

A Woman on David's Throne

Among the many events divinely recorded in the history of Israel, one of the most remarkable is the interregnum of Athaliah-her usurpation, reign, and destruction-with the consequent restoration of the house of David. It is unique, no such circumstance occurring before or after.

The historian informs us (2 Kgs. 11:3) that "*Athaliah did reign over the land*"; and we are impressed at once by the spectacle-a *woman* sitting on the throne of David! And such a woman! No daughter of Sarah, but a Canaanitish idolater; a concretion of all that is detestable and abominable in the sight of the Deity reigning in Zion enthroned in Jerusalem.

Hath not Jehovah covenanted with David that he should never want a *man* to sit on his throne? Our faith is shaken for a moment, and we ask what were the circumstances producing this phenomenon.

In order to obtain a right understanding of this revolution in Israel we must go back in its history, trace out its origin and development. The *causes of things* are often more important to know than the things themselves in matters where learning and instruction are to be obtained.

While the event itself may impress us greatly, it furnishes no teaching-nothing observable to avoid, or to follow. It is to the causes we must direct our attention; results cannot be avoided, they are inevitable.

Who was Athaliah? Where did she come from? And how came she to be Queen of Judah? She was wife to Jehoram, King of Judah; daughter of Ahab, King of Israel. Jehoram was son of, and successor to Jehoshaphat, late King of Judah.

The characters of these two kings-fathers respectively of Athaliah and her husband-and their relationship to each other, must first engage our attention. From this we shall be able to ascertain how so disastrous a state obtained in Zion.

Jehoshaphat and Ahab were contemporaneous kings in Judah and Israel. Unlike many of the former kings, they were on very friendly terms. "*After certain years,*" Jehoshaphat paid a visit to Ahab in Samaria; the latter made a great feast and received him royally. Ramoth Gilead at this time had been taken from Israel by Syria; Ahab seizing the opportunity, invites Jehoshaphat's help-

"I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses,"

replies Jehoshaphat; thus placing his whole resources at Ahab's disposal (1 Kgs. 22:4). The opposite characters of these men would incline us to the conclusion that Jehoshaphat would not have joined hands with so notorious an evildoer as Ahab: the one was undoubtedly a good man, the other, a bad one.

These terms are but relative and convey nothing: goodness or badness must be considered by that to which it stands related. In the present case it is the Word of Deity; we have then to search the Scriptures to know what made them so. Of Jehoshaphat it is recorded in 2 Chronicles 17:3-10-

“And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the way of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim . . . therefore the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand . . . and he had riches and honor in abundance . . .”

“In the third year of his reign he sent princes, Levites, and priests to teach in the cities of Judah . . . and they had the Book of the Law with them . . . and taught the people.”

“And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms round about so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.”

In chapter 19:5-9, it is written-

“And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, and said, Take heed what ye do for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord who is with you in the judgment . . .”

“Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; . . . thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully and with a perfect heart.”

This is a character pleasant to contemplate, resulting in great blessings not only to the king, but the subjects also. The Lord was with him, and the land had peace-

“When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule the people mourn” (Prov. 29:2).

The people of Judah were enjoying the blessings consequent upon a righteous reign.

For twenty-five years this continued, a sufficient time for the whole land to be well established according to the righteousness of their king; for we have this record at his death, that-

“He departed not from doing what was right in the sight of the Lord” (2 Chr. 20:32).

From such a record as this we expect to find a righteous continuance in the son and successor. We cannot admit that so excellent a king, so diligent in teaching his people the ways of the Lord God of Israel, and in abolishing idolatry out of the land, could have been a less excellent father, neglecting his own children, not bringing them up in the fear of the Lord.

Instead, however, of this happy condition continuing, *an era of bloodshed and idolatry immediately commences*, the outcome of which is the spectacle presented to us of *a woman ruling Judah*, a worshipper of Baal established in Zion.

Although we have so admirable a character in Jehoshaphat, we can nevertheless trace to him the origin of this great evil. We find him lacking in that principle so characteristic of the prophets and all God’s children in times past, namely-that stern contention for the truth shown in Phinehas.

Though so zealous in repressing idolatry and teaching his own people the law of the Lord, yet *we find him fast friends with one of whom it is written that he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him!*

It is through this ill-advised friendliness, a yielding to that good natured but deceitful and destructive sentiment that makes friends with the world where purity is sacrificed for peace. This was the “cause” that produced the unhappy result we are considering.

“The law of the wise is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death” (Prov. 13:14).

“When the King sitteth upon the throne of his Kingdom, he shall write him a copy of this law, and he shall read therein all the days of his life” (Deut.17:18-19).

It was written in this Law (Deut. 13:12-18)-

“If thou shalt hear in one of thy cities that . . . men have withdrawn the inhabitants, saying, Let us go and serve other gods . . . behold, if it be true . . . thou shalt smite the inhabitants of that city destroying it utterly.”

This was the Word of the Lord that Jehoshaphat should have executed upon the house of Ahab. He failed to do so. On the contrary, he is fast friends with him, helps him personally to fight his battles, providing him with war material, and finally consummates his folly by joining affinity in marriage, and Athaliah becomes wife to his son Jehoram, heir to the throne of the Lord in the land of the house of David.

How different the testimony to Ahab’s character recorded in 1 Kings 16:25-33.

“And Ahab made a grove and did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him” (v. 33).

This is what we should expect from a son of such a father, for Omri, Ahab’s father-

“. . . wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him” (1 Kgs. 16:25).

But how much more are the evil conditions intensified when we consider the wife of Ahab.

“And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal King of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him” (1 Kgs. 16:31).

A fit wife for such a king-her unrelenting hatred of God’s people and sanguinary character appears in her efforts to exterminate them. Faithful Obadiah took one hundred of them and hid them in a cave. Eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal did eat at her table; these were all destroyed by Elijah, who fled to Horeb from her vengeance.

The murder of Naboth is the culminating act in her career; a righteous man charged with blaspheming God and the King, stoned to rob him of the inheritance the Lord had given him.

But, *“Vengeance is mine, I will repay,”* saith the Lord, the terrible message comes (1Kgs. 21:19)-

“Thus saith the Lord, in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood.”

And of Jezebel, God declares (v. 23)-

“The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.”

Not only themselves, but all Ahab’s posterity were doomed to extermination-

“Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field the fowls of the air shall eat, and I will take away thy posterity” (1 Kgs. 21:24).

However bad Ahab might have been, he was influenced to still greater crime by his execrable partner-

“There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up” (v. 25).

The good Jehoshaphat, had he exterminated this brood of vipers, would have done great good to Israel, adding lustre to his name. They were at least to be avoided as a pestilence.

We can reasonably expect an upright son from Jehoshaphat, but what manner of offspring can we look for from such a stock as Jezebel and Ahab?

“That which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned” (Heb. 6:8).

Knowing the readiness with which human nature absorbs all things contrary to the mind of Deity, and the vile nature of the worship of Baal so agreeable to that flesh by which it is devised, we may expect a reproduction in the children, or probably something still worse.

Such was the family with whom Jehoshaphat made affinity; from such a stock did he select a wife for his son who was to succeed him on the throne of the Lord.

“Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem” (2 Chr. 21:5).

His marriage with Athaliah must have taken place at a very early age, his youngest son, who succeeded him, being twenty-two (2 Kgs. 8:26) when he began to reign.

It is necessary to note this in order to account for the great difference between the character of Jehoram and that of his father. Immediately the latter died, we look for the uprightness of the father in the son with a faithful adherence to the law of the Lord, having been in his early days brought up in that fear which is the beginning of wisdom-but we find it not; the days of peace and prosperity ended with Jehoshaphat. No longer could Judah rejoice in the blessing God gave through a righteous reign.

The direct operation of Deity for good or evil is the spirit of these records of His people. How could they be His people apart from this? Thus it is that their history is equally for God as the doer, and of Israel as the instrument. The divine character of the events recorded is imprinted upon the text recording them in the rigid, concise, yet all-embracing style.

In the histories we have a mass of facts, with little or no comment capable of indefinite expansion, this makes their study so interesting and absorbing, things new and old continually arising from this storehouse of the Spirit.

“Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and . . . when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel” (2 Chr. 21:1-4).

What an appalling introduction is this to the new King of Judah! Though a son brought up in the way he should go, of what advantage was it when a serpent was placed in his bosom?

This sanguinary character would not be hereditary from his father; we look to the other side and we see the leaven of Jezebel working the old animus. Those “princes of Israel” slain by Jehoram were not men according to his murderous heart, otherwise they would not have been slain. There was a wholesale clearing away of those obstacles to the purpose he ultimately attained.

The revolution that has now taken place in Judah makes the prospect for the future dark for the Lord’s people. The probable reason for exterminating his brethren was to obtain “*the gold, silver, and fenced cities*” Jehoshaphat had given them, and this seems the reason for its being recorded. No doubt such gifts were not uncommon, though unrecorded, in the history of other kings.

The act shows its author; the Jezebel instinct in murdering Naboth for his possession finds its expression in Athaliah’s moving her husband to do likewise. Again, these “*brethren and princes*” would be faithful men, worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Whatever Jehoram’s disposition was, we are sure his wife, as a worshipper of Baal, was filled with all the deadly hatred that Jezebel exhibited against the people of the Lord. Having the power now in her hands in the authority she exercised over the king, we see it at once taking effect when Jehoram reigns.

That the influence of the wife was over the husband, and was the cause of these evils, it is so written-

“He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: FOR he had the daughter of Ahab to wife” (2 Chr. 21:6).

The inspired writer sets it down as a natural conclusion. The peace and prosperity of the former reign soon ended, and as God had then given them rest round about, so now wars and troubles are the fruit of unrighteousness. Edom revolted, and Libnah also “unto this day,” because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers and compelled Judah to sin-

“Moreover the Lord stirred up the Philistines and Arabians and they carried away all the substance that was found in the king’s house, sons and wives, so there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz his youngest son” (vs. 16-17).

A writing from Elijah is sent to him; an awful message soon fulfilled; and after all this the Lord smote him-

“... with an incurable disease . . . and after two years his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness, so he died . . . and his people made no burning for him . . . He reigned eight years and departed without being desired; and was not buried in the sepulchre of the kings” (vs. 18-20).

No language can describe the horror of such a death, the merited reward of an iniquitous life; an example of the apostolic teaching that the Lord is not mocked, and that he that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption.

Had the commandments of Moses been observed, no such cause would have been possible. Strange marriages constituted the fruitful source of idolatry in Jacob, which ultimately enveloped them in the darkness that altogether obscured for them *“the Light that came into the world.”* Jehoram’s fatal marriage was the cause of all.

By the death of Jehoram, Athaliah is left a widow; the throne vacant by her husband’s death is filled by his youngest son, the only one who escaped death at the hands of the “band that came with the Arabians.” We recognize the hand of Jehovah in thus preserving one of the house of David to fulfil God’s promise to him.

“And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah king” (22:1).

The unhappy state of Judah, the miseries arising from the foreign invasions of the Philistines and Arabians, the wars undertaken against Edom and Libnah, with the evils within that would follow upon the suppression of the temple service, and the undoing of the good Jehoshaphat had brought to pass this unhappy state of affairs which would not cease from the accession of a son coming from such a stock.

The tree-bad in Ahab and Jezebel-was made far worse in Jehoram and Athaliah; the fruit of such an union proves worthy of the tree equally corrupt with its bearers. *“Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?”* Let history answer. Ahaziah, son of Athaliah, grandson of Jezebel, reigned one year-

“He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: FOR his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the Lord like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction” (2 Chr. 22:3-4).

The friendliness commenced with Jehoshaphat towards Ahab would naturally increase after the two families had inter-married. Thus we find Ahaziah repeating his grandfather’s action in helping Ahab; he joins with his uncle Joram, Ahab’s son, in battle against the Assyrians at Ramoth-Gilead.

Ahaziah’s death is brought about specially by this alliance (2 Chr. 22:7)-

“And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Joram against Jehu the son of Nimshi whom the Lord had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab.”

Thus was the eighth son of the house of David slain, destroyed by the sword of God in the hand of Jehu; and again is the throne of Judah vacant. We look now for a son of Ahaziah to succeed, as had been the case with all former kings, for Ahaziah had many sons. But no, there is now to be a new thing in the earth as concerning the rulers in Judah.

The opportunity has at last presented itself; the throne is within her grasp, and Athaliah's ambition is satisfied.

“Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem” (2 Kgs. 8:26).

He was therefore but twenty-three years old at his death; the children were young and tender, and at least had claims on the natural affection of Athaliah-her own flesh and blood, her own grandchildren.

But natural affection under the teaching of Baal had no proper place: its devotees were like brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed. A ritual that made prostitution a religious obligation would be utterly incapable of producing either a moral character or developing those finer sentiments so abounding in the Law of Moses and teaching of Christ.

These filthy abominations were practiced in the very House of the Lord itself-in that glorious temple built for His worship and service. So utterly degenerate had Israel become that Baal was established in Zion and Jehovah forgotten (2 Kgs. 23:4).

We readily understand the hatred such practices would engender in the human mind against those things written in that Book which the kings of Israel were commanded to study. To Athaliah it would be an intolerable burden, grievous indeed, and in like measure to those priests of Baal abounding in Jerusalem.

No such opportunity for serving Baal in Judah had before been possible. Now was the golden chance-the pinnacle of fame to be reached-High Priestess of Baal and Queen of Judah! With terrible brevity the sacred historian records it-

“When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw her son was dead, she arose and DESTROYED ALL THE SEED ROYAL OF THE HOUSE OF JUDAH” (2 Chr. 22:10).

The murderous hostility of the mother against the priests of God, finds its counterpart in the daughter. True to the family instinct Athaliah stops short at no crime that serves her ambition and animosity. Void of all that is admirable and lovely in woman, the innocent children are ruthlessly slaughtered- her intention being to exterminate the house of David-and

“ATHALIAH REIGNED OVER THE LAND.”

In our consideration of these things we are enabled somewhat to realize the words of Peter and to account the longsuffering of God as salvation-for what had been the condition of

things in Zion during the few years since the advent of Jezebel?-a king rises who murders his brothers and sets up the abomination of the Zidonians in Jerusalem; wars commence with the Gentiles round about who plunder Jerusalem itself; the king's sons all slain save one; the king himself, smitten by God with a horrible distemper which consumed him, dies uncared for; the son who succeeds, and in like manner follows the evil ways, is also smitten by God after a brief reign of one year.

Probably the children of Ahaziah were no better, and their murder was no more than a *clearing away of the serpent-seed* so strongly developed in Judah, and filling up the iniquity of Athaliah to the full before the judgments of Jehovah come upon her as upon the Amorite of old.

Athaliah, by killing her grandchildren, helps, with her own hand, to execute the judgment upon the house of Ahab and Jezebel then being so thoroughly performed in Israel by Jehu her own son, the late king, having been slain by that valiant man.

Doubtless had Athaliah lived in Israel she also would have suffered at the hand of Jehu; for surely no such pernicious offspring of Ahab would have been spared. The events then occurrent in Israel, the killing of all her own kindred, and the extinction of Baal so energetically carried out by Jehu would have a great effect upon such a woman urged on, as she no doubt was, by the priests of Baal in Judah, who would be anxious both for their own safety and that of Baal.

Athaliah herself would also be involved in the ruin that would ensue did Jehu extend his operations to Jerusalem. In this way did the Jezebel-leaven work its own destruction by her own daughter; there had been a general clearing out, with but one more left of this accursed family who had killed the children of God and stamped out the truth to the best of their ability; and this solitary one is Athaliah herself.

By her counsel prevailing with her husband to kill all his brethren, and by her own hand slaying the remnant, she exists the last representative of a house accursed of God-murderers of the prophets-destroyers of God's people-doomed to extinction: an imperious, sanguinary, ambitious woman that hated Jehovah of Israel-inheritress of all that Ahab and Jezebel could leave, and where do we now find her? *Seated on the throne of the Lord at Jerusalem*-in that place concerning which the Lord said (Psa. 132:14)-

"Here will I dwell, for I have desired it."

Has the Lord forgotten His promise? Has His love for Zion ceased? Is it not written that the Lord-

"Loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Psa. 87:2).

What a severe trial of faith this darkness in Judah must have been to the few faithful! The promise to David apparently a delusion-and Baal supreme! For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the House of God, and also all the dedicated things of the House of the Lord did they bestow upon Baalim.

No more hopeless picture could be presented to those believers in the sure mercies of David. David's sun had apparently set. They no longer rejoiced in their appointed feasts; no morning and evening offering was made to the Mighty One of Jacob; darkness was over the land.

Having comprehended the purpose of God involved in this kingdom, it is of absorbing interest to know all things concerning it-past, present, or future-and if we admit that God has a purpose with it, we thereby make a connection between past and future.

If this purpose were not fulfilled during the past existence of the kingdom, it follows that its past is a certainty of its future; it indicates it, prefigures it, and becomes a type of it. Having a prophetic character, its history is mixed with prophecy, and supplies us with information relative to the greater future.

The times of David and Solomon are eminently typical, shadows of good things to come to be fulfilled in David's greater son; and shall we say that these two kings *alone* are of a typical character and all the *subsequent* history affords no information of the future?

We think that *many* of them have this character. It may be said they are undesigned coincidences; but it is not human history we are considering, it is divine.

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings to search out a matter" (Prov. 25:2).

We apply this scriptural principle to Israel's history, and its truth is evidenced. With this view interest is heightened, the past is but a reflector, throwing the light far ahead to the future. We look for a time when these things, realities though they were, will be finally consummated "in that day" when the events of which these were shadows will be fulfilled. They form part of those "*things written aforetime*," that through them we might obtain patience, comfort, and hope.

It is from this aspect of *historic prefigurement* that we are considering the position of Israel's history from Jehoshaphat to Joash.

Continuing our history of Athaliah-we left her reigning and ruling Queen in Jerusalem. *Where was God's kingdom?* The people truly were there, as was the land, but kingdom there was not. The name of Jehovah-regally and ecclesiastically-was no longer in Zion. Neither-as was supposed by Athaliah and the Baalites-was there *any representative of David's line living to trouble them*.

The worship was to Baal; the ruler, a Canaanite; and the authority of Deity usurped by a woman. This is the condition of things today; God has no kingdom on earth. His power and authority are usurped by a "woman" who has climbed to this high position as Athaliah did, through blood.

In teaching us things spiritual from things natural, the Spirit employs one or more persons or things, as the case requires, to typify but one antitype. The many things Mosaic all converge upon one antitype-Christ.

So also in establishing the kingdom; two kings are required-David and Solomon-they are the two halves of a perfect whole; what is foreshown in the one could not be in the other. Yet they are both one in Christ, *the man of war and the prince of peace*.

As two men-though representing-one are the instruments in setting up the kingdom, so also two *women* are instrumental in setting up an idolatrous apostasy in the very seat of God on David's throne, casting the truth to the ground and prospering.

Athaliah completes the half-type of Jezebel as Solomon did that of David; and we consider the two as one, in the result of their operations. Athaliah's birthright is the curse pronounced upon her father and mother; *it is her inheritance and will overtake her at the right time*.

The diversity in operation-though one in spirit-seen in the mother and daughter, is that their operations are respectively against the two great "estates" of the kingdom-kingly and priestly. Jezebel perpetrates her animosity against the prophets and the Lord's people, and the saints in Israel. The land was hunted for them. They were hid in caves from her ferocity.

An easy solution of their difficulties would have been to serve Baal and receive his mark; but they were faithful and true. They were specially preserved by Jehovah who had reserved to Himself seven thousand that had not kissed Baal. *So completely was the Lord's people suppressed that Elijah thought himself the last one left*.

Though Jezebel could thus operate against the prophets, she was powerless against the royal line. Not so with Athaliah; having by marriage got among the seed of David, it required but the opportunity to strike a blow at the royal line; with the result already seen. Here then we have a political and ecclesiastical, idolatrous, sanguinary power, doomed to extermination, usurping the highest position on earth; to which she has no shadow of a claim; and obtained through the blood of God's saints and princes.

We have no difficulty in pointing out the living fulfilment of this prophetic personage and power. She calls herself a woman and a mother, thus indicating her own identity. The Spirit has branded her with the name of her infamous type "*that woman Jezebel that calleth herself a prophetess*."

There she sits usurping the authority of God upon earth, claiming both regal and ecclesiastical authority over all men, sitting as a God, claiming to be possessor of the attributes of God, with no more right to her exalted position than had Athaliah. The high authority of king and priest belonging to the Prince of the House of David has been usurped by her, and the right of Christ to this position in the earth is consequently unknown by her followers.

She has attained to this position through the same means employed by her forerunner, scarlet with the same blood, the blood of priests and princes of Deity; for they are a royal priesthood hated by her. These faithful ones, who protested against both her abominable practices and right to authority, were put to death; their extermination was necessary in order that the throne be hers.

Thus has she attempted to destroy all the "seed royal." Not only has the seed of the kingdom been the object of her hatred and destruction, but also the "*incorruptible seed, the Word of Truth*." As in Athaliah we had a Gentile usurper downtreading the Holy City, so again is

there a downtreading by a Gentile persecuting power, which can be identified in this same second Jezebel. The resemblance is continued in the time allotted; they are both limited to prophetic periods, both are alike doomed to the same end.

The description of the latter-day Athaliah is also equally applicable to the former. We see them seated on their thrones arrayed in purple and scarlet, drunken with the blood of saints and martyrs, and of their own children; drunk also with pride (Rev. 18:7)-

“I sit a queen and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow, she saith in her heart. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day-death and mourning and famine-and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her.”

Although the King of Israel who sitteth in the heavens had thus given over His city to a Gentile downtreading, yet had He not forgotten Zion or the covenant made with David. Should a Gentile woman be the means of breaking it by destroying the line royal and usurping the Throne? No; God will realize His plan. Jehosheba, sister to the late king, took his infant son-

“. . . and stole him from among the kings sons that were slain, and they hid him and his nurse in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain, and he was with her hid in the house of the Lord six years” (2ÊKgs.Ê11:2-3).

Here was a seed secretly and surely preserved by God in His house for the purpose of bursting forth at the appointed time and consuming the idolatrous usurper.

So will it be with the latter-day fulfiller. Power has been given into her hands for a set time to tread down the truth and usurp the office of Christ. During the time of her oppressing, a seed has been developing *unknown to her and her Baalite daughters*.

The members of that seed are not only in the Temple of God, but *are* the Temple. There can be no more connection between this Temple and “Jezebel” than there could have been between Athaliah and Jehoiada, the High Priest; for the Spirit saith to them (2 Cor. 6:16)-

“Ye are the Temple of the living God, and what agreement hath the Temple of God with idols?”

These have been specially prepared by that Word of Truth she has striven to destroy; these whom she thinks she has destroyed are alive to Him; they live under the altar crying day and night against her for the blood she has slain, and to them are entrusted the execution of the “judgments written.”

The Gentiles’ dogs also shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh even as the Samaritan dogs ate the flesh of her predecessor under the walls of Jezreel.

The infant prince thus divinely preserved may be regarded as a *new seed in the earth*. His aunt, who had stolen him, was wife to the High Priest Jehoiada. Apparently his existence was kept secret from all others, probably through the state of things in Jerusalem.

The house of the Lord being broken up, and Baal supreme, the priest and his family doubtless lived very secluded lives, and their attention would be devoted to nourishing the young seed, the hope of Israel, at that time, with the good words of truth.

Thus, in secret, the work of preparation went on during the hidden period; though surrounded by Baal, the work went surely on. So with the seed-growing during the career of the second Athaliah. Surrounded by Baal, they are nevertheless *under the care of their High Priest*; his counsel and instruction they hear daily. Unheeded by those around, they are silently going on to perfection, and it will be their duty to pull down the scarlet woman, preparatory to raising again the Tabernacle of David in the holy place.

As there was a perfect number, seven thousand, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, whose existence was unknown, even to Elijah; and who had escaped the vengeance of Jezebel; so again are there those who have not received the mark of modern Baal on their hands or foreheads, who are known of God and reserved by Him, as were their brethren of old.

In the new seed, Jehoash, we recognize a strong prefigurement of Christ as the seed hid in the Temple; not the Temple made with hands, but the "*Most Holy Place*," heaven itself; the hope of Israel, on whom alone depends the hope of his people to destroy the idol-worshipping system of iniquity. With the spirit of his mouth and the brightness of his coming will he do this.

When this hidden seed is manifested to the world in order to accomplish this appointed work, then will those who are to share in the honor be revealed, for their lives are hid with him in God.

In the preserver of the young prince, we have an interesting instance of a Scripture name signifying some special aspect or character relative to God's purposes. Thus, Jesus, *Saviour*; David, *Beloved*; Solomon, *Peaceable*, etc.

In the present case, the Lord having sworn to David an everlasting succession, His oath was for the moment (humanly speaking) in danger of being thwarted by Athaliah's purpose to destroy "*all the seed royal*."

The saving of the infant is evidence of God's remembrance of His oath; this is expressed in the preserver's name, viz., Jehoshabeath, *Whose oath is Jehovah*. She becomes its embodiment for the time being in the high honor she had in upholding it.

In the *seventh year*, God remembered His oath to David, and once again interfered for His Name's sake. The time had come for iniquity to have an end and His righteousness to be re-established. A terrible retribution was in store for the down-treaders of the Holy Place. The faithful High Priest commenced his operations secretly and surely-

"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 showed them the King's son" (2 Kgs. 11:4).

These were men upon whom Jehoiada could rely; that they were faithful is evident by their subsequent actions; truly their hearts must have rejoiced at the revelation made to them

that David yet had a son to sit on his throne, that the Lord had not deserted them, and that the time had come to sweep away the desolating abomination from the Sanctuary.

A secret compact is entered into-a covenant made by oath to which they solemnly subscribe. Two things are necessarily involved in this, viz., *the pulling down of the one, and the restoration of the other.*

Here we have the constitution of a little kingdom-a king, priest, rulers, and captains-banded together, unknown to the usurper. Its organization, the work it had to do, with the allotments of their various parts, are given in the subsequent portion of the chapter. They did all Jehoiada commanded.

What an honor for those who “*compassed the king about*”! The hope of Israel under their charge! The captains who were thus selected by Jehoiada, called and chosen and faithful, were armed in a manner not to be passed by (v. 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.”

As captains of the guard, they must reasonably have been armed with their ordinary weapon, but this seems some special arming. Their shields and spears are holy, having been sanctified in the House of the Lord. The cause was a righteous one, therefore the Lord opened His armory and brought forth the weapons of His indignation; these shields of faith and swords of the spirit are invulnerable.

In the creation of this little kingdom, can we not see the figure of the future-when he whose right it is shall have gathered his warriors together, and clothed them with invulnerable armor, to sweep away the impostor whose right it is *not* to be the representative of Jehovah upon earth, and whose idolatry has covered with thick darkness the words of Deity? The arrangements completed, the coronation takes place-

“He brought forth the king’s son and put the crown upon him, and they made him king and clapped their hands and shouted, God save the king!” (v. 12).

The shouting and rejoicing is taken up by all the people, for the king has come suddenly to his temple; Athaliah hears the tumult, and, rushing in, she sees at a glance the whole position. There stood the priest of Israel’s God, and there was His representative, the youthful Jehoash; there stood the temple guard, and the shouts of the people, with the sounds of the trumpets as of old, making Jerusalem rejoice again.

She cries, “Treason! Treason!” and rends her clothes. There is something grimly humorous in this cry, remembering the path this woman had trod to attain her position-murdering the rightful heirs, and defying Jehovah by setting up Baal in His sanctuary; *and SHE cries, “Treason!”*

We have heard this cry in these latter days; the wailings and vain thunderings-unheeded by the spoilers who inaugurated the work-proceed from the modern woman, who has cried, and still cries, Treason! As with her sister of old, these cries were but the signs of her approaching end, so are they now. In either case sins have reached to heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

The House of the Lord was not to be defiled by the blood of such a creature; *“Have her forth without the ranges”*; away with her to an unclean place. Not only herself, but all who followed her out were to be slain-

“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” (v. 16).

Her calamities came in one day, and Jehovah remembered the blood of the innocents, His seed, and the word He had given through Moses, His truth. Having dispatched the head and fountain of all uncleanness, a most important transaction follows, namely-a covenant, not with the captains and rulers; but, between-

“Jehovah, the king, and the people, that they should be the Lord’s people” (v. 17).

This covenant involved the restoration of the truth; yet to be repeated when the people will again rejoice in the truth, confessing that they had inherited lies and things of no profit. Having made this priestly covenant through Jehoiada, yet another is made between the king only and the people: the political-or regal.

The two covenants combined declare the acceptance by the people of a new royal and ecclesiastical constitution in the room of those destroyed. Can we not discern here a foreshadowing of the new covenant to be made with Israel when they will rejoice at the truth then impossible to be disbelieved by reason of *their king being shown them*; when the Lord will write His laws upon their minds and hearts and remember their iniquities no more?

Having slain the queen and once again become the Lord’s people, they give evidence of the nature of the covenants in their subsequent actions. They could not be the Lord’s people and Baal’s-

“. . . and all the people of the land went into the house of Baal and break it down, his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal” (v. 18).

What an example we have had presented to us of the result of marrying out of the Truth! Whatever good intentions there were at the time of the union, the facts before us are that the unbelieving wife ate the Truth out of the “believing” husband.

No such result could have been anticipated by Jehoshaphat. These things are written for our instruction; if we blind our eyes to the plain conclusions of such a history as Athaliah’s, on our own heads be it.

Although we have a history which is in itself dark and sanguinary, we can recognize that which is a comfort to us; we see that the providence of God overrules all. *“Thus far, and no farther, shalt thou go,”* was the divine determination; while things on the surface seemed dark and cheerless.

Yet concurrent with the permitted evil was there the preparation proceeding for the deliverance. The preparation period for the manifestation of the King of Israel is again at hand. He will come again like Jehoash, not to all the world, but first he will be shown secretly to a few, the faithful.

These, brought from their graves, will-with the living-enter into a covenant with him as King and Priest; they will then be armed with the holy weapons, invulnerable in person, in righteousness perfect. With their king they will proceed to the accomplishment of the work before them-the destruction of the Roman Athaliah and the Temples of Baal, even more “thoroughly” than of old.

“And he took the captains and rulers, and they brought down the king and he sat on the throne of the kings, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet” (vs. 19-20).

Then shall the impostor be eternally silenced, and he whose right it is set the righteousness of Deity in the Holy Place. Surely in that day, the land will rejoice with a rejoicing that shall be heard afar off. A new covenant will the inhabitants of the earth enter into, and that kingdom be established whose work is-

“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Lk. 2:14).

(Taken from “Be Ye Transformed” Volume 2 pages 64-81 by Bro. G. Growcott)