

2nd Kings Chapters 11-12 – John Karmelich

1. My title for this week's lesson is "Soap Opera" and "Understanding Satan's Power". Yes that's a strange combination. I call it a soap opera because the stories in these chapters do truly read like a daytime soap opera. At the same time, an underlying reason for these stories do show demonic forces working to undermine God's will for our lives. I would like you to read this lesson not to learn the details of this palace based soap opera, but to understand the powers working behind the scenes that we Christians fight and how to deal with those forces. Hopefully this dual title intrigues you to read more and understand how this lesson affects our lives as Christians.
2. To begin, let me explain what is happening in this chapter:
 - a) All the events here occur in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. For my new readers, this is a time when Israel was split into two separate kingdoms. In the last lesson, the newest king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel kills the last king of Judah. The mother of the king that was just killed assumes power for herself and kills all the heirs to the throne. This queen was not Jewish and a worshipper of Baal. One reason this lesson is called understanding Satan's power is that the queen wanted to stop God's will for a descendant of King David to rule over the Southern Kingdom for a long time.
 - b) The good news is the wicked queen had a half sister who hid one of the king's baby sons (not hers) so that when the boy got older, he could be the king. This half sister's husband was the head priest. The short version is they worked together when the boy was seven to overthrow the wicked queen and the seven year old became king. There, now you can see why I call this chapter a soap opera, and this is just the start of the story.
 - c) Since the king-boy was raised inside the temple, one of his concerns as king was to repair the temple, which is now almost two hundred years old. The Israelite priests were told to give part of their earnings for the repairs. After many years of waiting, these priests failed and the king took matters into his own hand. The soap opera here has to do with a power battle between the priests and the king. The demonic battle is about God's will to be done in that a temple be used for a central point to worship God. Yes in this lesson I discuss the issue of using some of our giving to God for building funds versus other good works. It's a big topic and I'll deal with it the best I can in this chapter.
 - d) The next section of this soap opera has to do with a foreign king attacking the kingdom of Judah. Instead of this king trusting in God, the Jewish king buys off the foreign army by giving them the gold in the temple. To put it mildly, this is not God's will. Again, it is an example of both the continuing soap opera story versus the issue of trusting in God when life gets difficult and the punishment when we fail to trust in Him.
 - e) The final part of this section has to do with the death of the king. He gets killed and we'll read of his son assuming power. The underlying issue is the failure to trust in God and letting evil win, which in this case is a foreign army wanting to attack God's people.
3. OK John, I have to admit, this is an interesting story. However, I have enough to worry about in my life without having to think about evil in the world. That's true for all of us. Now let me give you the most important thing to learn about these chapters, the way for God's will gets done is all about trusting Him with our lives and being obedient to what His word teaches. Then and only then do we have the power to face whatever evil exists in the world.
 - a) To put this another way, we can't stop evil from existing as such forces can't be killed. But we can trust in God to help us through situations when we as a society or as individuals do face such issues, and that's the underlying lesson of this chapter.
 - b) With all that stated, this chapter is an "interesting ride" full of intriguing stories that teach us how we can face evil forces as we make a difference for God. As I state every now and then, if you don't believe Satan is real, try opposing him for a while. With that very tough introduction completed, it is time for the lesson itself.

4. Chapter 11, Verse 1: When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family.² But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes, who were about to be murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah; so he was not killed.³ He remained hidden with his nurse at the temple of the LORD for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.
- a) We start with a whole bunch of new names that we will probably soon forget. To explain what is going on, it is best to first explain where we left off and why the text is moving in the direction it is going. Here goes:
 - i) We left off focusing on the Northern Kingdom of Israel. To summarize the entire last lesson, there was a new king named Jehu, who was an army officer and then proceeded to wipe out the entire family of the existing king after he was told by a prophet of God that he would be the next king. Among the many people that was killed in the last chapter included the king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He was also killed because he was related to the Northern king by marriage. God had pronounced all of this judgment was because the family that ruled in the Northern Kingdom had turned the Israelites away from God. That's all "well and good" and the killing spree of the last lesson is over. However, our soap opera is just starting.
 - ii) With the Northern Kingdom now in the hands of someone who for the most part did what God wanted him to do, the focus here now switches to the other Israelite kingdom in the South again called Judah. All of that leads me to this text here.
 - iii) The best way to describe this paragraph is to say, "You can kill off every person who has turned against God, but the demonic forces behind those who turn from God don't give up that easily". I say all of that because the last lesson was about the new king of the North trying to kill everyone that turned the Israelites away from God. However, this opening paragraph says that Jehu missed someone who is about to take revenge. I told you this lesson is a soap opera, and I meant it.
 - b) With that confusing introduction completed, let me now explain what is going on in this opening paragraph. The king of Judah died in the last lesson. The mother of the queen wanted to stay in power. She therefore, has all of her grandchildren killed who would be possibly be the next king. However, a half sister of hers hid her son so the queen mother would not find her.
 - i) Once I explain a little about her background in a bit, you'll understand why she has all of her grandchildren murdered. Still it's hard to imagine wanting power so bad as to kill one's own grandchildren, but that's what happened here.
 - ii) Then the plot thickens by having one baby hid away and I assume lots of lying did occur to claim that this baby was dead.
 - iii) The key question of course, is why did this occur and why should we care. Let me explain by coming back to a promise made to King David centuries earlier: A son of his would rule forever. (2nd Samuel 7:14). My point is Satan doesn't know all things, but he learns from listening. He is aware of that promise and now is doing all he can to stop that descendant from coming in the world. I'm convinced of that just because here is this queen mother having killed any legitimate descendant of David to start this chapter. Yes on the surface this is a "soap opera" about staying in power, but I'm convinced evil forces lurk underneath the surface to undermine God's will for His people.
 - iv) OK that is all well and fine. Since one son lives and we know Jesus did come from this line of kings what's the point in sharing all of this? To grasp the idea that evil does exist and is always working to undermine God's will for our lives. To say it another way, anytime we're not working to build up God's kingdom, we are then susceptible to the will of the other kingdom.

- c) Let me come back to explaining why this queen did what she did. This queen mother was a daughter of "Ahab and Jezebel". If you remember that couple, they were previous rulers of the Northern Kingdom that required Israelites in the Northern Kingdom to turn away from God and worship a deity called "Baal". Now here is the queen mother back in the South who found out that the new king of Northern Israel had all the worshippers of Baal killed along with all her relatives that supported this practice. My point here is a reason she had the descendants killed in her mind is "tit for tat". She saw all of her family in power that supported "Baal worship" killed and now she is saying in effect, "Fine I will just kill all the descendants of David down in Judah and we'll see which "deity" rules.
 - i) To say this in plain English, this is a battle behind the scenes to see who does rule, God or Satan (through Baal worship) and having those in power being killed.
 - ii) With that tough introduction finally completed, time to get back to the story.
- 5. Verse 4: In the seventh year Jehoiada sent for the commanders of units of a hundred, the Carites and the guards and had them brought to him at the temple of the LORD. He made a covenant with them and put them under oath at the temple of the LORD. Then he showed them the king's son. ⁵ He commanded them, saying, "This is what you are to do: You who are in the three companies that are going on duty on the Sabbath--a third of you guarding the royal palace, ⁶ a third at the Sur Gate, and a third at the gate behind the guard, who take turns guarding the temple-- ⁷ and you who are in the other two companies that normally go off Sabbath duty are all to guard the temple for the king. ⁸ Station yourselves around the king, each man with his weapon in his hand. Anyone who approaches your ranks must be put to death. Stay close to the king wherever he goes."
 - a) To explain all of this, first one has to know that the story has just moved six years later. During that six-year period, the queen mother who had all of David's descendants killed except for the one she didn't know about. She's now ruling in Judah as the queen with no king in that kingdom.
 - b) My speculation is that since the queen worshipped Baal, she didn't spend a whole lot of time in God's temple. That is why the baby boy was hidden in that temple all of that time.
 - c) Coming back to the first few verses, the baby and a nurse were hidden in that temple. So you know that temple had a whole bunch of storage rooms. Those rooms were designed for the use of the priests. We will read in Verse 9, that a man named Jehoida is currently the head priest of Israel. I say that because he is the one in Verse 4 who orders the guards (other members of the tribe of Levi who support the priests) to protect the baby king. In the parallel story in 2nd Chronicles 22:11, one discovers that this head priest is married to the half sister of the queen that hid the baby in the first place.
 - d) Yes this whole soap opera can be confusing. Let me make it simple: Those who were the priests of God knew about the baby boy being raised in the temple. Since the priests were in charge of bringing animals to be sacrificed in the temple, they brought food for the boy to live off while they were hiding him from the queen mother. Since the bad queen had no interest in God, she was unaware of the legitimate heir to the throne being raised up in this temple. Bottom line is the priests so far, have successfully protected the only living descendant of David from the queen mother who wanted all of those descendants killed.
 - i) One has to admit, this does make a good soap opera.
 - e) All of that leads to the text in this paragraph: To make it simple, the priests decide that it is time to reveal the king to all of Israel and wipe out the wicked queen. The head priest knows that the Sabbath day is "double duty" as those priests going off duty for the week are being replaced by new guys coming on duty for a week. The point is the priests are now organizing to protect the boy king by surrounding the king and threatening a death sentence to anyone approaching the king. To make it even simpler, the priests are about to organize a big mutiny against the queen mother and present the boy king publicly.

6. Verse 9: The commanders of units of a hundred did just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. Each one took his men--those who were going on duty on the Sabbath and those who were going off duty--and came to Jehoiada the priest. ¹⁰ Then he gave the commanders the spears and shields that had belonged to King David and that were in the temple of the LORD. ¹¹ The guards, each with his weapon in his hand, stationed themselves around the king--near the altar and the temple, from the south side to the north side of the temple.
- a) As they say in show business, it's now "show time". In these verses, we have the actual execution of the plan as launched in the previous set of verses. If the priests are going to successfully organized this mutiny they are going to need weapons since they are about to face the queen and her own army protection duty.
 - b) Speaking of "storage rooms in the temple", apparently the priests found a bunch of spears and shields in the temple that were used during the time of King David, which was a few hundred years earlier. In other words, the latest in this soap opera, is we now have the priests armed for a possible battle when they announce who is the real king.
 - c) Let me pause from the soap opera for a moment and discuss why we should care about all of this. Yes this soap opera makes a great story. However, the question should come back to the issue, of "Why is this in the bible?" In other words, why does God want us to know all of this stuff?
 - i) For starters, it shows how God keeps His promise that David would have many kings as descendants despite all of the plotting of those who tried to end it.
 - ii) The reminder to us is just as God keeps His promises to the Nation of Israel, so we can trust that He keeps His promises to us no matter what is happening in power or any other negative situation we may have to deal with in life.
 - iii) This also reminds us that no matter how bad life is getting at any moment, God is still working in the background to get His will done. In this story, we have a six year period where no descendant of David is ruling as the king. I'm guessing that a lot of Israelites were giving up on God at this point. Yet here is God working in the background of this soap opera to work out His plan of salvation despite what any wicked queen will do in society.
 - iv) In other words, when life seems like it is at its worse, this story is a reminder that God is still in control and still working out life for His glory.
 - d) With that positive reminder stated for us to remember, time to get back the soap opera.
7. Verse 12: Jehoiada brought out the king's son and put the crown on him; he presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and the people clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!"
- a) Now comes the moment of truth in this story. The top priest puts a crown on this seven year old boy and declares him the king. He is also given a thick scroll, which is a copy of the five books of Moses (or maybe just the book of Deuteronomy) as a gift. The reason for the scroll (called "a copy of the covenant" here) is that it's written in Deuteronomy 17:18 that an Israelite king shall study the law as he rules as a king of Israel.
 - b) Picture a seven year old boy, who has lived his whole life to this point hidden in a temple, now coming out in public and being presented as a king. A crown is on his head and he is holding thick scroll. Then the crowd shouts, "Long live the king". I have to admit, this would make a great movie scene and I'm surprised Hollywood never picked this one up.
 - c) Meanwhile, its time for the other moment of truth, facing the queen mother. Remember that the priests are all armed and ready for a battle. Also remember that average Israelite expected a descendant of David to be a king and probably wasn't crazy about having this woman in power for the last six years or so.
 - i) Therefore as read about the seven year old boy being declared the king, I see it as a time of joy amongst the Israelites as they realized that God's word still stands as a descendant of David is still alive. OK, time to deal with the queen mother:

8. Verse 13: When Athaliah heard the noise made by the guards and the people, she went to the people at the temple of the LORD. ¹⁴ She looked and there was the king, standing by the pillar, as the custom was. The officers and the trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her robes and called out, "Treason! Treason!"
- a) In case you forgot, the bad queen was named Athaliah. She heard the commotion and went to see what all the noise was about. She saw the boy with the crown and the scroll and probably figured out pretty quickly that she didn't kill all of David's descendants.
 - b) Let me remind you of a bit of bible trivia here. When David's son King Solomon first built the temple structure about two hundred years earlier, there were two big pillars in front of the temple that didn't support anything. They were just there for show. The purpose of those pillars were to remind the Israelites that God is the leader of the country and not the king of the moment. I bring that up here, as I suspect whenever an Israelite king was to address a crowd, he stood by those big pillars. That is how the queen mother knew the boy with the crown was the legitimate king.
 - c) Speaking of soap opera's, one has to see the irony of the same woman who had all of the descendants of the last king killed now crying "treason" as she is about lose power herself.
 - d) Bottom line is she knew the "jig was up" and a legitimate son of David lived. That is why the next step in this soap opera of a chapter is the execution of the queen who had the real descendants of David killed.
9. Verse 15: Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders of units of a hundred, who were in charge of the troops: "Bring her out between the ranks and put to the sword anyone who follows her." For the priest had said, "She must not be put to death in the temple of the LORD." ¹⁶ So they seized her as she reached the place where the horses enter the palace grounds, and there she was put to death.
- a) The short version here is the palace guards seized the queen. They didn't want her to be put to death in God's temple, so they took her out to a public square and that was the end of her reign there on the spot. That would make a lovely ending to this wonderful little soap opera of a story, but we still have the issue of a seven year old boy now being King of Southern Kingdom of Israel (called Judah). My point is the rest of the lesson is going to focus on the good and bad parts of this king's life.
 - i) In other words, like any good soap opera the story has to continue in order to sell commercials to the advertisers. Our story continues to find out what did happen to this king and how he ruled over God's people.
10. Verse 17: Jehoiada then made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people that they would be the LORD's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people. ¹⁸ All the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols to pieces and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.
- a) If you read the last lesson, you might recall that the King named Jehu of the Northern Kingdom of Israel had all the priests of Baal killed. I mentioned earlier in this lesson that the queen who was just killed here was a daughter of a former king and queen of that same Northern Kingdom. In other words, that former king and queen who encouraged the worship of Baal, may have been dealt a death blow in the Northern Kingdom, but Baal worship was alive and well while this queen ruled in the South. I say all of that because we read here of a "Temple to Baal" in the Southern Kingdom. The priests who worked in the temple to God put the true king in power, the next order of business was then to tear down the temple to Baal. That is what we read about here in these verses. Also for good measure, the priests who worked in this false god temple were also put to death.
 - b) I warned you this lesson is one big soap opera, and so far, the text has not failed to live up to billing. We've had good old fashioned, lust for power, intrigue, killing and the worship of false deities occurring and finally being killed. Can't ask for much more than this.

11. Verse 18 (cont.): Then Jehoiada the priest posted guards at the temple of the LORD.¹⁹ He took with him the commanders of hundreds, the Carites, the guards and all the people of the land, and together they brought the king down from the temple of the LORD and went into the palace, entering by way of the gate of the guards. The king then took his place on the royal throne,²⁰ and all the people of the land rejoiced. And the city was quiet, because Athaliah had been slain with the sword at the palace.
- a) In these verses, we have the "clean up" operation. With a new king in power, the guards now worked to protect the boy from anyone still loyal to that queen. The seven year old boy took the throne and for the first time in probably seven years all was quiet in capital city of Jerusalem as the wicked queen had been slain.
 - b) However, like all good soap operas, you need the plot to continue to keep the show on the air, so our plot continues. Let me put this in terms we can relate to: Just because we kill off those who have done evil, doesn't stop evil from occurring. There is always another battle to be fought another day. To say it another way, Satan will not give up trying to stop God's eternal plan from happening. Just because he lost this round and at this time all the worshippers of Baal have been wiped out, he refuses to quit. We'll sort of figure out how he continue to works behind the scenes himself as our lesson continues.
 - i) In other words, the real soap opera, is watching God work behind the scenes of our lives working out the world for His glory. I remember when my daughters were young, they asked me why does Satan exist in the first place? The answer is to show us that God can and does work out His plan for His glory despite the best efforts made to stop His plan from being successful. That is why we dedicate our lives to serving God knowing that in the soap opera of life, He will win in the end.
 - ii) In the meantime, it's time to get back to the boy-king.
12. Verse 21: Joash was seven years old when he began to reign.
- a) This marks the end of the chapter as Joash the seven year old starts to reign as king. The next chapter will highlight what he did during the time he reigned as king. Therefore one can think of this whole lesson as covering the life of Joash from the time he was destined to be the king until his death at the end of Chapter 12. Yes it's one big soap opera, but this soap opera has some valuable lessons for us as we see how God works in the background to bring about His will in our lives. With that said, onto Chapter 12.
13. Verse 1: In the seventh year of Jehu, Joash became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother's name was Zibiah; she was from Beersheba.² Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him.³ The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.
- a) Let's be honest, you really can't have a seven year old be the king. That is why we read of his mother being alive to help him learn right from wrong. Going back to the first verse of the previous chapter, it now becomes more clear that the woman who hid the boy king to start this soap opera was not the boy's mother, but just a woman who wanted to do the right thing and hid the baby with his nurse so he could live to be the king. The boy's real mother was still alive and she helped to raise the boy.
 - b) What is also implied here is the priest named Jehoiada also instructed the boy on how one should rule over God's people. I suspect if there were big decisions to be made, the priest was the power behind the scene that kept things under control. It's interesting to consider we don't read of this kingdom being at war during these years. You would think that an enemy of Israel would take advantage of this time period. This is another example of God working behind the scenes to keep the peace while the soap opera at the palace is playing out for all of history to read about.
 - c) The final comment we get here is the people still offered sacrifices at the high places. That means people too lazy to travel to Jerusalem would sacrifice to God at "any old place that they felt like it". Let me talk about why this is an issue before I move on.

- i) The idea is that God set up a system of priests for the Israelites. The purpose of the priests was to help people draw close to God. By having people worship God any old place they felt like it, they were avoiding what God has ordained for them as a way of worshipping Him.
 - ii) I suspect the reason the king didn't stop it, was for starters, he was a boy and there was only so much a boy king could do. I also wonder if the priest helping the boy was thinking, "Many people are used to doing it this way. Yes it is not what God ordained, but in order to let the people accept him, let's give them what they want in order for public acceptance." Yes it is wrong, and it is sign that this king's heart was not fully committed to serving God the right way, although for the most part, he was considered a good king.
 - iii) Before I move on, let me talk about worshipping God "any old way we want to". To use a simple example, why do we have to go to a church gathering? Why not just worship God where we live and save a lot of trouble? Accountability to each other as a starter. Let's be honest, we're more likely to do the right thing if we know that we are accountable to others. In other words, the reason God has a bunch of rules on how He is to be worshipped is not for His sake but for ours. Those rules are set up to remind us what it is He desires of us (trust in Him to guide our lives and our gratitude for salvation). OK, enough of that. Back to the soap opera.
14. Verse 4: Joash said to the priests, "Collect all the money that is brought as sacred offerings to the temple of the LORD--the money collected in the census, the money received from personal vows and the money brought voluntarily to the temple. ⁵ Let every priest receive the money from one of the treasurers, and let it be used to repair whatever damage is found in the temple."
- a) As a person who makes a living as a real estate appraiser, I spend a lot of time touring in very old buildings. It's amazing to watch how buildings wear out over time. I say that as the official temple of God is now about 200 years old and I'm positive that time has caught up with this temple.
 - b) With that said, remember where Joash lived the first six or seven years of his life: Hidden in God's temple. I'm sure as a boy he noticed all the repairs that were needed. Therefore as he learned how priests make a living, he wanted some of the money collected from the Israelites to be used to repair the temple. In this text, we read of the three different taxes that were imposed on Israelites. Joash was commanding that some of that money be used to fix up the temple which by now is showing signs of age. This desire of the king to fix the temple will lead us to the next little episode in our soap opera.
15. Verse 6: But by the twenty-third year of King Joash the priests still had not repaired the temple. ⁷Therefore King Joash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and asked them, "Why aren't you repairing the damage done to the temple? Take no more money from your treasurers, but hand it over for repairing the temple." ⁸ The priests agreed that they would not collect any more money from the people and that they would not repair the temple themselves.
- a) The point here is simply that the king wanted the temple repaired. The funds the priests were collecting were not being used as the king requested. Notice the time gap stated in these verses. The king has now been in power for 23 years. The text is not clear when the king first made the request, but the idea is time has past and the king has noticed, hey this building is still in bad shape, what's going on here?
 - b) Let's be honest, when someone in charge gives an order and that order is not carried out, someone has to suffer. In this case, it was whatever priests were put in charge earlier to take care of the repairs. This is the king saying, "Fine, you won't do it? Great, I'll just get someone else to be in charge of this and I'll get it done if it's the last thing I do."
 - i) The obvious application is to follow through on whatever it is God and let's face it, our bosses ask us to do. The other obvious application is God saying, "Trust Me with part of what you have and I'll promise to bless what it is you give to Me."

- ii) This brings up the topic of giving. Let me quickly give my standard message. The New Testament does not require Christians to tithe, but it does want us to give to God part of what we earn as a way of saying, "Trust Me with your finances and I promise to bless you based on that trust." So where do we give? I use the analogy of how does one pick what stocks in the stock market to pick? One picks ones that brings a good return on investment. In other words one blesses where one already sees God working in the world and supports it.
 - iii) I also want to say I don't support the "God promises us riches if we give crowd." It's not like if I give God one dollar, He owes me ten. To state one of my favorite quotes on this topic, "Jesus did not come here to improve my golf score." He came to pay the price for my sins so I don't have to. One gives of one's income simply to say, "I don't know what is going to happen to my financial future, so to show that I trust in God, I'm giving part of my income to put my money where my mouth is and show that I am trusting in God. On that convicting note, let's get back to the topic of money and see how the king handles it here.
- 16. Verse 9: Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in its lid. He placed it beside the altar, on the right side as one enters the temple of the LORD. The priests who guarded the entrance put into the chest all the money that was brought to the temple of the LORD.¹⁰ Whenever they saw that there was a large amount of money in the chest, the royal secretary and the high priest came, counted the money that had been brought into the temple of the LORD and put it into bags.
 - a) Remember Jehoiada the priest? This is the guy who lead the revolt against the previous queen mother to make Joash the current king. The point here is he took charge of what the king desired. Instead of asking the priests to give part of what the congregation gave to repair the temple, the head priest said in effect, "We're bypassing the middle man and going directly to the people". Therefore he put a treasure chest in the temple so that if someone wanted to give to the temple fund, they could put their checks right in that box.
 - b) This reminds me of a church I attended years ago. The pastor never past a collection plate from row to row. That church just kept a collection box outside the main doors and said in effect, "If you want to give, there is a box outside the front door." One has to admit that it takes a little guts for a church to operate without the guilt of passing the plate and I've always admired that church for operating that way. I don't have a problem with a church asking for donations by passing a plate around. I just admire those churches that take the step in faith to trust God by putting the boxes by the door as it is done in these verses.
- 17. Verse 11: When the amount had been determined, they gave the money to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. With it they paid those who worked on the temple of the LORD--the carpenters and builders,¹² the masons and stonecutters. They purchased timber and dressed stone for the repair of the temple of the LORD, and met all the other expenses of restoring the temple.
 - a) The point here is that God blessed this method and what was collected this way was then used to repair the temple. Again I should point out the king spent the first seven years of his life living in the temple, so he was personally aware of the need to take care of it.
 - b) I'm sure there has been many a church and a synagogue over the centuries that have used this passage to support a building fund. My view is that it is better to ask than to demand that people give. As to whether we should support say our building funds as opposed to other works of the church, I'll let the Holy Spirit guide our hearts and our church leaders as to the proper priority at any given moment. I'm also speculating that the reason those priests didn't give in the first place was that they probably wanted the money collected for other needs. However, when the king wants something, don't mess with that order.
 - c) Here the money was spent on carpenters, builders, masons and stonecutters. With that said, let me ask the question: Money for church repair or say helping the poor? It truly depends on needs of the moment. If the building is falling apart, that is a real need here.

- d) I also remember when my wife and I were part of another church and my wife wanted to give part of our earnings to a building fund at that church. I figure that she gets to decide where to give as much as I do and if that is where God is leading here, I don't argue. At the same time, I do know that a church secretary complained to her that the staff barely had enough money to live off and we shouldn't give to that cause. Looking back at that incident in hindsight, it was wrong of her to complain that way. If God was leading my wife to give that way, that's between God and the giver. My point of sharing this story is simply to say, give where one sees the needs and give where one sees God working to make a difference. Don't worry about where others are giving but stick to the principal to bless what God is blessing and odds are good one can't go wrong in that aspect.
 - e) In the meantime, we have this building being repaired and it's time to move on unto the next related subject in this saga.
18. Verse 13: The money brought into the temple was not spent for making silver basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, trumpets or any other articles of gold or silver for the temple of the LORD; ¹⁴ it was paid to the workmen, who used it to repair the temple. ¹⁵ They did not require an accounting from those to whom they gave the money to pay the workers, because they acted with complete honesty. ¹⁶ The money from the guilt offerings and sin offerings was not brought into the temple of the LORD; it belonged to the priests.
- a) Time for some of John's loose translation: The money set aside to fix the temple, did get the temple building fixed but not repair the furnishings used in this temple.
 - i) The good news is the workers in this temple were honest and didn't require any accounting. Let's be honest, if you've ever hired a contractor for a big repair job, the standard joke is it always cost more and takes longer than one budgets. In this case, the work was done well and on time. That alone is a great miracle.
 - ii) The second part of this verse reminds us that the priests in this country had a few sources of income and while some of it was used for the temple, the rest of it was kept for the priests for them to live.
 - b) This brings us back to the discussion of "building funds". The simple lesson is that those who work in our church still have to eat and there are always other needs in a church. At the same time if the church believes some money should be set aside for a building fund, one can make a biblical case for that use. As I stated earlier, I'm sure there has been many a church over the centuries that has used this chapter to support their building projects.
 - c) The application for us is that having a covered building to meet may be less of a priority at times than say providing for the church staff or other projects. But if there are holes in the roof or a structure is falling apart, it is biblical at times to have such a collection.
 - d) OK, enough of all of that. Time for the next story in this soap opera.
19. Verse 17: About this time Hazael king of Aram went up and attacked Gath and captured it. Then he turned to attack Jerusalem. ¹⁸ But Joash king of Judah took all the sacred objects dedicated by his fathers--Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and Ahaziah, the kings of Judah--and the gifts he himself had dedicated and all the gold found in the treasuries of the temple of the LORD and of the royal palace, and he sent them to Hazael king of Aram, who then withdrew from Jerusalem.
- a) Time for another loose translation: Forget the building repair project, we now have a war to fight. You may recall from the last lesson that there was a king of a neighboring place called Aram. It is roughly Syria today. The short version is this foreign king and a large army attacked Jerusalem. Instead of fighting this army and trusting God, the Jewish king bought off the foreign army with the gold in the temple.
 - b) Here is something interesting to consider: The father, grandfather and great grandfather of the current king are listed in Verse 18. However, you may recall that these were not all God fearing men. They themselves were involved in idolatry. My point is these former kings did give God "lip service" during their reigns and did put some gold articles in the temple when they were kings. They "covered their bases" by some worship of God then.

- c) To understand the significance here, let me state a few verses from Second Chronicles 24. That chapter is a parallel account to this one. The reason both are in the bible is they each given different perspectives of details of the lives of the kings. Anyway, Verse 18 of that chapter says, "They abandoned the temple of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and worshiped Asherah poles and idols. Because of their guilt, God's anger came on Judah and Jerusalem." Then the last part of Verse 20 reads, "You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you."
- i) John's loose translation: When this king got older, he turned against God and then worshiped the false gods associated with Baal. Because the king turning from God He allowed this foreign army to invade the Southern Kingdom and win the war.
 - ii) Believe it or not, this leads me back to my lesson theme about demonic powers. My point is one can kill off the people who lead others away from God like the big "slaughter fest" of the last two chapters, but one can't kill off the demonic forces who are behind that turning from God.
 - iii) Time for another of my classical Christian expressions: "I don't believe Satan can take away our salvation, but He does work hard to make us ineffective witnesses for Jesus." That's one reason why if one works to make a difference for Jesus, one can expect demonic resistance. It comes with the territory.
 - iv) In this case, even though all of the priests to the false gods were killed off in the last lesson, "lo and behold" new ones are there to take their place here. My point is we can't kill off evil people and think that's that. The forces behind those people are always going to work to make us ineffective witnesses for God.
- d) Before I get back to the main text, a good question to ask is why did this "good king" who started out so well, now get his focus on false gods as stated in 2nd Chronicles? While we can't say for sure, most likely to use a sports analogy, the king failed to keep his eye on the ball. In other words in order to be a lifelong witness for Him, we need to stay focused on God or it is amazing how in subtle ways evil will creep back into our lives. Those of us who've lived long enough have seen this time and time again.
- i) If I'm describing you or someone you know at this point, here is the good news. Trusting in Jesus' complete payment for our sins is an irrevocable gift. The issue here is about being a good witness for God. We can at any given time choose to be or not be a good witness. If one catches themselves turning from God, confess it as sin and trust that God has forgiven us and then go out and find a way in order to make a difference for God again. Remember the most valuable thing we own is our time, and God wants to own our time to make that difference for Him. That doesn't mean we have to be serious all the time and never have down time. It just means we are conscious of our time and want to use some of it for His glory.
- e) With all that said, it's time to get back to Chapter 12 of 2nd Kings. The point here is that a foreign king attacked Jerusalem as God predicted in 2nd Chronicles. Instead of the king of Judah trusting God, the king saw the size of the army in front of him and said in effect, "You are too powerful a force. Here take all of our gold. I give up. Just don't kill me."
- i) To state the obvious at this point, the issue is about one's continuous trust in God when facing situations that are way too big too deal with on our own. To quote the second step of Alcoholics Anonymous, "Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity". John's loose translation, "Without God we can't, without us, God won't". My point here is we can face any obstacle that on the face of it seems too big for us to face. However, with God's help we can get through any situation, and that's how we deal with evil forces in our lives.
 - ii) In this case, it was a huge army at the doorstep. Coming back to the literal text, the point is if the king didn't turn from God in the first place, the enemy would not be knocking on the door in the first place. That's a good thought to keep in mind.

20. Verse 19: As for the other events of the reign of Joash, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? ²⁰ His officials conspired against him and assassinated him at Beth Millo, on the road down to Silla. ²¹ The officials who murdered him were Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer. He died and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. And Amaziah his son succeeded him as king.
- a) Here we read of the death of the king who started off well but eventually "got his eye off the ball" and paid the price for turning from God.
 - b) Verse 19 is saying that when "Kings" was put together, all the records of the king's reign were available to study as a source for this book. To state the obvious both "Kings" and "Chronicles" were based on those records. So what happened to them? Most likely they were either destroyed when this temple finally fell a few hundred years later. The other possibility is they survived that conquering, but when the Romans destroyed the rebuilt temple around the time of Jesus, all of those records were definitely destroyed. OK, enough history. Back to the soap opera.
 - c) The last part of these verses talk about the king's death. So why did the king's officials kill him? Most likely because of how he turned from God late in life. Maybe they were mad at the king for giving away all the gold in temple and this is the king's punishment. For whatever the reason, the king is done, and a son of that king became the next king. As to what happened to the next king, we'll read about him in future chapters. It's interesting to consider the fact the king bought off the foreign army in order to save his own life, and yet he didn't realize that act cost him his life anyway! A perfect soap opera ending!
 - d) The point is this king started off well and survived a few soap operas of his own. He then made the great mistake of turning from God later in life and that allowed demonic forces to well, "Do their thing". The men who killed this king are listed here. I suspect they are listed to just to say, who did this thing, be it right or wrong.
 - e) The final point for us is about the importance of sticking close to God no matter what. To paraphrase one of my favorite verses in 2nd Timothy, "Stick to what God called you to do whether you feel like it or not". My loose translation of 2nd Timothy 4:2. By the way as I rereading that passage in 2nd Timothy, I'd forgot how much Paul warned Timothy about the price to be a good witness for God means one has battle demonic forces. My point is these two chapters in 2nd Kings have a lot of parallel's to Paul's instruction to Timothy in that epistle. The other point is demonic influences is not just an Old Testament thing. In Paul's epistles he talks about how Satan's kingdom (influence over this world) is as much alive in his day and our day as it was in Old Testament times. The good news is the God we serve is greater in power than any and all things that demonic forces can throw at us.
 - f) On that positive note, I'll bring this lesson to an end.
21. Father, as we go through our own soap operas of life, may we remember that You're aware of all things, and You want to guide our lives for Your glory. Help us to use the most valuable things we own, our time to make a difference for You. As you work in the background of our lives, may we be conscious of Your presence and be a good witness for You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.