

## **Jehoahaz**

2 Kings 23:30-35

### **Slide 1**

Today we're going to begin a short series detailing the lives of the last three kings of Judah that ruled after Josiah died.

I say 3 kings and not 4 because I'm not including Zedekiah as he was not a true king, but a vassal king or a governor of Babylon.

After King David died, his son Solomon rose to power. Solomon grew the kingdom far beyond the borders of the promised land that God had given the nation of Israel.

During Solomon's reign, it encompassed most of modern Lebanon, some of Syria, Egypt all the way to the Nile River, and eastward to include what would be modern Jordan.

It was by far the largest known empire in the western world at that time.

After Solomon died, there was a civil war in his family with one of his sons taking over the northern area of the empire, and another taking the southern area.

The northern area became known as Israel but didn't have Jerusalem as part of its territory so its capital was placed in Samaria. The southern Kingdom, which included Jerusalem, became known as Judah.

Because of this split, the two nations had difficulties ruling over and defending their respective areas.

Eventually the northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria, and 120 years later the Southern Kingdom of Judah was conquered by Babylon.

When you study these two kingdoms, the first thing you'll notice is that all of Israel's kings were evil.

Now, there was a minor spark of religious zeal in Jehu, but it was self-serving. All the kings of Israel tolerated evil and idolatry up to and including child sacrifices.

But Judah's kings weren't too much better. They were a mixed bag. You'd have a decent King who would try to follow God, followed by three or four wicked kings.

With one exception, they all tolerated the high places. These were areas where people would worship other gods.

They might worship God on the Sabbath, but they would go to the "high places" during the week and worship idols.

The last good king, and probably the best king since David, was a man named Josiah. Josiah was only eight years old when he became king.

When he was eighteen, Josiah became concerned about the condition of the Temple and requested it be repaired.

As the temple was being upgraded, the workers stumbled across a copy of the Torah, which was their Bible.

The high priest informed Josiah's secretary about the find who immediately went to the king and read excerpts out of it to him.

When Josiah heard the Word of the Lord, he repented for his nation's actions and led a full nationwide revival.

He purged the entire land of any pagan influence like no other king had done before him. Josiah was unique in that even the high places were removed under his rule.

Josiah then went to meet the King of Egypt in battle where he was killed. We pick up the story in 2 Kings 23:30-35, *“Josiah’s servants brought his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in place of his father. Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother’s name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as his predecessors had done. Pharaoh Necho put him in chains at Riblah in the land of Hamath so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and he imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah and changed Eliakim’s name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz and carried him off to Egypt, and there he died. Jehoiakim paid Pharaoh Necho the silver and gold he demanded. In order to do so, he taxed the land and exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land according to their assessments.”*

There are several things that we can learn from the last three kings of Judah that directly apply to what has happened, and will continue to happen in our country today.

These messages may be a bit prophetic in that they will expose some of the spiritual truth that led us down this path.

Saying that, I want to make one thing very clear. In these messages, I’m not going to call out specific people.

If you're looking for me to criticize one political party over the other, you'll be disappointed.

I believe our current two-party system is simply two sides of the same evil coin and neither really have our best interests in heart.

I'm simply going to point out some of the same glaring truths in the people we see in the Bible after which you can apply them to the current people in power, or the people that have been in power for the last 20 years.

But I want you to first apply them to yourself. Think about this. We are really no different than the people who live in ancient Israel or Judah.

We attend church on Sunday, then go to our high places the rest of the week to worship at the altar of what this world has to offer in forms of entertainment, much of which is not God-honoring or God pleasing.

Jesus plainly taught us to remove the plank from our own eyes before we try to remove the speck in others.

Saying that, let's look at three things from the life of Jehoahaz that we can apply to our lives and to our world today.

## **Slide 2**

The first is that we should beware of the rapid promotion of unexperienced individuals over more seasoned or qualified people.

In other Scriptures, and in other extra Biblical texts such as the writings of Josephus, we learn that Jehoahaz was the youngest of the sons of Josiah.

In monarchy's, generally the oldest son would be the next in line but, for some reason, the people chose the younger son to be their king.

It could be because they thought the older sons were no good. We don't know. The Bible doesn't give a specific answer, but I suspect they chose Jehoahaz because he wasn't a religious man.

Josephus, the greatest of the Jewish historians, records in his book, *Antiquities of the Jews*, that "*Jehoahaz was impious who resented the reforms of his father.*"

It's possible that the people chose him because they wanted to go back to the old ways of following Baal and Asherah or at least allow the high places again.

If that's true, they chose the youngest son as he would be the most easily swayed.

There's a saying, "*Respect the gray hair.*" There's a lot of wisdom in that because you can only gain true wisdom through experience, and the young have no experience to temper the knowledge they think they know.

I have witnessed young children 6, 7, 8 years old cussing at their parents when they don't get what they want. Is it any wonder why the young people of today are the foot soldiers of the "woke revolution?"

Now, if you're in your late teens or early 20's listening to this, I'm not insulting your whole generation. I'm simply saying that experience matters. Logic and rational thinking matters.

People in power, whether that be in government or the media, purposefully play on your emotions. They don't want you to use your God given ability to reason.

They play the emotion card at the expense of your logic to keep you angry and afraid. People who are angry and afraid are easily manipulated.

Unfortunately, it's getting worse. It's on hyperdrive in our culture today, and it's tearing our country apart at the seams.

In his writings, Vladimir Lenin, the man who most directly formed the Soviet Union, spoke of young people as being useful idiots.

He said, *"Young people are at an age of being easily stirred into passionate action but lacking the wisdom to see the end result of the thing for which they're being stirred up."*

Lenin used that to form one of the vilest empires that ever existed. In fact, his successor, Joseph Stalin, killed 6 to 11 million of his own people.

He even coined the very cynical phrase, *"One death is a tragedy, a million is simply a statistic."*

To put that number, 6-11 million, in perspective, it would be like wiping out the entire population of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

God has a process for maturity. It's called time. Jehoahaz had older brothers, brothers that might have at least maintained Josiah's reforms, if not improved them.

But the people chose the one that would give them what they wanted, not what they needed.

They chose the leader with the least maturity to give them exactly that. The Bible says, *"Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands."*

It's directly referring to not placing a leadership mantle on the shoulders of a person until they have proven they have the character to wear that mantle, and that character is only formed through time.

We should remember that when we seek promotion. If you seek advancement for the wrong reasons, say for popularity, you fall into the trap of the enemy.

He'll use it to destroy not only you, but those you seek to lead, which leads us to our next point.

### **Slide 3**

We must beware of the favor of the world or chasing popularity.

We live in a very unique time in the history. A time in which a person can become famous for mastering the art of social media for their benefit.

Not for artistic or creative talent, but for their ability to promote themselves to the world.

You probably don't realize it, but three companies, Google, Facebook, and X, are driving the popular opinion of this country far more than any other media outlet. A distant second to those three companies is Fox News.

What this has done in our society is create a sickness called self-promotion. It's an endless pursuit of popularity. Popularity means more than character in most people's minds. Popularity means more than truth.

Popularity is the new currency that people use to gain influence. How many of you remember the story of the 3 little pigs?

There are three little pigs, and a big bad wolf wants to eat them. The pigs start building shelters to protect them from the wolf. One builds a shelter with straw, one uses twigs, and the final pig uses brick and stone.

The wolf then arrives and says little pig, little pig, let me in. The little pig replies, *“Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin.”*

The big bad wolf says, *“If you don’t open up, I’m going to huff and puff and blow your house down!”*

We all remember what happens next. The first two pigs get eaten because they trusted in straw and sticks to protect them, while the last pig survived because he used bricks and stones to build his house.

Pursuing popularity is the same thing as building your house with straw and sticks. The slightest breeze or bad weather will topple your house around you, and you’re left defenseless before a predator.

How many people in the last five years have been ruined when their fans turned on them.

Their entire livelihood stripped away because they lost their popularity when opinion shifted and blew down their houses.

The three little pigs’ story has a biblical source, too.

1 Corinthians 3:10b-14, *“But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.”*

So, I ask you, *“Is it more important to be popular, or be known as a person of character and honor?”*

Character is the cornerstone that builds a life that's not easily swayed or destroyed when bad times come. When you develop character, the big bad wolf, we call the devil, cannot simply blow your life apart.

A question often asked of pastors is, *"Are you preaching to the crowd, or to God?"* One will make you popular with the crowd, the other will reap eternal benefit in those people.

So, beware of trying to be popular. The same crowd that was praising Jesus and yelling Hosanna one week was the same crowd that screamed crucify Him a few days later. That's a sobering thought, isn't it?

#### **Slide 4**

##### Conclusion

The last thing I want to point out is that you should beware of compromising the faith that established you.

Psalm 11:1-3, *"In the Lord I take refuge. How then can you say to me: 'Flee like a bird to your mountain. For look, the wicked bend their bows; they set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart. When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?'"*

I want to focus on verse 3, the destruction of the foundations. One of the main reasons this country is in the same kind of turmoil that the last three kings of Judah faced is because of the systematic destruction of the foundation upon which it was built.

Our country was built on Christian principles, not Christian Nationalism. As we watch it crumble around us, we must realize that this is happening because that foundation upon which our country was built is being destroyed as we speak.

If there are things in your life that are crumbling right now, what foundation is under attack?

This should drive all of us to pray. Pray for our country, pray for our leaders, pray even for people in the opposite political party. Pray that Jesus would get ahold of their hearts.

The elections are coming up. I encourage you to exercise your freedom to vote. But even more so, I encourage you to exercise the incredible power God has given you and pray for the future of our country.

Because, regardless of who wins the election, if God is not for us, if we're not following HIM and HIS ways, everything will continue to worsen until we see the last days of this great nation.