

2 Kings 11 - Annals of Both Kingdoms: Athaliah's Evil Reign in Judah; Jehoiada Anointed King in Judah

II. The divided kingdom from the North-South division until the Assyrian invasion (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 17:41)

(17) Athaliah's reign in the South (11:1-21)

Athaliah's Evil Reign in Judah

Athaliah usurped the throne of Judah. She was not a descendant of David. She was one of Judah's 20 rulers, was Judah's only reigning queen and the strongest Baal advocate among Judah's rulers.

Summary: Athaliah

Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, grand-daughter of Omri, 6th king of Israel. In her childhood the political relations of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel had, after many years of strife, become friendly, and she was married to Jehoram, eldest son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (2 Kings 8:18). The marriage was one of political expediency, and is a blot on the memory of Jehoshaphat. It was a union (compare 1 Cor 15:33; 6:14-18) fatal to the cause of piety in Judah, a cause which the godly Jehoshaphat had so much at heart.

Athaliah as Queen

When Jehoram was 32 years of age, he succeeded to the throne, and Athaliah became queen of Judah. She inherited her mother's strength of will, and like her developed a fanatical devotion to the cult of the Zidonian Baal. Elijah's blow at the worship of Baal in Samaria shortly before her accession to power did nothing to mitigate her zeal. It probably intensified it. The first recorded act of Jehoram's reign is the murder of his six younger brothers; some princes of the realm, who were known to be favorable to the ancient faith of the nation, were also destroyed (2 Chr 21:4). There can be little doubt that these deeds of blood were supported, and perhaps instigated, by Athaliah, who was a much stronger character than her husband.

Murder of Her Grandchildren

After eight years of royal life, Athaliah became a widow, and her son, Ahaziah, then 22 years of age (2 Kings 8:26; not 42 as in 2 Chr 22:2), ascended his father's throne. As queen-mother, Athaliah was now supreme in the councils of the nation, as well as in the royal palace. Within a single year, the young king fell, and the only persons who stood between Athaliah and the throne were her grandchildren. It is in such moments that ambition, fired by fanaticism, sees its opportunity, and the massacre of the royal seed was determined.

The same bloodthirstiness, lust of dominion over husband and over the state, and unscrupulous wickedness in killing all that stood in the way of ambition, appear in the daughter as in the mother. When her son Ahaziah was slain by Jehu, along with the brethren of Ahaziah and their sons (42 men), she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah (2 Chr 22:10). As queen mother she was determined to keep the regal power which she exercised during Ahaziah's absence in Jezreel (2 Kings 9:16). The massacre of the royal seed was carried out: but one of them, Jehoash, a babe, escaped by the intervention of his aunt, Jehosheba (1 Kings 11:2; 2 Chr 22:11).

Her Usurpation

The palace being cleared of its royal occupants, Athaliah had herself proclaimed sovereign. No other woman, before or since, sat upon the throne of David, and it is a proof of her energy and ability that, in spite of her sex, she was able to keep it for six years. From 2 Chr 24:7 we gather that a portion of the temple of Yahweh was pulled down, and the material used in the structure of a temple of Baal.

The Counter-Revolution

The high priest at this time was Jehoiada, who had married the daughter of Athaliah, Jehosheba (2 Chr 22:11). His promotion to the primacy led to the undoing of the usurper, as Jehoiada proved staunchly, if secretly, true to the religion of Yahweh. For six years he and his wife concealed in their apartments, near the temple, Joash, the young child of Ahaziah. In the seventh year a counter-revolution was planned. The details are given with unusual fullness in both the Books of Kings and Chronicles, which supplement one another. Thus, when the Chronicler wrote, it had become safe to give the names of five captains who led the military rising (2 Chr 23:1). [It is interesting to review the entire Bible as drama in which Satan attempts to thwart the plan of God: the Nephilim of Genesis 6...to the slaughter of the babes in Bethlehem, et al. And, obviously, God always thwarts the Thwarter.]

Her Death

At the time of her deposition, Athaliah was resident in the royal palace. When roused to a sense of danger by the acclamations which greeted the coronation ceremony, she made an attempt to stay the revolt by rushing into the temple court, alone; her guards, according to Josephus, [*Antiquities*, IX, vii, 3.] having been prevented from following her. A glance sufficed. It revealed the lad standing on a raised platform before the temple, holding the Book of the Law in his hand, and with the crown upon his brow. Rending her robe and shouting, "Treason! Treason!" she fled. Some were for cutting her down as she did so, but this was objected to as defiling the temple with human blood. She was, therefore, allowed to reach the door of the palace in flight. Here she fell, smitten by the avenging guards. As she loved blood, blood was her own end; having lived as her mother, as her mother she died, slain at her own walls amidst the hoofs of the horses (compare Rev 16:5-6).

Athaliah's usurpation lasted for six years (2 Kings 11:3; 12:1; 2 Chr 22:12). Her first year synchronizes with the first of Jehu in Israel, and may be placed around 846 BC.

2 Kings 11

(17) Athaliah's reign in the South (11:1-21) (Cf. 2 Chr 22:10—23:11)

1 When **Athaliah** the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and eliminated all the royal children.

1 When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she rose and destroyed all the royal offspring.

1 As soon as Ahaziah's mother Athaliah learned that her son had died, she seized the throne¹ and executed the entire royal bloodline.

1 And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.

- "...Athaliah" - the mother of the Judean king Ahaziah, whom Jehu assassinated (9:27-29; 2 Chr 22:9) in 841 BC

— She was a daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and a sister of Ahaziah and Joram who had reigned successively in Israel after Ahab's death. She was the wife of King Jehoram of Judah who had died of an intestinal illness (2 Chr 21:18-19)

— Her other sons had all been killed by the raiding Philistines and Arabians (2 Chr 21:17), so she now saw the opportunity to seize the throne for herself. So she proceeded to have all her grandsons killed in total disregard for God's will that the descendants of David should rule over Judah forever (2 Sam 7:16).

This was one of the many attempts Satan made to exterminate the male offspring to make the coming One, the promised Savior, the seed of the woman, impossible. Had he

succeeded through Athaliah in the destruction of the royal seed of David, the promise made to David would have become impossible.

2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and abducted him from among the king's sons who were being put to death, *and put* him and his nurse in the bedroom. So they hid him from Athaliah, and he was not put to death.

2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and placed him and his nurse in the bedroom. So they hid him from Athaliah, and he was not put to death.

2 But King Joram's daughter Jehosheba, who was Ahaziah's sister, rescued³ Ahaziah's son Joash from the group of the king's sons who were being executed and hid him and his nurse in her bedroom, concealing him from Athaliah so he was not put to death.

2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain.

- Jehosheba, a daughter of Athaliah's husband King Jehoram (though perhaps not Athaliah's own daughter), was a sister of King Ahaziah of Judah

— She took one of Ahaziah's sons, Joash, and hid him so that he was not put to death with the other children (as Jochebed had hid Moses, Ex 2)

The Names Joash and Jehoash

Both names were used by the English translators to identify both the king of Judah and the king of Israel. For example, in the NASB20, the king of Judah is called Joash in 11:2; 12:19,20; 13:1,10; 14:1,3,17,23, and he is called Jehoash in 11:21; 12:1,2,4,6,7,18; 14:13,15,16. The king of Israel is called Joash in 13:1,12,13,14,25;14:1,27 and he is called Jehoash in 13:10,25; 14:8,9,11,13,15,16,17. In order to make identification simpler, the King of Judah is referred to as Joash, and the king of Israel as Jehoash in the notes.

3 So he was kept hidden with her in the house of the LORD for six years, while Athaliah was reigning over the land.

3 So he was hidden with her in the house of the LORD six years, while Athaliah was reigning over the land.

3 So Joash remained hidden with her in the LORD's Temple for six years while Athaliah reigned over the land.

3 And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.

- During Athaliah's six-year reign (841-835 BC) this aunt kept the prince safe by hiding him in the temple of the LORD where her husband, Jehoiada, served as high priest (2 Chr 22:11)

— Joash was a one-year-old when he was taken by Jehosheba because he was hidden for six years and then was made king at the age of seven (Cf. v21)

4 Now in the seventh year Jehoiada sent *orders* and brought the captains of hundreds of the Carites and of the guards, and brought them to himself at the house of the LORD. Then he made a covenant with them and put them under oath at the house of the LORD, and showed them the king's son.

4 Now in the seventh year Jehoiada sent and brought the captains of hundreds of the Carites and of the guard, and brought them to him in the house of the LORD. Then he made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the LORD, and showed them the king's son.

4 But during the seventh year of her reign, Jehoiada went out and called together the rulers of hundreds, the captains, and the guards, and assembled them together inside the LORD's Temple. He made a covenant with them, making them take an oath in the LORD's Temple, and then he revealed the king's son to them.

4 And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son.

- As Athaliah began the seventh year of her reign, Jehoiada the high priest assembled the military commanders at a certain level of authority (those commanding 100 soldiers each), the Carites (also called Cherethites [see comments on 2 Sam 8:18] and possibly Phoenician mercenaries who guarded the city), and the guards (lit., "runners," probably royal bodyguards) secretly in Solomon's temple.

— These were all loyalists who did not support the queen. He showed them little Joash, then seven years old (Cf. 2 Kings 11:21), to assure them that there was indeed a living legitimate heir to the throne.

5 And he commanded them, saying, "This is the thing that you shall do: a third of you, who come in on the Sabbath and keep watch over the king's house

5 He commanded them, saying, "This is the thing that you shall do: one third of you, who come in on the sabbath and keep watch over the king's house

5 He ordered them:

"Here's what we'll do: A third of you will enter here on this coming Sabbath dressed as guardians of the watch for the king's palace,

5 And he commanded them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house;

6 (a third also *shall be* at the gate Sur, and a third at the gate behind the guards), shall keep watch over the house for defense.

6 (one third also *shall be* at the gate Sur, and one third at the gate behind the guards), shall keep watch over the house for defense.

6 with a third of you at the Sur gate, and a third at the gate behind the guards. Keep watch over the palace and defend it.

6 And a third part shall be at the gate of Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down.

7 And two parts of you, all who go out on the Sabbath, shall also keep watch over the house of the LORD for the king.

7 Two parts of you, *even* all who go out on the sabbath, shall also keep watch over the house of the LORD for the king.

7 Two of you who enter here on this coming Sabbath are to stand watch at the LORD's Temple,

7 And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall keep the watch of the house of the LORD about the king.

8 Then you shall surround the king, each with his weapons in his hand; and whoever comes within the ranks shall be put to death. And you are to be with the king when he goes out and when he comes in."

8 Then you shall surround the king, each with his weapons in his hand; and whoever comes within the ranks shall be put to death. And be with the king when he goes out and when he comes in."

8 guarding the king and surrounding him with weapons in hand. Whoever comes within range is to be killed. Stay with the king wherever he goes, coming or going."

8 And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain: and be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in.

- The guards were to divide into three groups on the Sabbath, one group at the palace, another at the Sur Gate near the temple, and another group at the gate behind the guard through which opposition might come

— The others, who were going off duty, were to guard the temple

— A ceremony would take place at the changing of the guard on the Sabbath when the temple area would be busy, perhaps on a feast day

— The boy was to be fenced off by the soldiers and anyone who came near their ranks was to be killed. The soldiers were to guard Joash with their lives as he was conducted from the temple to his place of coronation in the temple courtyard.

9 So the captains of hundreds acted in accordance with everything that Jehoiada the priest commanded. And each one of them took his men who were to come in on the Sabbath, along with those who were to go out on the Sabbath, and they came to Jehoiada the priest.

9 So the captains of hundreds did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded. And each one of them took his men who were to come in on the sabbath, with those who were to go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

9 So the captains of hundreds did just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. Each one of them assembled his men who were to enter on the Sabbath, along with those who were to leave on the Sabbath, and approached Jehoiada the priest.

9 And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

10 Then the priest gave the captains of hundreds the spears and shields that *had been* King David's, which *were* in the house of the LORD.

10 The priest gave to the captains of hundreds the spears and shields that *had been* King David's, which *were* in the house of the LORD.

10 The priest issued King David's personal spears and shields that had been stored in the LORD's Temple to the captains of hundreds.

10 And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spears and shields, that were in the temple of the LORD.

11 The guards stood, each with his weapons in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, by the altar and by the house, around the king.

11 The guards stood each with his weapons in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, by the altar and by the house, around the king.

11 So the guards stood assembled, every soldier with weapons in hand, surrounding the king from the right side corner of the Temple to the left side corner, including around the altar and the Temple.

11 And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, along by the altar and the temple.

- Since the temple faced east, the guards evidently made a semicircular arc in front of the building from its northeast to its southeast corners, creating a shielded area in the temple courtyard where the anointing would take place

12 Then he brought the king's son out, and put the crown on him and *gave him* the testimony; and they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, "*Long live the king!*"

12 Then he brought the king's son out and put the crown on him and *gave him* the testimony; and they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, "*Long live the king!*"

12 Then he brought out the king's son, put the royal crown on him, presented him with the Testimony, and installed him as king. They anointed him, applauded, and said, "May the king live!"

12 And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

- Jehoiada then brought Joash out of the temple where he had been living into this protected area of the courtyard, placed the royal crown on his young head, presented him with a copy of "the testimony" (the Mosaic Law or a part of it, Deut 17:18-19), and proclaimed him king.

— At some time in the ceremony, probably near the beginning, the high priest also anointed Joash with oil, symbolizing enduement with divine power (Cf. 2 Kings 9:6)

— Undoubtedly Jehoiada had scheduled this coronation for a time when as many people as possible would witness it

— When the king had been crowned the people raised a roar of approval, clapped and shouted, God save the king!

13 When Athaliah heard the noise of the guards *and of* the people, she came to the people at the house of the LORD.

13 When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard *and of* the people, she came to the people in the house of the LORD.

13 When Athaliah heard all of the commotion coming from those who were guarding the people, she approached the people who were in the LORD's Temple.

13 And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the LORD.

- The first that Athaliah knew of Jehoiada's plan was when she heard the noise of the celebration. She went from her palace to the temple to find out what was happening.

14 And she looked, and behold, the king was standing by the pillar according to the custom, with the captains and the trumpeters beside the king; and all the people of the land were joyful and were blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and cried out, "Conspiracy! Conspiracy!"

14 She looked and behold, the king was standing by the pillar, according to the custom, with the captains and the trumpeters beside the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced and blew trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, "Treason! Treason!"

14 She looked around—and there was the king, standing near a column, as was the royal custom! He was accompanied by the commanding officers, along with trumpeters who stood beside the king. All the people of the land sounded trumpets in their excitement. But Athaliah tore her clothes and bellowed, "It's a plot! A conspiracy!"

14 And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, Treason.

- To her amazement, she saw little Joash (the king) with the royal crown on his head standing by the pillar at the eastern gate of the inner courtyard of the temple, the place the king customarily occupied when he addressed the people in the temple area (Cf. 2 Chr 23:13).

- An elevated platform was provided for the king to stand on when he visited the temple on festive occasions (Cf. 2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chr 6:13). This is where Joash stood.

— The queen immediately understood what was taking place, tore her robes signifying her great distress (Cf. 2 Kings 2:12; 5:7; 6:30), and cried, Treason! Treason!

15 And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of hundreds who were appointed over the army and said to them, "Bring her out between the ranks, and whoever follows her, put to death with the sword!" For the priest said, "She is not to be put to death at the house of the LORD."

15 And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of hundreds who were appointed over the army and said to them, "Bring her out between the ranks, and whoever follows her put to death with the sword." For the priest said, "Let her not be put to death in the house of the LORD."

15 Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains in charge of the army, "Take her out the back way and execute anybody who follows her," since the priest had also issued this order: "Let's not put her to death in the LORD's Temple."

15 But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges: and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD.

- What Jehoiada had done was not treasonous because Joash was a legitimate heir to the throne. Athaliah was not a legitimate heir since she was not a blood descendant of David.

She was the one guilty of treason.

— For this reason Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders to arrest her, to lead her out of the temple area under guard, and to kill anyone who tried to help her. It was not appropriate to execute anyone in the temple area since it was a place of worship (Cf. 2 Chr 24:20-22).

16 So they seized her, and when they brought her to the horses' entrance of the king's house, she was put to death there.

16 So they seized her, and when she arrived at the horses' entrance of the king's house, she was put to death there.

16 So they arrested Athaliah, took her out through the same entrance used by the horses for entering the king's palace, and executed her.

16 And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain.

- Athaliah was put to death with the sword at the place where the horses entered the palace grounds (the Horse Gate; Cf. 2 Chr 23:15, not the Horse Gate into the city). So ended the life of one of the most wicked women in Scripture, a true daughter of Jezebel.

17 Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD, the king, and the people, that they would be the LORD'S people, and between the king and the people.

17 Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they would be the LORD's people, also between the king and the people.

17 Then Jehoiada entered into a covenant with the LORD, the king, and the people, that they would live as the LORD's people, and also entered into a covenant with the king and the people.

17 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.

- Jehoiada led the people in a rededication of themselves to the LORD and His covenant given through Moses (Deut 4:20; 27:9-10) from which they had departed since the days of Jehoshaphat

— He also made a new covenant between the king and the people that the king would lead the people according to the Mosaic Law and the people would obey the king (Cf. 2 Sam 5:3)

18 And all the people of the land came to the house of Baal and tore it down; they thoroughly smashed his altars and his images in pieces, and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. Then the priest appointed sentries over the house of the LORD.

18 All the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces thoroughly, and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.

18 Then all of the people of the land entered Baal's temple, tore it down, and broke his altars and his images to pieces, killing Mattan the priest of Baal right in front of the altars. Furthermore, Jehoiada the priest appointed officers to guard the LORD's Temple,

18 And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.

- The people then tore down the temple of Baal that had been built in Jerusalem and used by Athaliah to promote Baal worship in Judah

- Just as Jezebel promoted Baal worship in Israel, her daughter Athaliah did in Judah.

During Athaliah's six-year reign (841-835 BC), Baalism gained its most secure foothold in Judah. However, it was never as prevalent in Judah as it was in Israel because of Judah's stronger commitment to *Yahweh*.

- They also destroyed the altars and idols which this temple contained, and killed Mattan the chief priest of Baal in front of the altars

- This showed deliberate disrespect for the pagan worshipers' false belief that the temple area was a sacred place of sanctuary

19 And he took the captains of hundreds and the Carites, and the guards and all the people of the land; and they brought the king down from the house of the LORD, and came by way of the gate of the guards to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

19 He took the captains of hundreds and the Carites and the guards and all the people of the land; and they brought the king down from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guards to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

19 and brought the commanders of hundreds, the Carites, the guards, and all the people of the land, taking the king out of the LORD's Temple, marching through the guard's gate to the king's palace, where Joash took his seat on the throne of the kings.

19 And he took the rulers over hundreds, and the captains, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

- To avoid recriminations by the devotees of Baal, Jehoiada posted guards at Solomon's temple

- At the end of the coronation ceremonies the people led by Jehoiada and his guards conducted the new king to his palace where he sat down on his throne

20 So all the people of the land rejoiced and the city was peaceful. For they had put Athaliah to death with the sword at the king's house.

20 So all the people of the land rejoiced and the city was quiet. For they had put Athaliah to death with the sword at the king's house.

20 After this, everyone throughout the land rejoiced and the city was at peace, because they had executed Athaliah at the king's palace.

20 And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet: and they slew Athaliah with the sword beside the king's house.

- The people of Judah as a whole rejoiced greatly that once again a descendant of David ruled and that the worship of *Yahweh* was again made official

— The turmoil that had existed in Jerusalem during Athaliah's reign subsided and the city was quiet once again — For more details on the reign of Athaliah, see 2 Chr 22:10-23:15

21 Jehoash was seven years old when he became king.

21 Jehoash was seven years old when he became king.

21 Jehoash began to reign as king when he was seven years old,

21 Seven years old was Jehoash when he began to reign.