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2 KINGS 11:1-12:21

Last week we saw some disturbing and bloody things happen.

We saw the **murder of the king of Syria** by his aide.

We saw the **death of Jezebel** just as the Lord had foretold.

We saw the **murders of all the sons of Ahab** by Jehu (Ja-hoo).

We saw the **slayings of the worshipers of Baal** by Jehu.

We saw that Jehu, king of Israel did a **good thing** in that he destroyed Baal worship in Israel...but we also saw that Jehu did a **bad thing** in that he **didn't** destroy the golden calves that Jeroboam had erected.

And this week's lesson is full of this same sort of thing. All throughout this part of Israel's and Judah's history, we see much the same things happening again and again and again.

They just keep repeating the same mistakes.

They just keep committing the same sins over and over.

So, if all this sounds familiar to you, it's because it **is** familiar. It's the same song, second and third and fourth verses...and we'll see some of the same sad events happening in our lesson today and also in the weeks ahead.

In today's lesson, we're going to be introduced to four characters: **two women and two men** - and I hope we can learn some lessons from these folks.

2 Kings 11:1-3...

In this passage we're introduced to the first three of our characters.

The first character we want to look at today is **Athaliah** (Ath-a-li'-ah). We saw her a little last week, but she didn't reveal her true colors in last week's passage. It's in this chapter that we see her in all her wickedness.

Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, king and queen of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. But, she was married to the king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Apparently Ahab thought it would be very advantageous to him for his daughter to be married to a southern king. He must have thought that this would give him influence over the whole empire. And it did!

So, Athaliah who was born into the royal of Israel, married into the royal family of Judah. She married Joram.

I think to really understand this wicked woman we need to understand some of her history.

When Athaliah and Joram were married, Joram's father, Jehoshaphat, was king of Judah. Jehoshaphat was a godly man. After he died, Joram became king. **This meant that Athaliah became queen.**

Athaliah was truly her mother's daughter. What's the old saying...the apple doesn't fall far from the tree? She inherited all the wickedness of Jezebel and then some. She decided to convince her husband that as long as he had living brothers his position would not be secure.

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(You have to go to **2 Chronicles** to get the whole story on these folks, and we don't have time to go there, so you'll just have to trust me.)

So, Joram goes to his own brothers in the flesh, his physical brothers, and one by one he puts them all to death.

After King Joram had reigned for eight years, he died. In fact, **2 Chronicles** tells us that the Lord smote him in his bowels and that when he died **he departed with no one's regret.**

After King Joram died, his and Athaliah's son, Ahaziah, came to the throne. Ahaziah was as bad as his father was, and after a year as king, **he** was put to death.

Then, Athaliah saw her big chance. She said, "*No more kings...now we're going to have **queen on the throne...now I'm going to sit upon the throne of Judah!***"

But, Athaliah still had a slight problem. And that's where **2 Kings 11** opens. Athaliah wanted no one to stand in her way, so she killed all the royal offspring. She killed her own **sons...and she killed her own grandsons.**

With one exception...her daughter Jehosheba (Je-**hosh'**-a-ba) was able to rescue her one-year-old baby brother. This baby was named Joash (Jehoash). And she ran to the temple and hid him and there they stayed for six years.

Athaliah assumed Joash was dead. She didn't see him anywhere. So, as far as she knew he **wasn't** anywhere...he was dead.

And Athaliah felt as if she were set for life. She thought no one remained who would threaten her position as queen of Judah. But, she left out God. She left out the **sovereignty** and the **justice** and the **power** of God.

Verses 4-12...

Six years pass between **verses 3 and 4.** For six years, Jehoiada, the priest and who also happens to be the fourth of our characters, had hidden Joash. For six years, he had been faithful to protect this little boy. For six years, he had risked his own life for the life of this little boy. **Why?**

Because if Joash had been killed, the Davidic line would have come to an end. God had promised that David would **always** have a descendant to sit on the throne and Joash was the only one left of the Davidic line. All the rest had been slain. Jehoiada (Je-**hoy'**-a-da) knew the promises and purposes of God. **And he was determined to allow God to accomplish His purposes through him.**

Verses 13-21...

Well, Athaliah heard about Joash being crowned king. She went into the temple and she saw this little seven year old grandson of hers with this crown on his head and all these soldiers flanking him on either side, and all the trumpeters sounding their trumpets, and she tore her clothes and cried "**Treason! Treason!**"

Now, of all people who should have been shouting "treason" it surely wasn't Athaliah. She was the one who had committed treason!

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And what did Jehoiada do? He simply said, *"Fellows, take her out and kill her. But don't kill her in the temple. Take her out of the temple and put her to death. And anybody who wants to be with her, anybody who wants to follow after her, anybody who wants to side with her...kill them too. Just kill 'em all!"*

That's the end of Athaliah. That's the story of Athaliah. But, there's one thing I forgot to mention. You remember her mother, Jezebel, had introduced Baal worship to the **northern kingdom of Israel**? Well, Athaliah had introduced Baal worship to the **southern kingdom of Judah**.

All over Judah, temples to Baal began to be erected. **What an influence for wickedness and evil this woman was!!**

However, we have two of our characters this morning **who had a tremendous influence for good**. Let's look at them now.

According to **2 Chronicles 22**, Jehosheba (Je-**hosh'**-a-ba) was the daughter of Athaliah and Jehoram and was married to Jehoiada (Je-**hoi'**-a-da), the priest who presided at the temple. So, Jehosheba and Jehoiada raised Joash and they tried to instill in this little boy a love and loyalty to the God of Israel.

And you've got to admire this lady, Jehosheba.

How many of you ever remember reading about her?

How many of you ever told your children about her?

I don't remember a time when I ever did. **In fact, I had to look up the pronunciation of her name this week!**

But, she was one of the **great women** of the Bible and Jehoiada was one of the **great men** of the Bible. And they were great because they put their fear of losing their own life aside and decided to fulfill the purpose God had not only for their **own** lives, but for the lives of His people.

Let's look at Jehosheba's husband...

The first thing that happened after Joash took the throne was that Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king that they should be the LORD'S people.

Verse 18...

Do you see what's happening? Not only is Baal being removed from Judah, but the God of Israel is being restored!

Jehoiada was the one who anointed Joash king at the age of seven. He was the one who influenced Joash to get rid of Baal worship.

Joash was a seven year old boy.

What did Joash know about worshiping the true God?

What did he know about rebuilding the temple?

What does **any** seven year old know about such things?

But, Jehoiada **did** know about these things, and he was saying,

"We're not going to be an atheist nation anymore.

We're not just going to kick Baal out of the land. We're going to renew our commitment to Jehovah God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

We're going to go back to worshiping God.

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We're going to serve God."

By the way, wouldn't it be nice if we had a "Jehoiada" here today? Don't we need a man of God who will stand up in America and say, "We're going to put away all our idols. We're not going to worship anymore at the shrine of sports and entertainment and money. We're going to go back to the God on whom this nation was founded!"

And when he went and got folks to help him, the captain of hundreds who were appointed over the army that we see in **verse 15**...and the other people we see in **verse 18**...he didn't have to beg them...

These folks had watched his life.

They knew he was a man of God!

They knew what kind of man he was and they were willing to do what he said.

And the people responded with much rejoicing!

And the city of Jerusalem was at peace!

Satan had attempted to end the Davidic line and he had failed.

The people had followed Jehoiada's lead and they had done the will of God and for the first time in many years, righteousness and peace reigned in the land!

So, we've seen **Athaliah**, and we've seen **Jehosheba**, and we've seen **Jehoiada**...let's take a look at **Joash** in all this and then we'll attempt to apply this to our lives today.

The first thing we know about Joash is that his life was **saved** by his sister and it was **preserved** by his sister and her husband.

The next thing we know about Joash is that he became king of Judah at the age of seven. And we have to understand that in many ways, he was no different from any other seven-year-old boy.

He probably was more interested in playing than he was in being king. He probably needed to be disciplined just as any other seven year old boy.

The one thing that made him different from any seven-year-old boy that you and have raised or have known is the fact that he was crowned king of his country!

2 Kings 12:1...

A second thing we know about Joash is how long he reigned as king. The Bible tells us there in **verse 1** that he reigned **forty years** in Jerusalem.

We also know from that verse that his mother's name was Zibiah. We aren't told what happened to his mother. Maybe Athaliah killed her when she went on her killing spree...or maybe she died at childbirth.

And the other significant thing that we know about Joash is that for a period of time **he did what was right in the sight of the Lord**.

Verse 2... "And Joash did right in the sight of the Lord..."

Now, if the story of Joash ended right there, we would have a wonderful testimony of his life, wouldn't we? But it didn't end there. The rest of that verse says, **"all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him."**

Jehoiada not only raised and nourished Joash **physically**. Jehoiada attempted to raise and nourish Joash **spiritually**.

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Verse 3...

I believe this verse tells you and me why the life of Joash began to deteriorate after Jehoida died.

He did not destroy the high places! What were the high places?

Well, they were places of pagan worship. And God had instructed His children way back when they were about to come into the Promised Land that they were to destroy all the high places...

...because God knew if they didn't, the ways of wickedness would rub off on them, and God doesn't want His people polluted by pagan worship and He doesn't want His people in turn perverting the way they worship Him! And of course, we know that's exactly what happened!

Verses 4-16 tell us that at some point Joash looked around at the house of God and decided it was in serious need of repair. When Joash was in the twenty-third year of his reign he decided to collect money to repair the temple, and the Bible tells us he was faithful to collect the money and faithful to give it to the ones who were to do the work.

The temple was 124 years old at this point. And it had been neglected for years and years! And Joash set up a chest for the people to come and bring their money. Do you remember when we had two "chests of Joash?"

And this was a **good** thing! It is a **good** thing for God's house to be in **good repair!** It is a **disgrace** for the house of the Lord to fall into disrepair!

And I wish this was the end of the testimony by the Holy Spirit of Joash's life...but it isn't...and to see the rest of the Joash's story we need to turn over to **2 Chronicles 24...**

After the **masons and carpenters** had been hired to restore the house of the LORD and
- after the **workers in iron and bronze** had done their repairs to the house of the LORD and
- after the **temple had been restored** according to its specifications and
- after the **utensils for the service** and the burnt offering and the pans and the utensils of gold and silver had been made...

...the Bible tells us "they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually **all the days of Jehoiada.**

But, let's look at

2 Chronicles 24:15-22...

Now, Zechariah was the son of the man who had loved Joash since he was a baby. No doubt, Joash and Zechariah sat at the same table and ate the same food as boys. But, Joash had wandered so far away from the Lord so fast that he did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada had shown him, and he murdered Zechariah.

Imagine murdering the son of the very people who had saved your life!

WHY? Because folks who have wandered away from the Lord don't want to hear the truth. Because folks who have left the Lord don't want to be convicted of their sin.

And this chapter goes on to tell us that the Syrians came against Israel and Joash bribed the king of Syria not to come against Jerusalem by sending him all the sacred things of God and all the monies that were left over from their collection...we see that in **2 Kings...**but in **2 Chronicles** we see that the Syrian army **did** eventually come against Jerusalem...

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Does this remind you of anything that's going on today? Does it remind you of the blackmail of the terrorists in Iraq? They take hostages and then blackmail the nations the hostages are from. "Pull your men out of Iraq and we'll let him go..."

2 Chronicles 24:24-25...

Did you notice anything about the burial of Jehoiada and the burial of Joash? Did you notice that Jehoiada, who was not a king, was buried among the kings, and that Joash, was a king, was not? Why? Because the people knew that Jehoiada was more of a leader of the people than Joash!

We see that the life of Joash started out well...but Joash didn't finish well! And it's so much more important to finish well than to begin well!

Let's see in the time we have left if we can draw a few lessons for our own life...

1) the powerful influence of a godly man...

Think about the influence the prophet **Jehoiada** had...

He had a godly influence on his wife.

He also had a godly influence over other men. When the day came for Athaliah to be overthrown, he didn't have to go out and recruit men to help him...all he had to do was sent a message, "It's time to overthrow Athaliah. I have a word from God. It's time." And the men showed up to help him.

He also had a godly influence on Joash...at least for a season. It wasn't the fault of Jehoiada that Joash's faith was an insincere faith.

2) the potential of a woman for good or for evil...

Think about Athaliah...power-driven, greedy, murderous, wicked, bloodthirsty, mean and vicious.

But, think about Jehosheba. Don't you wonder how a woman of such obedience could come from such an ungodly family? But, she did and it was really because of her that Joash was saved.

It's interesting to notice how many mothers are mentioned in Scripture. Mothers are very important! And the Bible lets us know which ones are good and which ones are evil!

3) the pitiful faith of an unsaved king...

Think about Joash. He began so well. He ended so badly.

He had every opportunity to be such a mighty man of God.

He had the potential to bring real reform to his nation.

And I think this shows you and me that no matter what kind of godly home we might come from, there comes a time when we have to stand on our own feet and decide in our own heart that we will follow God. Salvation is a **personal** relationship with Jesus, isn't it?

EX: Cain and Abel

Joash followed Jehoiada...and that was good as far as that went. But, Joash never did follow the God of Jehoiada on his own. If he had, he wouldn't have been influenced as an adult by idolatry.

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Jehosheba overcame her ungodly upbringing. Joash rebelled against his godly upbringing. And he paid the price.

And that brings us to the last thing I want to share with you...

4) the powerful sovereignty of the God we serve...

We see this mighty power all through this lesson.

We see that God miraculously preserved the line of David even through the murderous rampage of a wicked woman.

We see that God executed judgment on Athaliah and we see that God executed judgment on Joash.

We see that God used the enemy of Judah and Israel to come against them and execute judgment on them.

In closing, let me say that you and I should always be open and eager and thankful for the counsel of godly people.

We ought to be thankful for those who influence us in a godly direction. I know you could sit down and make a list of those folks who have been an influence for good in your own life.

But, having said that, there comes a time when you and I must stand on our own two feet. **One day you may not have anyone in your life to give you godly counsel...**they may all go to heaven and leave you here.

Jehoiada died and left Joash. And when that happens, we must not be like Joash...not thinking for himself and not willing to search for God's will and very eager to follow after anyone else who came along

Another reason we ought to stand on our own two feet is **to be sure that we have a relationship with God for ourselves.** Peter tells us we ought to be prepared to always give an answer for what we believe and why we believe it.

And we also need to stand on our own because **that's a part of spiritual maturity.**

We start out eating baby food. We eat the milk of the Word.

That's baby food. That's what other folks give to us. They spoon-feed us what they've already prepared.

But there comes a time when
we have to get into the Word of God ourselves
and feed ourselves and
grow up ourselves and
think for ourselves and
make decisions for ourselves.

I think about our children and grandchildren. Will they carry on in their adulthood what they've been taught in their childhood?

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Joash lived the first part of his life **to please Jehoiada**.

He lived the last part of his life **to please the officials of Judah and the people of Judah**.

He never stood on his own feet and said, **"I will live my life to please God!"**

So, my prayer is that we've learned some lessons from the characters we've seen today