

June 12

2Chronicles 22-23, 2 Kings 10-11

Have you ever noticed that although people love Bible names for their own kids, nobody ever names their daughter Jezebel? Obviously, because she is like the wicked witch of the west. Well nobody names a girl Athaliah, either because she is like the Wicked Witch of the East!

Today we read that Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, goes on a killing streak when her Son, Ahaziah the king, is killed in the North. She kills all of her kids, in-laws and grandkids! Whoa!

And all so she could reign in power. And she almost succeeded.

However, Jehosheba, the sister of Ahaziah and the wife of a godly priest named Jehoiada managed to escape with one son of the King -- Joash and hide him in the temple of God for six long years. How did they manage that? Perhaps since Jehoida was a priest he had the connections and the ability to hide Joash in the temple for that length of time.

Now -- think about the drama here. The Messiah is going to come from David's line and here just a few generations after his death there is a coup. A daughter of Ahab, the wicked king of the North, seizes the throne of Judah and comes within one life of wiping out the royal line of David's sons. And for six long years it looks as though she has succeeded. Only Jehosheba and Jehoiada and a nurse maid know the truth. It really looked like Satan had won! And I have to believe that the godly people of Judah were wondering what had happened. Had the plan of God been foiled, had evil triumphed over good and won the war? It often looks that way. For Joseph in Pharaoh's jail it seemed that way. For Israel laboring in slavery while God was silent it seemed that way. For two very long days between Friday and Sunday after the crucifixion it seemed certain that God's plan finally had been defeated. But in every case that conclusion was very wrong. God's plan can never be defeated or overthrown. Athaliah thought for six years that she had thwarted God. But Athaliah and every other would be usurper in history was wrong.

We read that in the 7th year, Priest Jehoiada "showed his strength." Because he believed that "the King's son shall reign, as the Lord promised concerning the descendants of David" he devised a plan to anoint Joash as king and do away with Athaliah. His plan worked out beautifully and Joash, at the tender age of 7, assumed the throne. Can you believe all this? After hiding a kid in the temple for 7 years (the crying, the poopy diapers, the potty training, and the terrible toddler years etc. etc) Jehoida unveils the secret: there is an heir to the throne from the line of David who is STILL ALIVE! I would have liked to see the look on Athaliah's face when she got a load of this one.

For 7 years she thought she was all that and a bag of chips... And now? WHAM. The trumpets are blaring and she is face to face with a little snotty nosed 1st grader who

has been crowned king...she is ruined. It would make for a great movie scene don't you think? Here's another incredible example of God's plans coming through amidst the seemingly impossible. Not only did a king emerge out of nowhere, but he was 7! Would you like to take orders from a 7 year old? How could he make decisions? At least it is better than Athaliah! Well, we read in our Daily Bibles that in the case of a child-king, the affairs of state would be carried out by the priests and military leaders until the child would become of age to lead.

Jehoiadah is a good priest. And he really pulls the strings in Judah through the child king. He wipes out Baal worship and reestablishes the covenant practices in Israel. For most of Joashes reign, things are good. Jehoiadah is blessed by God, living to the age of 130 and able to help Joash reign well - at least while he is alive.

Meanwhile in the northern kingdom of Israel, Jehu practices a little trickery of his own in hopes to destroy Baal worship in Israel. After deceiving all the ministers of Baal to assemble at the temple of Baal, he ordered 80 men to go in and kill them all. His plan succeeds and the scared stone of Baal, the temple of Baal, and all the ministers of Baal are leveled in one fell swoop. Because the Lord is pleased with Jehu's action he makes a promise with him: Jehu will have a descendant on the throne of Israel through the 4th generation. Now this promise sounds great but what about the following verses that said that Jehu was "not careful to keep the law of the Lord, the God of Israel, with all his heart"?

Why is Jehu getting blessed when he doesn't continue to stay faithful to the Lord? I am not quite sure, but have a few thoughts. One, it is important to note that the promise by God is not an eternal covenant like the one made to David, so there was a time frame on the blessing. Two, maybe Jehu's act of eradicating Baal worship far outweighed the sins he continued to commit i.e. not eliminating the golden calves of Bethel and Dan. Three, isn't this like God sometimes to bless people in the midst of their imperfection? Think about it. We have read countless stories so far of God blessing his appointed leaders despite often acting half-heartedly. And it looks like here that we have another case of this.

This is Mark Ashton encouraging you to have the passion of Jehoiadah - protecting the things of God and eliminating idolatry from every corner of your life.