

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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**Broadcast Date:** 8 September 2013

No. T0797

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## Women of Faith: Jehoshabeath

### Introduction

Today we consider the fourth and last character in this series of "Women of Faith".

We commenced our series with Miriam. There is much in the life of Miriam that is commendable as a woman of faith. But we do have a warning, as seen in Numbers 12, where Miriam steps outside of her God-given sphere of service when, as I believe, she leads Aaron astray and challenges the authority of Moses. God deals severely with Miriam and, although it is only temporary, its lesson is well heeded. We need to serve in our God-given place!

Next we had Rahab, a Gentile woman, who had no right to be blessed among the nation of Israel. Rahab had heard about God and the judgements that had happened to the Egyptians (Joshua 2:1-18). Also, Rahab had heard all about Israel since they left Egypt. As a result, Rahab believed and desired a blessing from the two spies that she hid on the roof top (Joshua 2:6). Rahab desired protection for herself and all her father's family that they might be spared when Israel destroyed the city of Jericho (Joshua 2:12). Just as in Rahab's day, there is a judgement coming on this world and we need to be like Rahab, to turn to God in repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, because the only place of security is in the salvation that God offers through faith in Christ.

The third talk considered Deborah and Jael (Judges 4:1-5:31). Both are used by God in different ways to defeat Israel's enemy. Deborah was a prophetess who lived in Israel when the nation was not going on well with God. However, Deborah was used to guide and direct the nation. In parallel, we have Jael, a Gentile woman, who acts for God and accomplishes the destruction of the enemy captain. Jael belonged to the Kenites, a people who lived within Israel's borders (Judges 5:24). It was with this people that Moses had lived for forty years and had also taken a wife from this people when he fled from Pharaoh.

We now come to Jehoshabeath. There are two Scriptural references to Jehoshabeath, 2 Kings 11:1-3 and 2 Chronicles 22:10-12. Although Jehoshabeath's name is slightly different in 2 Kings they both basically come from the same Hebrew word. The name is a combination of the word "Jehovah" (a name of God) and the word "oath". From this the meaning of the name might be said to be, "Jehovah promised". The event is described only slightly differently in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, so a combination of both scriptures provides the full picture of the tragic event.

Jehoshabeath is like so many biblical characters, waiting in the "wings" of the world stage and called into action by God at just the right moment. One final consideration before we look at the details of this event. Jehoshabeath lived an entirely different life to that of her brother. He was influenced by his mother to live an ungodly idolatrous life. The Scriptures record *"his mother advised him to do wickedly"*, 2 Chronicles 22:3. From the little information that we have, Jehoshabeath's life seems to have taken an entirely different course. There was at least one person in her life, under the guiding hand of God, who shaped her character for good. In the Bible there are a few occasions where people have had the same opportunities and yet some believed God and others did not. It commenced with Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-15 and later with Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25:19-24. Probably the most striking example was the two thieves crucified either side of the Lord Jesus (Luke 23:32-43). There comes a point where one confesses Jesus as Lord (Luke 23:39-43) but there is no confession from the other.

As we look at this woman of faith we will also consider some of the other characters who are involved in this tragedy.

### Background

In this tragic event at a low point in the nation of Judah's history, we need to understand the main characters that are involved.

- Ahaziah became king and followed the wicked counsel of his mother; his reign as king was cut short to only one year.

- Athaliah is the mother of Ahaziah, the recently killed king of Judah. Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab, an idolatrous king of Israel who marries the father of Ahaziah. As a result, Judah had become an idolatrous nation which resulted in God dealing severely with both the king and his people.
- Jehoshabeath is the sister of Ahaziah and is married to a priest called Jehoiada. It is Jehoshabeath who is the principal character at this tragic time.
- Joash, the youngest son of king Ahaziah, was about one year old and is saved from death by his aunt.
- Jehoiada is both a priest and husband of Jehoshabeath.

### Ahaziah

We need to say something about Ahaziah who was the son of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (1 Kings 22:2), was largely a good king. His weakness was his desire to ally his people to Israel. At some point, he allows his son, Jehoram, to marry a daughter of Ahab king of Israel. Often marriages were used to try to establish a peaceful relationship with a potentially troublesome nation. However, all that this relationship did was to turn his son into a godless king which also came out in his son Ahaziah. It also opened the door to idolatry. Because of Ahaziah's death at the hands of Jehu (God's instrument of judgement against Israel), see 2 Kings 9:27-29, his mother takes advantage of the situation to slay all the heirs to the throne of Judah or so she thought! (2 Kings 11:1)

### Athaliah

Athaliah should never have been married to a king of Judah. Athaliah was a daughter of Ahab (see 2 Kings 8:18), king of Israel, a nation given over to idolatry. The nation of Israel from the moment it was divided away from Judah had become a nation of idol worshippers. In this tragic event, Athaliah has no hesitation to embark upon mass murder. Let us read 2 Chronicles 22:10, *"Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs of the house of Judah."*

This was Satan's work and, if Athaliah had actually accomplished what she set out to do, then it would have been a defeat for God! Why would that be? John 7:42 states, *"Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"* See also Micah 5:2. This is just one of a few occasions when this promise is referred to in scripture. It is based upon God's promise to King David in 1 Chronicles 17:1-15 (and 2 Samuel 7:1-17). So the murderous work of Athaliah was in a sense defeated before it even began as God cannot be thwarted in His purposes. We see, then, how important it was for at least one of the children to be saved. This is where the heroine of the story comes to prominence.

I have no doubt that God was working behind the scenes to bring about a restoration of godly worship in the nation of Judah because of His covenant with King David, probably 150 years or so earlier (1 Chronicles 17:1-15 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17). God never forgets His promises!

For six years Athaliah reigned on the throne of Judah (2 Kings 11:3, 2 Chronicles 22:12). We are not told what happened in those years but it can surely be assumed that the reign was not a good time for the nation of Judah.

### Jehoshabeath

When Ahaziah is killed by Jehu (2 Kings 9:27-29) and Athaliah sees an opportunity to take the throne of Judah for herself, a faithful woman appears on the scene. When events reach a critical situation and the majority have turned away from God we find in Scripture there is always at least one person who is faithful to God. I have no doubt there would be other people who were faithful to God.

Remember Elijah who, during the reign of Ahab king of Israel, had caused a drought so that it did not rain at all for three years (1 Kings 17:1-24). Then Elijah goes and confronts Ahab (1 Kings 18:1-19) and God brings about a victory on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 17:20-40) and rain is restored to the land (1 Kings 17:41-46). But, at that very height of victory, Jezebel (Ahab's wife) threatens Elijah and he runs away, discouraged and feeling a failure (1 Kings 19:1-10). He ends up in a cave on the mountain of Horeb and voices his complaint to the Lord, that despite all the victory over the prophets of Baal and the restoring of rain, still his life is in danger from the very people he has helped. Elijah then says, *"I alone am left; and they seek to take my life"*, 1 Kings 19:10. He is basically telling God, "What is the point of going on!"

The sentiments of FB Hole's hymn may have been going through Elijah's mind:

O God of grace, whose saving power,  
 Can reach the chiefest sinner,  
 We seem to reach earth's darkest hour,  
**The ranks of faith grow thinner;**  
 Before Thee now in thought we stand,  
 Our sin, our need confessing;  
 We long to see Thy gracious hand  
 Bestow eternal blessing.

At this low point, God gives his faithful servant another commission and a reason to hope. The commission is, "Then the LORD said to him: 'Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place'", 1 Kings 19:15-16. So Elijah has two people to anoint as kings who will do God's strange work of judgement and he is to anoint Elisha as his replacement. With his replacement, Elijah knows that his time of service is at an end.

The reason for hope is found in 1 Kings 19:18: "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." "There are seven thousand who are still **faithful to Me**, Elijah!"

We see from this verse that God is never without His faithful servants even in the darkest of days spiritually. We are not told that Elijah was surprised by such a large number of faithful servants of God. But it was surely both a rebuke to this prophet when he thought that he was the only one left and an encouragement to him at the same time to know that God had such a large company of faithful servants.

So it is with Jehoshabeath. It is as a direct result of her faithful actions that God's promise to King David holds true but I believe her actions also eventually encourages her husband to take action a few years later to restore Joash as the true king of the throne of Judah.

In the middle of the slaughter of the royal seed Jehoshabeath suddenly snatches away the one year old child, Joash, along with his nurse and hides them in her own accommodation that is connected to the temple because she is married to a priest, Jehoiada by name. The child is rescued from the royal palace and taken to a place of safety. In this dreadful carnage, the child is missed by the murderers. We see wonderfully God's hand preserving the child. Does it remind you of our Lord Jesus Christ? Herod wanted to slay the one who was born king but, in a dream, God warned Joseph to take the child and His mother into the country of Egypt as a place of safety beyond the reach of Herod (see Matthew 2:13-15).

P Doddridge sums up the needed courage during exceptional times in his hymn,

O God, what cords of love are Thine,  
 How gentle, yet how strong!  
 Thy truth and grace their strength combine  
 To draw our souls along.

The guilt of twice ten thousand sins  
 One moment takes away;  
**And when the fight of faith begins,  
 Our strength is as our day.**

Jehoshabeath receives the needed strength and courage to enter the palace where murder was taking place on every hand - "Our strength is as our day".

Here was faith in action. If Jehoshabeath had been noticed, I have no doubt her life would have been taken from her. Was this the only brave thing that Jehoshabeath did? Not so. There was six years of bravery keeping this child safe. Not easy to hide a child and his nurse. Think of the mother of Moses who for the first three months hid her son, defying the orders of Pharaoh to kill him (Exodus 2:1-4). A single dramatic act of faith might be considered exciting. But faith in action is a lifelong commitment, doing what is right day by day.

The additional benefit for Joash and for the nation of Judah is that this young child is both safe and is being brought up in a godly environment, not under the wicked and idolatrous influence of Athaliah. This results in positive godly character being seen in this young king Joash in the early years of his reign. This is largely due to this godly woman of faith - Jehoshabeath. This reminds me of Timothy, a companion of the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. Paul said to Timothy, "From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for

salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work", 2 Timothy 3:15-17. Why had Timothy known the Scriptures from childhood? It was because of his mother and grandmother. Paul could write, "I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also", 2 Timothy 1:5. Salvation is not inherited, but salvation can be acquired through faithful witness in the home. Timothy was taught the way of salvation and gained a sound knowledge of Scripture in his early years. So we have the same principle worked out with Joash from his aunt and uncle.

This is an important principle for parents. As Proverbs 22:6 states, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Now I should say that Christian parents may do all that is right to bring up their children in "the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4), but in the end children become responsible adults and their Christian lives become their responsibility. A little later I will speak of this in relation to Joash.

For six years I believe Jehoshabeath would shoulder the main responsibility of faithfully caring for this child, Joash. Then, just as quickly as Jehoshabeath appeared on the scene, she leaves. Her public work for God is very brief but I have no doubt such a person would continue in other roles serving her God. It is important to understand, that Jehoshabeath was placed by God in circumstances that commenced the day she married Jehoiada, where she would be able to act faithfully in a time of great need. I think it is a challenge to be always ready and alert as when to act for God. It might not be as dramatic as this event; it might only be a "cup of cold water", see Matthew 10:42. Work that is done for God will be rewarded in a coming day.

Jehoshabeath's name, means "Jehovah promised". Her actions in saving and looking after the young child, Joash, meant that God's promise to King David was maintained through this tragedy.

### **Jehoiada the priest**

Let us briefly look at Jehoiada, the husband of Jehoshabeath. Jehoiada was not used in the rescue of baby Joash. We may ask why? I think that there is a very simple answer to this. It was possibly not an unusual thing to see Jehoshabeath, being the sister of Ahaziah, in the royal palace as she was family. Whereas Jehoiada although he was husband to Jehoshabeath, was a priest of the LORD and therefore would be opposed to the idolatrous activity in the palace and therefore it would be out of character for him to be in the palace. So Jehoiada's wife had the opportunity. However, now that the child had grown to the age of seven, it was considered a suitable age to have him installed on the throne, to remove Athaliah and restore the kingdom to the line of David. Although Joash was still very young, the godly Jehoiada would be his guide and mentor.

Jehoshabeath and Jehoiada are a wonderful picture of a husband and wife working together for God. It reminds me of Aquila and Priscilla who first come to the pages of Scripture in Acts. They are mentioned six times (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19) and always together. We find them involved in Christian service ready to help those in need, including the apostle Paul. One of the privileges of Christian couples is to serve the Lord together, using their home as a base from which to work and serve.

### **Joash**

Finally we have Joash, rescued as a baby by Jehoshabeath and hidden in her house with his nurse. Jehoshabeath, her husband and the nurse would all have a role at various stages in teaching young Joash that which was right. The Scriptures would form part of the child's curriculum. Included would be the responsibilities of being king. So, at the age of seven he was placed on the throne of Judah as the rightful king and his wicked grandmother was removed and slain.

During the early part of his reign he was guided by Jehoiada and in 2 Chronicles 24:1-14 we read of his work for the LORD, restoring the temple and the worship of God formally in the country. But after the death of godly Jehoiada (2 Chronicles 24:15-16) others influenced Joash in totally the wrong direction (2 Chronicles 24:17-19). So much so that Joash is involved in the killing of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada (2 Chronicles 24:20-21) and it is said in 2 Chronicles 24:22, "Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son."

This is rather a sad end to Joash who, at great personal danger, had been rescued from certain death by his aunt. He now repays that debt by killing her son! We can only speculate about Joash. But his reliance upon Jehoiada was probably too great. Joash should have relied upon his God more, to be a kind of "Timothy" and know the Scriptures that would make him wise (2 Timothy 3:5). Instead, he turned to the wrong kind of people who led him astray into wrong and evil ways.

This is a solemn warning to us all, especially as we get older. The Christian life is always to hold fast to the things we have learned from the Scriptures and not to give up. We are responsible to live for God.

As JN Darby states in one of his hymns,

*O keep us, love divine near Thee,  
That we our nothingness may know,  
And ever to Thy glory be  
**Walking by faith while here below.***

Let us take to heart the life of Jehoshabeath who was a shining example of faith. We should not miss the lessons of such a woman. She did what she could in difficult days without worrying about the dangers to herself. Are we ready to take up the baton of faith in the same way? To be counted faithful unto the end?

Thank you for listening and may the Lord bless you today.

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