

INTRODUCTION 引言

When there is a cause, there will be a consequence. That was one of the first things my two kids learned in school. They attended the same pre-kindergarten class operated by a church. They were taught by the same teacher. At the beginning of every school-year, she told the students the same principle: there will be a consequence for what you do. There will be a reward if they obey instructions. But there will also be a warning or even penalty when they violate a rule. The point is that kids must think carefully before any action. It depends on who they listen to. Parents bring up their kids by teaching them various skills: how to cook, wash dishes and do laundry, etc. But they also instill values to their kids. For example, honesty, compassion and responsibility. The goal is that their children will make wise choices when they leave home. They should not only be told to do right things; they should choose to do those things. Our passage today is about the upbringing of a young king named Joash. His parents had passed away after he was born. His grandma even tried to hunt him down. But by God's divine plan, Joash survived. With the help of some godly counsel, Joash became a good king, at least for the most part during his reign. Unfortunately, Joash did not have a good ending. A lesson we can learn from Joash's life is that our faith in God must be personal. Relationship makes the rules meaningful.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Hiding of the King 王的隱藏

Our story begins with the hiding of the king. Let us read **11:1-3**. Athaliah was the daughter of the northern royal couple Ahab and Jezebel. Athaliah was married to king Jehoram of Judah. Jehoram was judged by God and he died in a terminal disease. His son Ahaziah then succeeded the throne. Unfortunately, Ahaziah was killed by Jehu, who seized power to become the northern king. Athaliah took advantage of the power vacuum. She slaughtered the rest of the royal family and crowned herself as the new king. Athaliah was the only female king in the history of Israel. Actually, there was also a female emperor in the Tang Dynasty of China. Her name is Wu Zetian. The king sought her advice because she was smart. After the death of her husband, Wu seized power and became an emperor. Under Wu's leadership, China expanded its territory and grew stronger in its economy and military. She reigned for 15 years. In comparison, Athaliah only ruled for 7 years. Idol worship flourished under her control. She also tried to get rid of all the potential heirs. Only one of her grandsons, Joash, was preserved. When Joash was still a baby, his aunt Jehosheba hid him in the palace. She later hid him in the temple. Jehosheba's husband was the high priest Jehoiada. He played a critical role in preparing Joash to be the next king. Imagine the challenges this noble couple faced. What if Athaliah found out that they had been hiding Joash? Also, naturally a baby cries and wants to go outside to play. Many children and adults suffer from depression due to the pandemic. Joash was stuck in the temple for 7 years!

Jehoiada and Jehosheba protected their nephew from his furious grandma. They knew that only David's descendants could become kings. God also protected Moses and Jesus from people who were pursuing after them when they were still babies. Nothing will frustrate God's promises. God has a different plan for each of us. God has yet to call you home because He still has unfinished business for you. Life has a purpose. Give thanks to God every morning for a new day. God watches over us whether we are at home or outside, awake or asleep. The traffic in our town is famous for one thing. Some people treat the streets like a race track. Do not take God's protection for granted when you arrive safely to your destination. God is always with us.

After several years, it is time overthrow Athaliah. Look at **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. Jehoiada gathered some military officers to the temple. The Carites might be some specialized body-guards. He presented to them the future king. He then asked those personnel to make a pledge. A parallel passage in **2 Chronicles 23:2-3** give us more detail. Besides the military branch, Jehoiada also got the support from the religious and civic leaders. They all expressed their allegiance to Joash. How would you react when someone informs you that your next king is a seven years old kid? Put my trust on someone who just started elementary school? Are you kidding me? You may feel a little uneasy if your boss at work is much younger and less experienced than you. Jehoiada focused not on Joash's age. He reiterated God's mandate: only David's descendants would be kings. You may not totally agree with some of our government leaders. Do not forget that God puts them there and gives them authority to rule. We respect our leaders because we honor their positions. After Jehoiada had secured protection for the king, a brief inauguration ceremony was held. Coming back to 2 Kings 11, and we will read **verse 12-14**. The whole assembly rejoiced. Jehoiada then ordered some soldiers to put Athaliah under the sword. That ended her wicked influence.

2. Rising of the King 王的高升

After Athaliah was taken out, Judah could go back to the right track. We see the rising of the king in the next 40 years. Joash did a few things with the help of his uncle Jehoiada. Let us read **verse 17-18**. First, people **renewed** their covenant with both God and the king. They recommitted themselves to Jehovah, and pledged their loyalty to the king. They put the hierarchy in the right order: God, the king then citizens. The same principle applies to every nation. This country has a secular government. Not every policy made is consistent with Biblical value. However, we should obey our leaders to show our submission to God. If our rulers follow God's teaching, then everyone will be blessed. But God will discipline them when they violate His truth. After the people renewed their covenant, they **removed** their idol. They demolished the Baal worship facilities and eliminated the priest of Baal. After we became Christians, we also have to remove idols from our hearts. It can be anything that occupies God's position in our hearts. Perhaps it is a lifestyle, hobby or relationship that affects our spiritual growth. Some people spend too much time on entertainment or their

second job that they cannot find time to read the Bible or attend church meetings. Or it may be some friends who will lead you astray from the truth. You need God's wisdom to make right choices. Say no to idols so that you can say yes to God. Removing idols only gets the job half-done. The third thing Joash did was to **return** to worship God. We will refer to a parallel passage in **2 Chronicles 23:18-19**. Joash followed the Law to ask the Levites to serve in religious matters. The priests took care of the sacrifices. Besides, Joash followed the plan of king David to arrange temple guards and musicians. Everything was in place to ensure an orderly worship. We come here every Sunday to worship God. Our services should be God-centered. Coworkers lead us to worship God with songs and prayer. Sermons should be messages God wants a pastor to speak and something we need to hear. God can inspire you through a verse or a story to draw you closer to Him. The fourth thing Joash ordered was to **repair** the temple. The temple had existed for over 100 years by then. Naturally, there would be some wear and tear. More importantly, Athaliah did something bad to it. **2 Chronicles 24:7** says – Now the sons of that wicked woman Athaliah had broken into the temple of God and had used even its sacred objects for the Baals. Athaliah did some physical and spiritual damages to the temple. Joash thus collected fund for the repair. Read **2 Kings 12:4-6**. Joash followed Moses' instruction to ask people to pay a temple tax. There was also voluntary offering on the top of that. But for some reason, no repair was done even after Joash ruled for 23 years! The priests did not spend the money to build mansions for themselves or use it on Mediterranean cruise trips. The fund just sat there idling. Therefore, Joash decided to take matters into his own hands. Continue to read **2 Chronicles 24:8-13**. Instead of sending officials to every town to collect tax money, the king invited everyone to come to Jerusalem to donate freewill offering. There was a great and joyful response. Church members may offer money if a pastor encourages them to tithe. Besides, they will react eagerly if a love offering is collected to pay for someone's medical bill. It gives us a sense of participation that we are part of a family. The author of 2 Kings adds that the foremen were completely honest in handling the money. They hired craftsmen for stone, wood and metal works. No one even asked them to submit a report of how much and where they spent the fund. Trust is vital in a faith community. We have some faithful finance coworkers in our church. They diligently take care of every penny we collect and spend.

3. Falling of the King 王的衰落

So far everything seems positive. A noble high priest guided the king to walk with the Lord. A major idol was eliminated and people returned to worship Jehovah. People gladly dedicated money to renovate the temple. Unfortunately, we witness the falling of the king soon afterward. Judah was attacked by a foreign nation, and Joash was later killed by his officials. What had happened? The author of **2 Kings** gives us some hints in **12:2-3**. Joash obeyed God as long as his mentor was alive. But Joash abandoned God after Jehoiada's death. Another sign of his spiritual decline is in the description: "the high places were not removed." We said earlier in our studies of the kings that the saying is a recurring theme in the two books of the kings. The people of Judah had a temple to worship Jehovah. However, they had never completely demolished the religious facilities of the indigenous Canaanites. Sin will come back if the source of temptation is not entirely removed. People who followed

traditional beliefs in the past must clear off their idols after they receive Christ. If they only dump statues of false gods but keep some religious arts or “lucky charms,” those items will stumble their faith in Jesus. Using a medical analogy, it is like chemotherapy is commonly prescribed after a surgery to totally eradicate the cancer tissues. **2 Chronicles 24:17-19** tells us how Joash changed soon after Jehoiada left the scene. It made a huge difference to whom the king listens. Borrowing a slogan from a TV commercial: it is not complicated! Our heart is never a barren ground. If you do not let God’s Word to take roots and grow, weeds will come in and prevail. Our little human wisdom can often trip us too. We wonder whether God’s truth is applicable nowadays and in our unique circumstances. We often pick and choose which Biblical principles to follow. We believe we are smarter than God. But God’s way is always higher than our way. Trust and obey, and we will be blessed. It is not complicated! God in His faithfulness kept sending His prophets to nudge the king. But Joash would not listen. God gave him one last chance to turn back from sin. Continue to read **verse 20-22**. Zechariah was actually Joash’s cousin. Joash disliked the message so much that he even killed the messenger. Zechariah committed himself to God, knowing that God would avenge for his innocent blood. His dying words were a stern warning to the king. Joash abandoned God, went back to idol worship and killed a priest. It did not take long before God judged Joash. Next, we will read **verse 23-25**. Joash suffered from the attacks of both external and internal enemies. Aram, a recurring adversary, returned. This time it was led by king Hazael. The army killed some officials and looted the city. The record in 2 Kings 22 tells us that Joash paid a high price to please Hazael. Joash presented all the treasures he inherited from previous kings, and every valuable item he could find in the palace and the temple. It is never a good idea to bribe one’s opponents. They will return and ask for more! Verse 24 states that it was an easy victory for Aram. There had to be a lot of elite soldiers in the capital city to protect the king and his family, and the temple. However, a small Aram troop was sufficient because God was helping Aram. He used Aram as a spanking rod for the king. Joash was injured in the battle. Worse still, some officials seized the opportunity to kill him to avenge for Zechariah. This poor king died in a dishonorable way. He did not even receive a royal burial in the tombs of the kings. The Bible says God disciplines those He loves. Perhaps God can use a car breakdown, a minor illness or inter-personal conflict to alert us when we disobey Him. He wants us to repent and return to Him. Do not let sins get out of control. God is gracious and patient. He always gives us an opportunity to come back to Him.

CONCLUSION 結論

Our faith in God must be personal. God sent a godly mentor to help king Joash. Ultimately, Joash must make a decision to make Jehovah his God. There was no excuse for him to abandon God after receiving years of spiritual nurturing under Jehoiada. It does not matter how many years we or our children spend in the church. We must acknowledge Jesus as our Lord. A personal relationship with Him makes Biblical principles meaningful. We obey Him because we love Him. There should be willingness instead of grudges. The result will be God’s blessings.

INTRODUCTION 引言

有因必有果。這是我的兩個孩子在學校學到的第一個道理。他們就讀由教會經營的同一個學前班。他們是由同一位老師教的。在每個學年開始時，她都會告訴學生同樣的原則：你所做的每件事情都會有它的結果。如果他們服從指示，就會有獎勵。但是當他們違反規則時便會被警告甚至處罰。關鍵是孩子們在做任何事情之前必須仔細考慮。這取決於他們到底聽誰的話。父母在家中會教導孩子各種技能：如何做飯、洗碗和洗衣服等。但他們也向孩子灌輸價值觀念。例如，誠實、同情心和責任感。目標是讓孩子在離開家時做出明智的選擇。他們不僅是服從指示；他們也應該甘願做正確的選擇。今天的經文是關於一位年輕的王約阿施的成長經歷。他的父母在他出生後就去世了。他的祖母甚至想要追殺他。但按照神的旨意，約阿施生存下來。在一些敬虔的顧問的幫助下，約阿施成為一位好的王，起碼在他統治期間的大部分時間都是如此。可惜的是，約阿施並沒有一個美滿的結局。我們可以從約阿施的生平學到的一個教訓是，我們對神的信仰必須是個人的。關係使規則變得有意義。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Hiding of the King 王的隱藏

我們的故事從王的隱藏開始。讓我們閱讀 **11:1-3**。亞她利雅是北國夫婦亞哈和耶洗別的女兒。亞她利雅嫁給了猶大王約蘭。約蘭被神審判，他死於病患。他的兒子亞哈謝繼位。不幸的是，亞哈謝被耶戶殺死。然後耶戶奪權，成為了北國的王。亞她利雅趁著權力真空，於是屠殺了其餘的王室成員，並成為新的王。亞她利雅是以色列歷史上唯一的女王。其實，唐朝也有一位女皇帝，她叫武則天。因為她很聰明，連皇帝也徵求她的意見。當王過世後，武則天便奪權。在她的領導下，中國的領土、經濟和軍事都有增加。武則天在位 15 年。相比之下，亞她利雅只統治了 7 年。亞她利雅積極推廣偶像敬拜。她還試圖清除所有可能的繼承人，只有她的一個孫子約阿施被保存下來。當約阿施還是嬰兒的時候，他的姑姑約示巴把他藏在皇宮裡。後來她把小王子藏在聖殿裡。約示巴的丈夫是大祭司耶何耶大。日後他致力於準備約阿施成為下一任的王。想像一下這對敬虔的夫婦所面對的挑戰。如果亞她利雅發現他們一直藏著約阿施會怎麼樣？還有，小孩自然會哭，也會想要出去玩。許多兒童和成人在新冠疫情

期間得了憂鬱症。約阿施被困在聖殿裡 7 年！耶何耶大和約示巴保護他們的侄子免受他祖母的傷害。他們知道只有大衛的後裔才能作王。神也曾經保護嬰兒時期的摩西和耶穌，免受敵人的追趕。沒有什麼因素能攔阻神的旨意。神對我們每個人都有不同的計劃。神還沒有叫你回家，因為祂還有需要你去完成的事。我們的人生都有不同的目的。每天早上為新的一天感謝神。無論我們在家還是在外面，醒著還是睡著，神都在看顧我們。這個城市的交通是很有名的。有些人把街道當作跑道。當你安全到達目的地時，不要把神的保護看為是理所當然的。神總是與我們同在。

幾年後，是時候推翻亞她利雅了。請看第 4 節：**第七年，耶何耶大打發人叫迦利人和護衛兵的眾百夫長來，領他們進了耶和華的殿，與他們立約，使他們在耶和華殿裡起誓，又將王的兒子指給他們看。**耶何耶大召集了一些軍官到聖殿去。迦利人可能是一些特別的守衛。他向他們介紹了未來的王。然後他要求那些官員起誓。在**歷代志下 23:2-3** 的平行經文給我們更多的細節。除了軍官之外，耶何耶大還得到了宗教和民間領袖的支持。他們都表示效忠於約阿施。當有人告訴你下一任的王是一個七歲的孩子時，你會有何反應？把我的信心放在一個剛開始上小學的人身上？你在跟我開玩笑嗎？如果你公司的主管比你年輕得多，經驗也比你少，你可能會感到有點不安。耶何耶大關注的不是約阿施的年齡。他重申了神的規定：只有大衛的後裔才能成為王。你可能不完全同意一些政府領袖的看法。不要忘記是神把他們放在崗位上，並賜給他們管治的權柄。我們尊重他們，因為尊重他們的職位。耶何耶大確保了王的安全後，便舉行了簡短的就職儀式。回到列王紀下 11 章，我們將閱讀**第 12-14 節**。全體歡欣鼓舞。耶何耶大然後命令一些士兵處決亞她利雅。這便結束了她敗壞的影響。

2. Rising of the King 王的高升

亞她利雅被清除了之後，猶大國便可以回到正軌。我們看到接下來 40 年王的高升。約阿施在他的姑丈耶何耶大的幫助下做了一些事情。讓我們閱讀**第 17-18 節**。首先，人們**重新與神和王立約**。他們重新委身於耶和華，並表示向王效忠。他們把優先次序排對了：神、王、人民。同樣的原則適用於任何國家。這個國家有一個不信神的政府。並非每項政策都符合聖經的原則。然而，我們應該順服我們的領袖，以表明我們對神的順服。如果我們的領袖們聽從神，那麼大家都會得到祝福。但當他們違背神的真理時，神會管教他們。百姓更新了他們的盟約之後，他們就**清除他們的偶像**。他們拆毀了巴力的敬拜設施，並去掉巴力的祭司。成為基督徒之後，我們也必須把偶像從我們心中除掉。它可能是佔據我們內心的任何事物。也許某種生活型態、嗜好或關係影響了我們屬靈生命的成長。有些人花太多時間在娛樂或副業上，甚至沒有時間讀聖經或參加教

會聚會。也可能是一些會把你帶入歧途的朋友。你需要神的智慧來做出正確的選擇。要拒絕偶像，這樣你才能把空間留給神。去除偶像只是做了一半的功夫。約阿施做的第三件事是**回歸真神**。我們將參考**歷代志下 23:18-19**的平行經文。約阿施按照律法的要求讓利未人負責宗教事務，祭司們負責獻祭。此外，約阿施按照大衛王的計劃編排聖殿的守衛和音樂事奉人員。一切都準備好，確保有次序的崇拜。我們每個星期天都來這裡敬拜神。我們的崇拜也應該是以神為中心的。同工帶領我們用詩歌和禱告來敬拜神。講道應該是神要牧師講的信息，也是我們需要聽到的。神可以通過一節經文或一個故事來啟發你，使你更接近祂。約阿施命令的第四件事是**修理聖殿**。在那時，聖殿已經使用了 100 多年，自然會有一些損耗的地方。更重要的是，亞他利雅藐視了聖殿。歷代志下 24:7 說—**因為那惡婦亞他利雅的眾子曾拆毀神的殿，又用耶和華殿中分別為聖的物供奉巴力**。亞他利雅對聖殿造成了一些損害。約阿施因此收集了維修基金。閱讀**列王紀下 12:4-6**。約阿施遵照摩西的吩咐，要求人們繳納聖殿稅。除此之外，他還鼓勵大家自由奉獻。但不知為何，到約阿施在位 23 年之後，竟然沒有任何維修工程！祭司們沒有盜用那些錢為自己建造豪宅，也沒花在地中海遊輪旅行。基金只是擱置在那裡。因此，約阿施決定自己動手。繼續閱讀**歷代志下 24:8-13**。王並沒有派官員到每個城鎮徵收稅款，而是邀請人民來到耶路撒冷親自捐獻。結果反應熱烈。一般牧師鼓勵會眾什一奉獻時，大家都樂意參與。此外，如果為某人的醫療費用而收集愛心奉獻，弟兄姐妹也會支持。它讓我們有一種參與感，表示我們是家庭的成員。列王紀下的作者補充說，工頭在處理金錢方面是完全誠實的。他們聘請工匠來做石頭、木材和金屬的工程。甚至沒有人要求他們提交報告，解釋他們在什麼項目花費多少。信任在信仰群體中至關重要的事。我們教會有一些忠心的財務同工，他們很勤奮地處理我們收集和花費的每一分錢。

3. Falling of the King 王的衰落

到目前為止，一切似乎都非常好。一位敬虔的大祭司引導王與主同行。一個主要的偶像被消滅了，人們重新敬拜耶和華。百姓欣然捐錢修補聖殿。可惜的是，我們很快就看到王的衰落。猶大遭到外族攻擊，約阿施後來被他的臣僕殺害。發生了什麼事？**列王紀下**的作者**在 12:2-3**中給了我們一些暗示。只要約阿施的導師還在世，他就順服神。但是約阿施在耶何耶大死後便離棄神。他屬靈衰落的另一個跡像是從第 3 節的描述看到：「只是邱壇還沒有廢去」。我們之前說過，這句話在列王的記錄中反復出現。猶大人有一座聖殿敬拜耶和華。然而，他們從未完全拆除迦南人的宗教設施。如果試探的源頭沒有根治，罪就會捲土重來。過去信奉傳統信仰的人在信主之後必須清除他們的偶像。如果他們只丟棄假神的像，而保留一些宗教藝術品或是符，那些東西會成為他們的絆腳

石。用一個醫學的類比形容，就像醫生一般在腫瘤手術後通常會建議做化療，以徹底根除癌細胞一樣。歷代志下 24:17-19 告訴我們約阿施在耶何耶大離世後的改變。王聽誰的建議會有不同的結果。借用電視廣告的一句口號：一點都不複雜！我們的心從來都不是荒地。如果你不讓神的話語發芽生根，雜草就會來佔據。我們小智慧也經常會出壞主意。我們懷疑神的真理是否適用於今天和我們獨特的處境。我們也會有選擇性地挑選我們願意服從的聖經原則。我們以為自己比神更聰明。但神的道路總是高過我們的道路。信靠並信服神，我們就會得到祝福。一點都不複雜！神因著祂的信實不斷差派先知來提醒王。但是約阿施不聽。神給了他最後一次改過的機會。繼續閱讀第 20-22 節。撒迦利亞實際上是約阿施的表兄弟。約阿施非常討厭這個信息，他甚至殺死了那個信差。撒迦利亞將自己交託給神，知道神會為他伸冤。他的遺言是對王的嚴厲警告。約阿施離棄了神，回去敬拜偶像並殺死一名祭師。沒有多久，神就審判約阿施。接下來，我們將閱讀第 23-25 節。約阿施裡外受敵。亞蘭國這個長期的對手再次回來，這一次是由哈薛王領導。軍隊殺死了一些官員並搶劫城市。列王紀下 22 章的記錄告訴我們，約阿施為了取悅哈薛付出了高昂的代價。約阿施把先王流傳下來的財寶，以及皇宮和聖殿中所能找到的貴重物品通通給了亞蘭。花錢討好敵人從來都不是個好主意。他們會回來並要求更多！第 24 節說亞蘭輕而易舉便得勝。首都裡應該有很多精銳部隊來保護王和他的家人並聖殿。然而，一支小小的亞蘭軍隊就足夠了，因為神在幫助亞蘭。神用亞蘭作為管教約阿施的刑杖。約阿施在戰爭中受了傷。更糟糕的是，一些官員抓住機會殺死他，為撒迦利亞報仇。這位可憐的王慘淡收場。他甚至沒有得到皇家葬禮。聖經說神管教祂所愛的人。當我們不順服神時，也許神會用汽車故障、輕微的疾病或人際衝突來提醒我們。祂希望我們悔改並歸向祂。不要讓罪失控。神是滿有恩慈和耐心的。祂總是給我們機會回到祂的身邊。

CONCLUSION 結論

我們對神的信仰必須是個人的。神派了一位敬虔的導師去幫助約阿施。最終，約阿施必須做出決定，讓耶和華成為他的神。在耶何耶大的帶領下接受了多年的屬靈培育後，約阿施沒有任何理由放棄神。不論我們或我們的孩子在教會渡過了多少年，關鍵是我們必須承認耶穌是我們的主。與主建立個人關係使聖經的原則變得有意義。我們服從神，因為我們愛祂。這應該是甘心樂意並毫無保留的。結果將是神的祝福。