua is faithful; then he dies. A good judge, then a judge who is a net negative. David’s heart for God, then Solomon’s ending. Elijah, Elisha. Jehoiada’s influence is genuinely positive — and then there is a funeral.

► 1:25:52

What that leaves behind is a longing, and Matt let it stay in the room in plain language: “I know what we need. I don’t know how it’s ever going to happen, but I do know we need a king, prophet, priest guy — somebody who would just stick around, and who could come inside my heart. Is that too much to ask?” As messy as this story is, that is exactly why it is a type of the need for Christ.

► 1:26:26

Then the turn — and the answer had already been in the room that morning. “Thankfully, as Steve pointed out to us earlier, God’s the pursuer. He’s our shepherd.” Steve had walked the congregation through Psalm 23 earlier in the service, and Matt took God’s side of the exchange in the first person: “He’s the one bringing you back home, bringing you back home. I’ll raise up new prophets, I’ll raise up new prophets. I will speak to you, I will speak to you again.” And then, with no transition at all: “here’s Christ doing that.”

A priest who does not die, and who gets inside

► 1:27:06

“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.”

ROMANS 6:9–10 ↗ (ESV)

There is the mentor who never dies. And then the second advantage he has over Jehoiada:

“That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”

EPHESIANS 3:16–17 ↗ (ESV)

Through his Spirit, in your inner being. Matt noted it was Lent, and that most people in the room were already brushing up against their own wavering faithfulness — bad at fasting, or not even attempting it. “Lent aside: your own faithfulness wavers. Have you noticed?” That is the point at which the inner-being promise stops being abstract — “thanks be to God that his power, through his Spirit in your inner being, is at work, by the grace of God, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts.”

Why behavior cannot be the core of it

► 1:28:33

This is where Matt named something he dislikes about a certain strain of evangelicalism: the sense that if you do this, say this and come forward, you are done. “Anything you can copy, or that software can do for you, can’t be the core of what it means to be a Christian.” People push back on that, he said, because they want to be told what to do. “No — let me tell you what he did. I came to the altar; no, he went to the altar. But I prayed; well, he became a prayer for you.”

The name he gave the error is worth keeping: “Let’s not engage in behavior reductionism that can be copied. There’s something beautiful at work — and I know, since it’s beautiful and it’s working, it’s his hand.”

► 1:29:56

Joash had the behavior while Jehoiada was alive, and the inner conviction never matched it. Which, Matt said, is why this church is called Hope Chapel — the hope is not in what we did for God or in a list of things Christians do. There is a who behind the why. Why fight sin, why pray, why do anything: because, like Jehoiada but permanently, there is a Christ who gives life, who protects, who mentors and raises you like the kind of father figure you always wanted, who is actually for you. And one more parallel between the priest and Jesus: he is the reason David's line continues forever, and he is the one “who always intercedes to the Father for us.”

► 1:31:39

And you do not have to talk him into wanting in. “He’s the one knocking. He’s the one pursuing.” Which is why Matt likes to say that the wages of sin are not passive aggression: “Adam was the one hiding from God. God was the one pursuing Adam” ([Genesis 3:8–9](#)). It has been that way since the beginning, and whatever place in life you find yourself in, it is that way now — “even now, even now he wants his Spirit in your heart.” If there is anything left to boast in, it is not our letting him. “We can boast in his work.”

► 1:32:21

He finished by praying it rather than restating it: that God would be at work in our hearts by the power of his Spirit, that he would woo us and grow our affection for him, that he would call us back “again, again, again, again — the way a shepherd would,” and bring us home, and make his home within our hearts, and get our attention all over again. The last thing he thanked God for was the asymmetry: “you’re merciful enough to want to do that even more than we want you to do it.” Then the prayer teams came forward for anyone who wanted prayer for themselves or someone else, and the rest of the room was sent out the way it always is — go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- 2 Chronicles 21:4
- 2 Chronicles 22:1–4
- 2 Chronicles 22:10–11
- 2 Chronicles 23:1–3
- 2 Samuel 7:12–16
- 2 Chronicles 23:16
- 2 Chronicles 24:1–2 (NIV)
- 2 Chronicles 24:4–6 (NIV)
- 2 Chronicles 24:14 (NIV)
- 2 Chronicles 24:17–19 (NIV)
- 2 Chronicles 24:20–22 (NIV)
- Romans 6:9–10
- Ephesians 3:16–17
- Psalm 23
- Genesis 3:8–9

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Jehoiada risked everything for a promise God made to David generations earlier. Where is your own obedience actually loyalty to something God said, rather than loyalty to a person or a result?
2. He could have crowned his own son and almost certainly gotten away with it. What is the equivalent opportunity in your life — the thing you could take that nobody would question?
3. Joash's record reads "all the years of Jehoiada the priest." Whose presence is currently holding up some part of your faithfulness, and what happens to it if they are gone?
4. Matt said temptation can come through sweet words as easily as through hardship. Whose homage or approval is shaping you more than you would like to admit?
5. If the core of this is internal and not behavioral, what is one thing you will stop performing this week and instead bring to God to change from the inside?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIS5LITn4KE&t=3633s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.