

Sermon 53, Returning to the Rule of David's Son, 2 Kings 11:4-20

Proposition: The restoration of Davidic rule in Judah in 836 B.C. shows us what our own submission to Christ's rule should look like.

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Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, our text tonight is in many ways a coup more exciting than the coup we saw in the previous two chapters. There, Jehu ben Nimshi, an army officer, managed to seize power in Israel with military and prophetic backing. In our text tonight, though, it is no piece of military brass who decides that he's fit to rule but whose "zeal for Yahweh" makes us a bit queasy. Here we see the rightful king returning to David's throne with the full backing not only of the military and religious establishment, but also with the full consent of the people of the land. Yes, there are saddening things about this text — for instance, that David's family is now so messed up that a seven-year-old is coming to power over his grandmother's dead body. But the message, twice highlighted, is ultimately one of joy. What I hope to show you tonight is that the restoration of Davidic rule in Judah in 836 B.C. shows us what our own submission to Christ's rule should look like.

I. The Event Itself: A Carefully Planned Coup, vv. 4-12

Last week we saw how Joash's life was saved when he was a little baby. Tonight we will see how his coronation took place when he was a little seven-year-old boy.

A. The Co-Conspirators: Yahweh's Priest and the Army of Judah, v. 4

The first thing we see is that Jehoiada — the high priest, though we won't learn that till later — and the top military brass and royal bodyguard are all in this together. They make a covenant with each other — a covenant to be loyal to the true king rather than to the false queen. Jehoiada makes a binding agreement with these military men and then has them swear an oath to him. Only then does he show them Joash.

B. The Plan: Double or Triple Guards on Duty, vv. 5-11

The military is agreeable to his plans, and so he fills them in. The Hebrew text is a bit confusing, but it seems that at least double guards, and possibly triple guards, are put on duty at the time of the coup. The basic idea is that Joash will be surrounded by a cordon of armed men so thick that Athaliah has no hope of breaking through and killing her final surviving grandson. Some think that a certain number of troops were also dispatched to the temple of Baal to keep trouble from starting there. Regardless of the exact details, though, the overall point is clear enough: this coup is not going to fail for lack of manpower. The military force deployed will be overwhelming. Plus, the troops are armed (either for actual combat or symbolically) with weapons that had once belonged to King David. The historical and dynastic connection is unmistakable. These men are in the business of restoring David's line to its rightful place on the throne of Judah.

C. The Coronation, v. 12

And so they do. Jehoiada lets Joash come out into the open and crowns him. Joash also receives the testimony — probably a copy of the Pentateuch to serve as a reminder to him of how kings are supposed to behave. David's son is not to rule without the word of God! And, of course, the people acclaim him as king.

All three pillars of Judean society have come together to overthrow the usurper. The military, the temple establishment, and the people agree that they want to be ruled by Joash.

Such, in brief, is the story of how the coup took place. Everything worked like a well-oiled machine. Not a hair was out of place; the television cameras could have captured the whole of this beautifully choreographed event.

II. The Event's Results, vv. 13-20

But the chapter doesn't end there. It doesn't just say "In the seventh year of Jehu, Joash became king." No. It describes in detail what happened what a son of David returned to the throne of Judah — not only for the sake of historical interest, but so that we can know how God's people respond to being ruled by David's Son. We see in this chapter that our God keeps His promises through the work of His people. We see that His coming Messiah cannot be blocked or stopped. And we also see how God's people ought to respond when they come under the rule of one typologically like that Messiah.

A. The Joy of Yahweh's People, v. 14

The first thing to catch is the joy of Yahweh's people, singing, shouting, and blowing trumpets. When David's son comes back to the throne, His people's joy is irrepressible! Brothers and sisters, is this how you feel about the rule of Jesus Christ? Does it make you want to sing, shout,

and blow trumpets? I remember working at Walmart during my seminary days in South Carolina. I was responsible to monitor the flower rack and the banana rack at the General Merchandise door all the way across the front end of the store, and so you could often find me pulling carts of flowers and bananas across that long stretch between doors. And as I pulled those carts, I sang. My mouth was full of hymns praising Jesus Christ. I sang just below a normal volume, and with the noise of the place and the rattling of my cart, people five feet away couldn't hear me. But my heart was full of joy as I thought about my position in Christ, and I would sing to Him as I walked around Walmart.

Well, that joy should characterize us all. If you've lived under Christ's rule so long that you can't remember what it's like to be under the dominion of a murderous tyrant like Athaliah, watch some gritty films. Read some gritty books. Talk to some gritty people. Do something (not something sinful!) to remind yourself that you are under the rule of Jesus Christ and that it is infinitely better than the reign of Athaliah and her death-loving kind!

B. The Death of the Usurping Queen, vv. 13-16

The second thing that took place after Joash began to rule was the death of the usurping queen. In our case, of course, when we begin to submit to Jesus Christ then sin lies dead. It no longer has dominion over us. We no longer have to do what it says. We no longer have to carry out its commands. Athaliah was dragged out of the temple and slaughtered in the horse passageway — a fate reminiscent of Jezebel's. When you come under the rule of Jesus Christ, you pass out of the dominion of sin. It's that simple.

C. A Renewed Covenant Between God, His King, and His People, vv. 17a-b

After Athaliah was safely disposed of, Jehoiada led the people in making a covenant between Yahweh, Joash, and the people. This is a three-way pact, and its content is summarized as a promise to be Yahweh's people. Remember, this is the master promise. God promised to be Abraham's God and the God of Abraham's seed. To be "God of" someone, or to be the "people of" God, is to be in covenant. The covenant is mentioned here with the article: Jehoiada made *the* covenant, that is the longstanding Covenant of Grace whereby God promised to give every spiritual blessing, including resurrection from the dead, to Abraham and His seed. He promised to be a God in committed relationship to Abraham's seed, and from that promise Jesus deduced that He even promised to raise the dead (see the discussion with the Sadducees in Matthew 22). So basically, in this covenant God promised to make Judah His people and to lavish on them every spiritual blessing, including Jesus Christ as their King to rule them, their Prophet to teach them, and their priest to pay the penalty for their sins, together with all the spiritual benefits that union with Christ brings. (If you don't believe me, then you need to survey every usage of the term "God of" or "your God" in the Bible. You'll see that what I'm saying is exactly what the phrase means in the Bible.) Yet for all of us democrats (not political party members, but people who live under and believe in democracy), the idea that such a covenant should include the king is very odd. If they were going to be God's people, and He was going to be their God, what does

Joash have to do with that? Couldn't they have been God's people without Joash? Abraham became God's person without any mediator, right?

Brothers and sisters, I believe that this three-way covenant points to the truth that God is our God only in and through Jesus Christ. Without the participation of David's Son, there could be no genuine covenant between God and His people. Without Christ's life, death, and resurrection, God would not be yours and you would not be His.

In short, one of the major consequences of coming under the rule of Jesus Christ is that then, and only then, are you able to come into covenant with God. The benefits and blessings of belonging, of being in a committed relationship to your Heavenly Father, are yours only in and through the Son of David. So celebrate, embrace, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, who has brought us to God!

D. A Covenant Between the King and the People, v. 17c

Yet Jehoiada also insisted that the people and the King covenant with each other. What was this all about? Once again, the point is that unless Jesus is your King, whatever you say about your relationship to God, you are not really one of His. Are you in covenant with Jesus Christ? Have you taken Him for your King and the ruler of your heart and life? Again, the point here is that to enter a relationship to God is to enter a relationship to Jesus Christ, and vice versa. In Judah of old that relationship was formalized through the person of the King — not that people couldn't relate to God without a Davidic monarch, but rather that the presence of the Davidic monarch was a sign to them, a type of the one who was to come. Now we know what this focus on the king meant. It meant the truth that if you know Christ, then you know the Father, and that if you know the Father, then you must know Him through Christ. That is the glory and beauty of the Christian faith. It is through Christ the Way that we have access by one Spirit to the Father.

E. The Destruction of the Idols, v. 18a-c

Well, once you have submitted to Christ and covenanted with God to be His people, the next thing that must happen is a war against the idols. The sequence is obvious and natural. If you come under Jesus' rule, then you must throw away your false gods. You cannot serve God and Mammon. God will not share with any rival.

1. Idolatrous Institutions, v. 18a

And so, the Judeans went and tore down the temple of Baal. This is the only temple of Baal ever mentioned in Judah, and its very presence was a blot on the face of the holy land. It would be rather like finding a brothel in the side chapel of a church. A place ostensibly devoted to worshipping the true God is actually doing something very different.

Brothers and sisters, how do we tear down idolatrous institutions when we come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Well, rarely is it our call to go and tear them stone from stone as the Judeans did here. Rather, as Origen pointed out so long ago, these kinds of OT texts are directly relevant in the Christian era to what we do with our sin. We are tempted by idols no less than the ancient Judeans were. So what do we do with those temptations? First of all, we need to personally back out of idolatrous institutions. Stop contributing money. Cancel your

membership. This would certainly include all formal non-Christian religious organizations (e.g., a Buddhist temple or a mosque) — but it may also include many apparently secular organizations whose stated goals or who methods are fundamentally incompatible with Christian belief. Many Christians believe this to be the case with American public schools, for instance. Others believe it about particular political parties or interest groups. Brothers and sisters, do not think that you can continue to serve God while being part of an institution your conscience tells you is radically opposed to Him.

2. Idolatrous Apparatus, v. 18b

The second thing the Judeans got rid of was the idolatrous apparatus — the altar and the images. Again, we need to apply this personally, in our lives, our homes, and the businesses and other institutions we control. Does the machinery or apparatus of idolatry exist in your home? If you worship the God of entertainment, the apparatus you use is a big TV and a powerful sound system. If you worship the God of convenience, the apparatus with which you do it may be a big smartphone or an Amazon Echo. If you worship the god of human relationships, the apparatus with which you do it may be clothes, makeup, and other image and status artifacts. If you worship the god of prosperity, the apparatus may be your tools or your bank accounts. If you worship the God of the Bible, but reduced to a size and level you can control, you may have images of God and Jesus in your house. You may not be able to get rid of certain of these different apparatuses of idolatry, and some of them have legitimate uses. But brothers and sisters, if you are confirmed money-worshipper you may need to severely curtail your bank account. If you are a food-worshipper you may need to keep an empty fridge. If you are an images-of-Christ worshipper, you may need to get rid of your idolatrous pictures.

3. Idolatrous Leaders, v. 18c

Finally, in accordance with the civil law of Judah, they put to death Mattan the priest of Baal. In our own country, of course, it is not within the scope of the civil law to kill people for leading religious perversion. But again, personally speaking, how do we get ride of idolatrous leaders when we come under the rule of Jesus Christ? Well, we stop listening to them. We delete their podcasts. We throw away their CDs. We give their books to the thrift store or to the trash can (depending on how bad they are). We stop supporting them financially. And we instead turn ourselves toward the next point here — to the institutional support and renewal of true religion.

F. The Institutional Renewal of True Religion, v. 18d

That's what Jehoiada did. He appointed officers over the house of Yahweh. He put men in charge of making sure that true institutionalized worship of God continued and flourished in Judah. When Christ becomes your King, you will support organized, institutional religion. Do you do so?

G. The Rule of David's Son, v. 19

Yet another result of the coup was the ongoing rule of David's Son. Once Christ becomes your king He remains your king. If you have been converted, then Christ belongs to you and you submit to His rule!

H. The Joy of Yahweh's People, v. 20a

Again, under Christ's rule the whole land rejoices. If you are truly submitted to Him, then you will rejoice greatly under His lordship? Do you sing in Walmart?

I. The Peace of Yahweh's City, v. 20b

And finally, of course, Jerusalem is the archetype of the church. Under Christ's rule, we have peace. Yes, the bloody corpse of Athaliah may not look like peace — but it is. The carcass of the dragon may not look like peace — but it is. When Jesus Christ is Lord, you have peace under His care!

When you joined this church, you promised to study its purity and peace. Do you know what the best way to pursue both of those things is? It is to come under the lordship of David's Son. Seek Him. Seek to obey Him. Covenant with Him and His Father tonight that you will be His people, destroy the idols in your life, and in this place you will have peace. God promises it. Amen.