

JEHOIADA AND JOASH ... or the tale of two funerals  
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(2 CHRONICLES 24: 15-25)

This is the strange account of two funerals, and a more suggestive story was never told. Within six months of each other, two bodies were carried to their last earthly resting place ; but casual onlookers would have been quite sure that the undertakers had ruined the funeral arrangements. In the first place, a humble priest was lifted from his unpretentious dwelling, and carried through crowded streets to be buried in the royal burial ground. " And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house (v. 16). Later that year another funeral left the royal palace, but this time the streets were empty except for a few morbid sightseers. The king had been brutally murdered, but everyone was glad. "They buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings " (2 Chron. 21:20). In common with one of his predecessors, "he departed without being desired." This suggests a story, for here we have an example of the New Testament text, "The last shall be first, and the first last."

#### A Star Appearing

Against the somber background of Israel's history, the coming of Joash seemed like the appearance of a new comet in the constellations of God. A strong-willed woman had ruthlessly planned the annihilation of the royal family, and only the fortitude of a brave priest had prevented the complete success of her schemings. A boy prince had been smuggled into the temple, and carefully guarded against the day of his coronation. The priest had been father, counsellor, guardian, and tutor to his young charge. " @d Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. But-" (2 Kings 12: 2, 3). When the faithful in Israel were beginning to despair, this dauntless prince ascended the throne of David, and immediately instituted reforms destined to transform a nation. Surely, the old priest was intensely proud of his royal scholar.

#### A Star Shining

" And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people; between the king also and the people. And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down" (2 Kings 11 : 17, 18). And from that day a new happiness came to the hearts of Israel ; the influence of the sanctuary reached every part of the nation, and the God-fearing king shone brilliantly in the national sky. Extensive repairs were carried out within the damaged temple, and the resurgence of spiritual life thrilled the heart of God. But-

#### A Star Slipping

It is tragic to see a wounded eagle, with its wings spread helplessly on the ground ; it is even more tragic to see one of God's instruments falling into sin and shame. When the aged priest died, the king began to ignore the word of God. Then the princes made obeisance before him, and the increasing popularity turned his head. When the Lord sent messengers to warn the sinful leaders, they refused to listen. " And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest," who stood before the people and warned them of coming judgment. The king, who had once been a

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foster-brother to this young man, listened and secretly issued  
orders for his execution. "And the people conspired against  
Zechariah, and stoned him with stones at the commandment  
of the king in the court of the house of the Lord. Thus Joash  
the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his  
father had done to him, but slew his son. And when  
Zechariah died, he said, The Lord look upon it, and require  
it."

#### A Star Crashing

When the new friends gathered around the king, their  
laughter made the utterances of the priest seem ancient and  
stupid. He shared their sinful gaiety. Yet it would have been  
better had a millstone been hanged about his neck, and he  
cast into the depths of the sea, rather than that he should  
fall into the hands of the living Clod. Within the brief space  
of six months avengers crept into the royal bedroom, and  
callously murdered him. The assassination probably delighted  
the nation. Joash had not only lost his friends, his possessions,  
his honor, and the respect of the nation-he had lost his  
soul. In the Great Assize he will be without excuse, for he  
had "known the Scriptures from his youth up."

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