

The Lord's Arrow of Victory

2 Kings 11-13

Key Verse: 13:17

“Open the east window,' he said, and he opened it. 'Shoot!' Elisha said, and he shot. 'The Lord's arrow of victory; the arrow of victory over Aram!' Elisha declared. 'You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek.'”

Chapters 11 and 12 are about Joash king of Judah. He became king because of Jehoiada the priest. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord while Jehoiada lived. We can learn something from Jehoiada about raising young leaders. However, after Jehoiada's death, Joash did evil in the eyes of the Lord and worshiped idols. In the end he was assassinated by his officials. We must know the proper role of a mentor. Chapter 13 is the story of Jehoahaz and Jehoash, the kings of Israel. During their time, the king of Aram oppressed Israel severely. Israel was miserable and powerless. Then Elisha taught King Jehoash the secret of victory. The Lord gave Israel victory through this. Today, let's learn the secret of complete victory in the Lord.

I. Jehoiada made Joash king of Judah in a time of crisis (11:1-21)

Chapter 11 tells us how the priest Jehoiada raised Joash as king of Judah. In doing so, he defeated the wicked Athaliah and saved his country.

Verses 1-3 tell the story of Athaliah's reign. Athaliah was a daughter of the Baal worshipers, Ahab and Jezebel, who ruled the northern kingdom. How did she come to be a queen in Judah? To understand, we must return to the time of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. He made a critical mistake. He arranged a marriage between his son Jehoram and Athaliah. When Athaliah first came into Judah, she must have been quiet, pretending to worship the Lord. But after her husband Jehoram became king, she began to reveal her true colors. She influenced her husband Jehoram, and her son Ahaziah, to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. (8:18,26-27) She brought Baal worship to Judah. Though Jehu had destroyed Baal worship in northern Israel, it infiltrated Judah through Athaliah. After Ahaziah died, Athaliah seized power in Judah. Then she proceeded to destroy the whole line of David.

David's line had already been weakened through various events. Jehoram had put to death six of his own brothers, sons of Jehoshaphat, due to the evil influence of Athaliah. (2 Chr 21:2-6) Moreover, some Arab raiders had come into the camp of Judah and killed all the sons of Jehoram except the youngest, Ahaziah. (2 Chr 22:1) Then Ahaziah was killed by Jehu, (2 Ki 9:28) along with 42 of his relatives,

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some princes of Judah. (10:14; 2 Chr 22:8) Now Athaliah was destroying what was left of David's line. She killed her own grandsons, granddaughters, nephews and nieces. How could she do so? It was the work of Satan. She was vulnerable to Satan's work through her sin of idol worship. Satan wanted to destroy David's family line in order to prevent the Savior from coming into the world.

At this critical moment, the Lord intervened through a pious woman, Jehosheba. She was the daughter of King Jehoram and the sister of Ahaziah. Jehosheba was married to Jehoiada the priest. (2 Chr 22:11) She stole away Joash, a son of Ahaziah, and her nephew. She hid him with his nurse in a bedroom in the temple. There he stayed hidden until an opportune time.

As Athaliah ruled the land, Judah became spiritually bankrupt. Yet the Lord was working secretly to raise Joash through Jehosheba and Jehoiada. They must have adopted Joash as their own son and taken care of him for six years, providing everything he needed, especially instruction in the word of God. It must have been difficult to bring up a baby in the temple without being noticed. Jehoiada and Jehosheba must have prayed diligently every day for Joash. In dark times, it is most important to raise one spiritual leader. This is the goal of many UBF house churches.

Jehoiada not only raised Joash, but gained supporters to make him a king. He made a covenant with the commanders of units of hundreds, the Carites. Also known as Kerethites, they were faithful bodyguards to the king. They were important to both David and Solomon. (2 Sam 8:18; 1 Ki 1:38) Most likely, they were supposed to guard Athaliah. However, her demonic behavior offended them, while Jehoiada's godly life earned their respect.

In the seventh year, Jehoiada sent for the commanders of hundreds and had them brought to the temple of the Lord. There, Jehoiada made a covenant with them. Then he showed them Joash, the king's son, and the rightful heir to David's throne.

And Jehoiada shared his detailed plan to remove Athaliah. (5-8) It would be done on a Sabbath day. Three companies of soldiers going on duty were to be deployed: one at the palace, another at the Sur Gate--which was an important entrance to the temple, also known as the Foundation Gate (2 Chr 23:5)--and another at the gate behind the guards--which is called the Upper Gate. Two other companies, whose shift of duty had just ended, were to stay at the temple and guard the king.

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The commanders of hundreds did just as Jehoiada ordered. (9-11) Then 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 people clapped, shouting, "Long live the king." Upon hearing this noise, Athaliah went to the temple. She saw the king and the rejoicing people. Then she tore her robes and shouted, "Treason! Treason!" Actually she had committed treason. She was an idol worshiper, a murderer, and a traitor. She was put to death, and no one was sorry about it.

Look at 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." Jehoiada's purpose was to restore spiritual order in Judah by serving God first. In the time of Athaliah, the people worshiped Baal and lived according to the sinful nature. They needed to live by the word of God, including the Ten Commandments. They needed to renew their covenant with God. The real King of Judah was the God of Israel. King Joash needed to know this, and to obey the words of God. Jehoiada also wanted to establish order between the young king and his people through a covenant. Then they destroyed the temple of Baal. They smashed the altars and idols to pieces and killed the priest of Baal (18a). At last, the king went to the royal palace. All the people of the land rejoiced. Judah was saved from Athaliah's tyranny and restored in covenant with God.

Here we learn from the priest Jehoiada. First, he raised Joash. If he had had his own ambition, he could have tried to become king. But he raised Joash as king, because Joash was a descendant of David. It was Jehoiada's love for God and obedience to God. To raise spiritual leaders, one must love God more than himself. Second, Jehoiada gained coworkers in doing God's work. He knew that he could not accomplish the mission by himself. So he did his best to gain coworkers--not those with just a human tie, but those who share God's purpose and heart. However, it was not easy. If Jehoiada was betrayed, he would have lost his life. To win coworkers, we may need to take risks like Jehoiada. We must have faith and courage to do so. Third, Jehoiada established spiritual order, which had been broken by Athaliah. We must seek to restore spiritual order in our nation by loving God first and helping others love God first through the obedience that comes from faith.

When Jehoiada's motive was pure, and he had courage and wisdom, he was useful to the Lord. The Lord kept the lamp of David through his family. Most of all, we learn that the Lord was faithful to his promise to David. In dark times, he preserved

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a seed of David in a most unexpected way. God is faithful. God fulfills his redemptive purpose without fail.

II. Joash reigns over Judah (12:1-21)

Joash became king at the age of seven and ruled over Judah for 40 years. Look at verses 2-3. "Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him. The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there." The high places were used for idol worship by the Canaanites. The Jews used them to worship the Lord. It was more convenient than going to Jerusalem. This kind of worship did not please God. It was syncretism.

Verses 4-16 tell how Joash repaired the temple. Perhaps while he lived there for six years, he found many places that needed repair. Now he had the authority to do so. He told the priests to collect all the money for sacred offerings--the money collected in the census, the money received from personal vows and the money brought voluntarily--and to use it to repair the temple. However, by the twenty-third year of Joash, the priests still had not done so. So King Joash summoned Jehoiada and the other priests and told them to hire laymen to repair the temple. They agreed. The laymen worked hard and honestly to repair the temple. This was Joash's effort to restore the spiritual life of his nation. It was his expression of love for God. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, while Jehoiada was alive.

However, 2 Chronicles 24:17-22 reveal that Joash did not keep his faith, but became an idol worshiper. After Jehoiada died, wicked officials gathered around Joash. They might have said, "You are free from the priest Jehoiada. Don't follow his advice. Do as you please." When Joash listened to them, he changed completely. Once he had been eager to repair the temple out of love for God. But now he forsook the Lord and worshiped idols. The Lord sent Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, to warn him. But Joash did not listen. Rather, he ordered that Zechariah be stoned to death in the courtyard of the Lord's temple. In this way, Joash murdered the priest and prophet, shedding innocent blood. He desecrated the court of the Lord's temple. He did not remember Jehoiada's kindness. Instead, he killed Jehoiada's son, Zechariah. After one year, the Lord punished him by sending the army of Aram. Although the Arameans had only a few men, the Lord delivered Judah into their hands, because Judah had forsaken the Lord. Furthermore, Joash was severely wounded. His officials conspired against him and assassinated him.

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Why did Joash finish his life in such a miserable way? When he had a spiritual mentor he was okay. But without his spiritual mentor, he fell into disaster. We need a mentor in order to live a victorious life. However, a mentor cannot live forever. We must take instruction to heart, and learn to practice it when our mentor not present. We cannot remain as permanent sheep. We must grow to be shepherds who have personal decisions to obey God's word and take initiative to serve God. We may stumble. However, God will warn us through his servants. We should be humble enough to listen. Then the Lord will help us to live by faith to the end.

III. The reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoash in Israel (13:1-25)

Chapter 13 is about the northern kingdom. Verses 1-9 and 22-23 cover the reign of Jehoahaz. Verses 10-21 and 24-25 cover the reign of Jehoash.

First, the Lord's compassion in the time of Jehoahaz. (1-9,22-23) In the twenty-third year of Joash, king of Judah, Jehoahaz son of Jehu became king of Israel in Samaria. He reigned 17 years. But he did evil in the eyes of the Lord by following the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat. He did not turn away from them. He imitated his father, Jehu in this. Although Jehu brought religious reformation by destroying Baal worship, he did not turn away from the sin of Jeroboam. Like father, like son. Therefore, the Lord's anger burned against Israel. The Lord allowed Hazael king of Aram, and Ben-Hadad III his son to oppress Israel for a long time. Still, the people did not turn away from the sin of Jeroboam. Moreover, they let an Asherah pole, a symbol of idol worship, remain standing in Samaria. God's punishment was severe. Nothing was left of Israel's army except fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers. The king of Aram had completely destroyed the rest. (7) When a nation serves the Lord wholeheartedly, she prospers. But if she forsakes the Lord, she becomes weak. Northern Israel almost vanished.

At this time of trial, Jehoahaz repented and sought the Lord's favor. The Lord listened to him, because the Lord saw how severely the king of Aram was oppressing Israel. Look at verses 22-23. The Lord had mercy upon Israel. The Lord was gracious to them, had compassion for them, and showed concern for them. It was because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Even though the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, God was unwilling to destroy them or banish them from his presence. God is the God of compassion, not based on emotion, but based on his covenant promises. God is faithful. This faithful God wants to save mankind. Ezekiel 33:11 says, "Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways!

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Why will you die, O house of Israel?" (cf. 1 Tim 2:3-4) The Lord provided a deliverer for Israel, and they escaped the power of Aram. (5) Let's think about who this deliverer is and what he does. At first glance, it seems to be Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz.

Second, Elisha teaches faith to Jehoahaz. (19,24,25) Look at verses 10-11. In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash became king of Israel in Samaria. He reigned sixteen years. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam. Still, the Lord, in his great mercy, used him to deliver Israel. Verses 14-21 show how Jehoash won victory over the king of Aram. The prophet Elisha appears in these verses, for the first time since anointing Jehu in chapter 9. There is no mention of Elisha during Jehu's reign or Jehoahaz's reign, a time of about 45 years. Elisha was now very old, and the time came for him to leave this world.

Look at verse 14. "Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him, 'My father! My father!' He cried. 'The chariots and horsemen of Israel!'" The words "My father! My father!" show that the king had respect for Elisha as his spiritual father. The words "the chariots and horsemen of Israel" show that Elisha had been the defender of Israel. Jehoash did not know how they would survive without Elisha. How could Elisha help Jehoash? Elisha taught him the secret of victory. It was not a military secret, but a spiritual secret.

Look at verses 15-17. Elisha said, "Get a bow and some arrows," and Jehoash did so. Then Elisha said, "Take the bow in your hands." When he had done so, Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. The hands of Elisha were the hands of love, the hands of power, the hands of prayer for the king, and the hands of victory. The king may have felt the power and love of God through Elisha's hands. Then Elisha said, "Open the east window." That was the direction of Aram. "Shoot!" Elisha said, and Jehoash shot, without knowing why. Elisha explained, saying "This is the Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!" And Elisha declared, "You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek."

Through this audio-visual education, what did Elisha want to teach Jehoash? He wanted to teach him to depend on the power of God by faith. Thus far, Jehoash did not exercise personal faith in God. He had depended on Elisha. Now the king had to learn how to depend on the Lord himself. He had to shoot the arrows with his own hands. When the king relied on the Lord, the Lord would give him victory. Victory belongs to the Lord. Still, Jehoash had to open the east window and shoot

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the arrow with his own hands. Having the arrow of victory is not enough. We must open the window and shoot the arrow. We must combine God's message of victory with faith, and put that faith into action. Then the Lord carries out his work of salvation.

After planting faith in the Lord, Elisha tested the king. Look at verses 18-19. Elisha said, "Take the arrows." And the king took them. Elisha told him, "Stike the ground." The king struck it three times and stopped. Why did he stop? Maybe he thought three times was enough. Maybe he felt silly to be role-playing in the presence of old and sick Elisha. But most of all, it was because he lacked a shepherd's heart for his people and zeal to destroy their enemies. He did not fully trust the words of the Lord's prophecy. Then the man of God was angry and said, "You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times." Jehoash was blessed according to the measure of his faith. For striking three times, he would win three victories. But it was not complete victory.

Look at verses 20-21. The author suddenly returns to Elisha, saying, "Elisha died and was buried." Elisha died after a long illness. He must have looked weak and helpless at the time of death. However, death was not the end. Once, when some Israelites had to scatter before Moabite raiders during a funeral service, they threw a dead body into Elisha's tomb. Then the dead man came to life and stood up on his feet. This shows us that death was not the end for Elisha. The spirit of Elisha lived and the God of Elisha is the living God. The words of God spoken through Elisha were fulfilled exactly as he had said. Israel defeated Aram three times during Jehoahaz' reign. This tells us that the deliverer of Israel was in essence Elisha the prophet.

However, the true deliverer is Jesus Christ. His death and resurrection are foreshadowed in this event. Christ died for our sins, shedding his blood. On the cross, Jesus cried out, "It is finished." Jesus paid it all. Whoever believes in him receives forgiveness of sins and enters into the righteousness of Christ. This gives us complete victory over the power of sin. Moreover, Christ rose from the dead, winning eternal victory over the power of death. So Paul cried out, "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" However, we must claim this victory by faith. Let's repent of our indecisive acceptance of God's victory in Christ Jesus. Let's accept God's victory with absolute faith, striking the arrows five or six times. This is not just a personal victory, but victory in our families, victory in ministry, victory in our campuses and victory in our nation.