

APOSTASY—DEPARTING FROM FAITH

II Kings 12: 4-21, II Chronicles 24: 4-27 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Commitment was sorely lacking in the life of King Joash. Many people label him as an apostate. What is an apostate? Apostasy is a word coming from the Hebrew word, **shub** which means turning back. It can be used negatively of turning back or away from God, or it more often can be used positively and can speak of repenting and turning back to God. We see **shub** used negatively in I Samuel 15: 11, where we read, “The word of the Lord came to Samuel: “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has **turned back (shub)** from following me and has not performed my commandments.” And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the Lord all night.” Apostasy in the life of someone we love is especially tragic. Yet, labeling apostates is not something God wants us to be good at. Why? Jesus told us, in Matthew 7: 1-2, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

The Greek word for apostasy is **apostasias**. It means defection, departure, revolt, rebellion, a willful turning back from the Lord in the Old Testament, and a willful falling away from Christ and His Gospel in the New Testament. Surprisingly, in Scripture, God speaks of recalling apostates. In Hosea 11:7, we read, “My people are bent on **meshubah**, (a form of shub) **turning away** from Me, and though they call out to the Most-High, He shall not raise them up at all.” That sounds like God is through with His people. Nevertheless, in Hosea 14: 4, we read remarkably, “I will heal their **meshubah** apostasy; I will love them freely, for My anger has turned from them.” As I studied the life of Joash, I realized that labeling him does us very little good, because when we are through labeling someone as an apostate or a probable apostate, what have we accomplished? As an under-shepherd, warning us of what Joash did, and how we can fall away too, is extremely important. What lessons from Joash, can we learn about apostasy to turn our lives around, if we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit today?

APOSTATES MAY LIVE FOR YEARS AMONG STRONG BELIEVERS AND APPEAR TO BE ONE IN HEART WITH GOD’S PEOPLE. (I.)

Studying II Kings 12: 4-16 puts king Joash in a fairly good light as being a mentored follower of God, mentored by Jehoiada. Verses 4-8 speak of an ineffective plan king Joash began to rebuild the broken-down temple—the house of the Lord. What was the problem with the temple? In a flashback Ezra records that the sons of Athaliah, being Ahaziah and his elder brothers, before their capture by the Arabs and Philistines, carried out the queen mother’s designs against the Temple, devastating part of it in a break in. We read in II Chronicles 24: 7, “For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God, and

had also used all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord for the Baals.” Why was the Temple in such disrepair? It wasn’t just normal wear and tear usage; it was a deliberate campaign against the temple and the worship of the true God prompted by Athaliah and her sons. What a wonderful, zealous idea king Joash had as a young boy king. Look at II Kings 12: 4-5—“Jehoash said to the priests, “All the money of the holy things that is brought into the house of the Lord...the money that a man’s heart prompts him to bring into the house of the Lord, let the priests take, each from his donor, and let them repair—literally, the breaches of the house, wherever breaches are found. The word for breaches in the Hebrew is **bedeq**. Since that word appears 6 times in verses 5-8, what does it mean? It means an open gap, a leak in a building that needs repaired and caulked. Those sons of Athaliah, before they were captured, were hellions, and they truly wreaked havoc on God’s house. We will notice that the repair included the need for masons, stonecutters, quarried stone and timbers—verse 12. It was a great thing Joash wanted to do.

Don’t in any way put down the repairing of the house of the Lord. Every revival in the Old Testament followed the repairing of the house of the Lord. God honors us as a church, in part for keeping up the repairs of this house of the Lord. As a boy, Joash, as a child hidden in the Temple for six years, heard about the breaches in the Temple. Maybe even his bedroom where he was sleeping was breached and needed repair. The Temple is where he spent his early days, and it was not only to God but to this hidden chamber in the Temple in the shelter of this Temple, that he felt he owed his life and throne. Who wants to keep such a treasured house with a gaping hole or a leaky roof? This sacred house had been plundered by persons who worshipped Baal. The treasure of the Temple had been robbed to enrich the house of Baal, and breaches gaped in the outer walls and from the workers needed, the very foundation of the temple was compromised and insecure. This boy king asked for the work to be done by the priests, but for 23 years, until Joash was 30, the repairs were not accomplished. Notice II Kings 12: 6, “But by the 23rd year of King Jehoash, the priests had made no repairs on the house. Don’t blame Joash for this. Either the priests were negligent, or they used the money that came in to live on, but this first project the king desired went undone for 23 years. Finally, Joash wisely took the project out of the hands of the priests who had other work to do. After rebuking the priests, Jehoiada took a chest and bored a hole in the lid of it and set it beside the altar on the right side as one would enter the house of the Lord. Joash was on a roll. He wisely set up a separate building fund, a “Repairing the Temple Fund,” with a build as the money comes in philosophy. The priests were on board and they bagged and counted the money and did so without an audit honestly. The priests now contracted out the job to builders, carpenters, masons, stonecutters, men to buy timber, men to secure quarried stone, and the task was done. Who would have ever dreamed such a king would abandon this repaired

house of the Lord and worship idols? Beloved, even zeal to help in a building program does not secure anyone as being a true follower of God, of Jesus. I have observed unbelievers who rally to help in a church building program, zealously, but they aren't saved. Apostates can stand and worship, give offerings in God's house, and even be used of God, to build the house of the Lord. Only God sees the heart if a man or woman is a charlatan, living a charade, as an apostate. Secondly,

APOSTATES SOONER OR LATER SHOW THEIR TRUE COLORS IN A TEST FACING THEM TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GOD OR IDOLS. (II.)

Notice II Kings 12: 17-18. Here Joash had just completed the repair of God's house, but when the king of Syria set his face against Jerusalem after capturing the city of Gath—where Goliath was from, Joash did the unthinkable. Notice verse 18, "Jehoash, king of Judah, took all the sacred gifts that Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah his fathers, the kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own sacred gifts, and all the gold that was found in the treasuries of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and sent these to Hazael, king of Syria. Then Hazael went away from Jerusalem. He gave away sacred, dedicated vessels of honor and bribed Hazael as if he were using pocket change. With dramatic suddenness, we are taken from the restoration of the Temple to Joash plundering the Temple, plundering and robbing the Temple and the hallowed vessels to buy off this heathen invader.

Flashback to II Chronicles 24: 15-19, and notice Jehoiada the high priest died and was buried among the kings because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and His house. But Joash's true colors for God were instantly challenged by the young princes of Judah who flattered him and paid homage and obeisance to him. Without a fight, Joash abandoned God and listened to the princes and II Chronicles 24: 18 tells us that with the princes, they all abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. This is no small abandonment. Joash was not serious about God and His Word. He was complacent as if God meant nothing to him. Now this is more than backsliding. A backslider is a believer who falls into sin and out of fellowship with God, but later repents in tears before the Lord. An apostate may never have been a true believer. John wrote about apostates in I John 2: 18-19, saying, "Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore, we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us." Yet, the warnings in Hebrews are not as cut and dry. We cannot suggest the writer of Hebrews was talking about a straw man as an example. The writer in Hebrews 6: 4-6 speaks of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift (of salvation). Listen! "For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been

enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and have come, and have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, *since* they are **crucifying once again** the Son of God to their own harm and **holding him up** to contempt.” Some people deny this is a real warning and say this is a hypothetical argument. Don’t ignore this warning for everyone who would dare to crucify the son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.

Scripture does not deny itself. We interpret theology from scripture, not vice versa. The scripture teaches the security of the believer in Jesus—John 10: 27-30. Yet John 10: 27-30 doesn’t trump Hebrews 6: 4-6. So, what does this verse mean? First of all, crucifying once again and holding Him up to open shame or contempt are present participles. While we are willfully sinning, knowing what we are doing, we have the hammer in our hands. and we are joining the Roman soldiers. If you read the KJV, you read the word **seeing**, the ESV and the NASB translates **since**, the NLT and Good News translates **because**. What word are the translators trying to translate? There is no Greek word they are translating, but each translator is using a filler to fit the context. The Amplified Bible is most accurate to write for (because, *while, or as long as*) There you have it. God is trying to warn us secure believers who have tasted of the heavenly gift, not just put it to our lips, but we have shared in the Holy Spirit, we have been enlightened, not to play with sin, for as long as we do, crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame, as long as we are doing this, it is impossible to restore us again to repentance while we are so doing. But what did God do with the man after His own heart? God arrested him and he confessed and repented. What did God do with the man Paul rejected to take on his second missionary journey who departed and withdrew from the apostles in Pamphylia—John Mark? God used Barnabas to arrest John Mark and bring him to repentance. The writer of Hebrews 6, in verse 9, adds a clincher, not denying his warning, but adding that he believes his readers will repent of continuing to nail Jesus to the cross, attempting to re-crucify Him, and shaming Him by their actions. He writes. “Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.” Thirdly,

APOSTATES WILL NOT CONFESS THEIR SINS, BUT WILL JUSTIFY THEMSELVES, IN THE FACE OF REPEATED WARNINGS FROM GOD.

(III.) Beloved, don’t let the devil tell you that you are an apostate, if you are weeping over your sin like David did and like Peter did. Look with me at II Kings 12: 19. We read, “Now the rest of the acts of Joash and all that he did, are they not written in Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? So, come with me to the Book of Chronicles 24: 19. We read, “Yet God send prophets among them, that’s Joash and the princes of Judah, to bring them back to the Lord. These testified

against them, but they would not pay attention.” A terrible sin that can lead to apostasy is the sin of justifying ourselves, no matter how many times God corners us with His Holy Spirit or sends a Nathan to us. I John 1: 8 and 10 are verses to take seriously. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us...If we say we have not sinned, we make him, that’s God a liar, and His word is not in us.” It is dangerous to say, “I know full well what the Bible says about what I have done or what I am doing, but though I believe the Bible from cover to cover, in my case, this is an exception.” Don’t go there. You are playing with fire when you hear the Word speaking to you, but ignore it, or you know what the Word says, but in your case, deny it is God speaking to you. When we are sinning and we know it, and we justify ourselves, that is putting God and His Word to an open or public shame. Today, God doesn’t often do to us what He did to Ananias and Sapphira—they lied to the Holy Spirit and fell down dead before the apostles. (Acts 5: 1-11) But every time we take communion, and we have chosen to ignore God’s warnings about our pride, our justifying, our bitterness, our unforgiveness, our open moral sins, or our inner hidden sins—we are on dangerous ground. Paul writes in I Corinthians 11: 28-30, “Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.” Don’t ignore God’s warnings. Fourthly,

APOSTATES GROW BOLD IN OPPOSING GOD’S AUTHORITY HE HAS SET UP AND AS THEY DO, THEY RISK JOASH’S TREACHERY. (IV.)

Look at what Joash did in II Chronicles 24: 20-23. Here the succeeding high priest, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada God clothed Zechariah. The Hebrew word for clothed or came upon is **labesh**. This word means to wrap around, to put on, to clothe, to arm, or come upon someone in a mighty anointing. God dressed this son of the high priest Jehoiada with the same spirit as Joash’s mentor. He stood above the people and said, “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.” These princes and the people with their king Joash were doing what God hates. Korah opposed Moses. We read about such apostates, in II Timothy 3: 5-9 which speaks of those who have the appearance of godliness, but deny its power...Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.” Jude 11-13 is strong speaking of Cain, Balaam and Korah’s rebellion, opposing God’s anointed, Moses. When God labels apostates, He knows the heart. So, what did God say about Korah and men like him in the early church? “These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves, waterless clouds, swept along by winds, fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted, wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame;

wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.” Go back to Zechariah’s final warning to Joash, the princes and people of Judah. II Chronicles 24:21-22. They conspired and by the king’s command, they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord. Joash did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah’s father had shown him, but Joash killed Jehoiada’s son. As he was dying, he said, “May the Lord see and avenge.” What a capstone to how apostates hate God’s appointed authority. Fifthly,

APOSTATES FINALLY COME TO A PLACE WHERE THEY QUIT LISTENING TO GOD’S SPIRIT AND GOD’S WRATH FALLS ON THEM.

Notice II Kings 12: 20-21 and II Chronicles 24: 23-27. But first go back to II Chronicles 24: 18. We read, “And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs.” The Old and New Testament are a cohesive whole. I see the closest possible certainty of Joash being seen as an apostate by God. Yet, I hope as he died, he repented. I hope Joash repented and joined Jehoiada in heaven. The New Testament is clear about God’s wrath. Paul says in Romans 5:9, “Justified by His blood, much more now we will be saved by Him from the wrath of God.” Again, Paul in I Thess. 1: 10, “Wait for His son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.” And in I Thess. 5: 9, “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.” Now back to II Chronicles 24: 24—Let me read it. This was a miracle of a few Syrians defeating Joash’s very large army, because Judah had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. Thus, they executed judgment on Joash. God was no longer protecting Joash’s life—vs. 25-27, so he was wounded in battle and finally conspired against and killed on his death bed. He was not buried with the kings, but he was buried in the city of David, Jerusalem. So the last word of this boy king who stood by the Temple pillar in his childhood at age seven, amid the shouts and trumpet blasts of a rejoicing people, was abandoned as God’s wrath fell on Joash and Judah. At age 7, Joash’s life was filled with promise and hope. He had a godly mentor for most of his kingship of 40 years. Who would have anticipated that the young king whose head was touched with the sacred anointing oil and crowned king, overshadowed with the testimony of Moses and God’s shekinah glory, who would have thought this young king who made a covenant with the Lord of Hosts, and who initiated the restoration of the ruined Temple to its pristine beauty, would see his life ended in an earthquake of God’s judgment, with all his achievements eclipsed by his ingratitude and murderous apostasy? How sad that this wounded king was not allowed to die on his death bed, but was hurried to stand before God by an assassin’s knife! God required of Joash the blood of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. May this warning about apostasy wake each of us up to follow Jesus all the way. E. W. Blandy, 19th century hymn-writer, wrote, “Where He Leads Me, I will Follow.” Will you go with God all the way?