

2 Chronicles Chapter 23

Verses 1-3: Because “Jehoiada the priest (and husband of Jeho-shabeath; 22:11), was concerned with the sanctity of the temple. The Levites, not just the military leaders, needed to be involved in bringing out the young king from the temple and to the throne.

2 Chronicles 23:1 "And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him."

“Seventh year”: The beginning of Athaliah’s seventh year of reign (835 B.C.).

"In the seventh year Jehoiada ... took the captains of hundreds": The five officers mentioned here had been probably of the royal guard, and were known to be strongly disaffected to the government of Athaliah.

"Jehoiada strengthened himself": He nerved himself with courage, and that courage which results from conviction of duty and of the right time to achieve it.

Took the captains of hundreds; Not all, but those here following, in whom he put most trust. But this chapter is almost all taken out of (2 Kings chapter 11), where it is explained.

In the last lesson, Athaliah had killed all of her grandchildren (except one), so that she could be queen. Joash had been hidden in the temple. He was the rightful heir to the throne. Jehoiada was the High Priest who had hidden the baby Joash. Now he had strengthened his courage enough that he called the leaders of the army to him to anoint Joash king. These were leaders of various segments of the troops. We may assume that Jehoiada knew them well enough to know that he could trust them. Jehoiada had risked his own life and the life of his family, to hide the baby these years.

2 Chronicles 23:2 "And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem."

"Gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah": Partly because they could do this without any suspicion, upon presence of some solemn feast. Which time, it is probable, was chosen for this purpose. And partly because he knew them to be well affected to the cause of God and the king, to which they were obliged by the two firmest ties, conscience and interest.

"The chief of the fathers of Israel": I.e. both of the two tribes, and of the ten tribes, all which are called Israel. And he used the name of Israel rather than that of Judah, because there were now great numbers of the other tribes incorporated with Judah. And these he esteemed more faithful than many of Judah, having given better proofs of the truth of their religion than they. And therefore, he picked out of the chief men of the other tribes as well as of Judah and Benjamin. Having cautiously entrusted the secret of the young prince's preservation to all the leading men

in the kingdom, he enlisted their interest in the royal cause and got their pledge to support it by a secret oath of fidelity.

They had to do this secretly not to arouse the suspicion of this evil queen. The decision to anoint this youngster as king and overthrow the queen would need to be sanctioned by the Levitical tribe. All of these who came were people in authority.

2 Chronicles 23:3 "And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David."

“As the Lord hath said”: This is one of the most dramatic moments in messianic history. The human offspring of David have been reduced to one, Joash. If he had died, there would have been no human heir to the Davidic throne, and it would have meant the destruction of the line of the Messiah. However, God remedied the situation by providentially protecting Joash (22:10-12), and eliminating Athaliah (23:12-21).

This covenant was an unbreakable agreement of these men of authority gathered in the temple. It is explained to everyone that the LORD had promised David that his lineage would sit on the throne of Judah. This young boy Joash, is the only living heir to the throne. It appears, that all were in agreement.

2 Chronicles 23:4 "This [is] the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you entering on the sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, [shall be] porters of the doors;"

A third part of you ... shall be porters of the doors": Or rather, guards at the gates, to prevent any of Athaliah's party from entering into the temple. At the gate of the foundation, so called, because it stood lower than the rest of the doors, at the foot of the steps by which they went up from the king's house to the temple.

It was not unusual for Levites to come to the temple on Sabbath. A third of them shall be keepers of the door. They could not take a chance on someone entering who was not aware of what is going on.

2 Chronicles 23:5 "And a third part [shall be] at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation: and all the people [shall be] in the courts of the house of the LORD."

"A third part... at the king's house": It seems impossible to refer this to the royal palace, as some suppose from (verse 19), in the parallel. It probably designates the place where the child had been living in concealment.

"And all the people shall be in the courts": In the two courts. For by the people here he seems to intend both the generality of the Levites, who had no particular station assigned them. Such as their brethren had, and who were to be in the court of the priests, and the people who were in the court of the people.

This is just explaining that Joash, the king to be, would be guarded every step of the way. No one would be able to get to him.

2 Chronicles 23:6 "But let none come into the house of the LORD, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites; they shall go in, for they [are] holy: but all the people shall keep the watch of the LORD."

"Let none come into the house of the Lord": Strictly so called, and distinguished from the courts just mentioned, namely, into the sanctuary, or Holy Place.

"Save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites": Who are to minister in course, or according to my present appointment.

"They shall go in, for they are holy": They have been consecrated to the service of God, and are bound to attend there.

"But all the people shall keep the watch of the Lord": That is, of the house of the Lord, as is expressed (2 Kings 11:6). The meaning is, let them stand in their court to prevent and oppose any person that shall endeavor to break into the house. To seize upon the king, or to oppose the present work, which he expected Athaliah and her accomplices would do.

The people, who are not the Levites, are to guard from the outside, all of the entrances to the place where the young boy will be anointed king. Only the priests, who have been anointed of God themselves to take place in the services in the temple would be in the near vicinity of Joash (Jehoash).

2 Chronicles 23:7 "And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever [else] cometh into the house, he shall be put to death: but be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out."

"And the Levites shall compass the king": The matter of (verse 8), in the parallel suggests nothing inconsistent with the express mention of the Levites here. But rather that the word "Levites" is lacking there. And its significance perhaps accidentally overlooked, when the writer of Kings was using the original authorities and sources of his history.

"Into the house": 2 Kings. "within the ranges" ("within the ranks," R.V.). Anyone who should attempt to break through the ranks of the guard to get near to the king was to be killed. According to the Chronicler Jehoiada's precaution would protect the sanctity of the Temple as well as the person of the young king.

"He shall be put to death": Revised Version: "let him be slain".

The Levites had swords in their hands, ready to kill anyone who came near the boy. They made a human wall around Joash. Anyone trying to enter who was not part of the anointing service would be killed.

2 Chronicles 23:8 "So the Levites and all Judah did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go [out] on the sabbath: for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses."

“Jehoiada” had the support of “all Judah”. The people recognized he was restoring the throne to the rightful king rather than questing for power.

It would appear to be a normal Sabbath at the temple. Everyone did just as Jehoiada had planned.

2 Chronicles 23:9 "Moreover Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds spears, and bucklers, and shields, that [had been] king David's, which [were] in the house of God."

"To the captains of hundreds": It is to be observed that both accounts agree about the weapons being delivered to the soldiery by Jehoiada. Thus, making clear it was known that the whole undertaking was controlled by the guard and not by the priests and Levites. Though, as his manner is, the writer of Chronicles puts them in the forefront as much as he can.

"Spears, and bucklers, and shields, that [had been] king David's, which [were] in the house of God:" Such as he had taken in war from his enemies, and had dedicated for the service of the temple, to defend it on occasion. And laid up there; those the priests gave to the captains, to arm their men with, who came unarmed. And so unsuspected, and in this way might be armed without being seen and known.

It appears these weapons of David's had been kept in the temple. Now they were distributed out to the leaders of the groups of men who would protect the young king. We must remember that the temple was like a complex. The temple itself, was surrounded by other buildings.

2 Chronicles 23:10 "And he set all the people, every man having his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about."

"All the people": I.e., again, all those, not being Levites and priests, who had been trusted to assist.

"From the right side of the temple to the left side": This is equivalent to saying, those composing the guard were placed on the south and north sides, along by the altar. This was the altar of burnt offerings in front of the porch, and close by which the young "king stood at his pillar," or on his pedestal (verse 13). The rows of the guard bristling with weapons before and behind and round about him.

(See the note on 2 Kings 11:12).

The weapon being in their hand showed their readiness to use it. These men covered the entire wall, so that no one could possibly get through to Joash.

2 Chronicles 23:11 "Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and [gave him] the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king."

“Testimony”: The usual meaning is a copy of the law (compare Deut. 17:18; Job 31:35-36).

The High Priest Jehoiada and his sons who were priests, did the actual anointing of Joash as king. They put a crown on his head, and put the book of the law into his hands. He had been trained by the High Priest in the temple. They gave him God's law as a guide to judge by.

2 Chronicles 23:12 "Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the LORD:"

"The noise of the people running and praising the king": Or, the noise of the people, the Couriers, and those who were acclaiming the king (1 Kings 11:13). “The noise of the runners, the people;” where the people may be an inadvertent repetition, as the same expression follows directly.

It is interesting that all of this went on without her knowing it was happening. The people could not contain their joy when Joash was anointed king. Athaliah came to see for herself what was happening.

2 Chronicles 23:13 "And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, Treason."

"The king stood at his pillar at the entering in": In the entry. “Pillar” in the Hebrew text may mean a raised platform (compare the Latin Vulgate “step”), perhaps at the east gate in the inner court (compare 6:13).

"And the princes" (see note on 2 Kings 11:14). Some Hebrew manuscripts here also read “singers;” one manuscript has “Couriers.”

"Rejoiced": Were rejoicing and sounding.

"Also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise": And the minstrels (or musicians), with the instruments of music, and men leading the chanting (literally, teaching to praise). This is one of the writer's characteristic additions to the older text.

"Said": Kings: “cried.” Which is more original.

She was shocked when she saw the young boy crowned king in her stead. She immediately understood what had happened, and she began to tear her clothes in mourning. The treason was not against the land, but against her as queen.

2 Chronicles 23:14 "Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD."

"Brought out": Kings, "commanded." The Hebrew words are so nearly alike that one may easily be a corruption of the other. The Syriac and Arabic agree with Kings. The LXX. gives both readings.

"Have her forth of the ranges": Make her go out between the ranks of guards.

"Let him be slain with the sword": Meaning anyone trying to harm the king.

"Slay her not in the house of the Lord": And when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there. The high priest ordered her immediately to be taken out of the temple grounds and put to death. "And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain" (2 Kings 11:16).

Jehoiada reminded them not to kill her in the house of the LORD, but to take her away from the temple to kill her. Anyone who was with her was to be slain along with her. It would be hard to see why anyone would follow so evil a woman.

2 Chronicles 23:15 "So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there."

Both the women of the house of Ahab, Athaliah and her mother, Jezebel, were known for their wickedness and were "killed" because of it (2 Kings 9:30-37).

They killed her by the horse gate, because she was no more than an animal. She had no conscience at all. She would be killed in disgrace.

Verses 16-21: The high priest, "Jehoiada", led the people in a covenant renewal (compare the note at 15:12). As in the case of Asa (15:8-18), and Jehoshaphat (17:3-9; 19:4-11), the early days of Joash were to witness a time of spiritual rebirth and reformation (compare 24:2-12).

2 Chronicles 23:16 "And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD'S people."

"A covenant between ... the king": A slight but characteristic variation from (2 Kings 11:17). "The covenant between Jehovah and the king and the people, that they should become a people for Jehovah."

"Between him": Or rather, himself. The high priest is thus regarded as representing Jehovah in the transaction. And the apparent irreverence of making the Deity a direct co-partner with men in a compact is avoided.

"Be the Lord's people": Literally, become a people for Jehovah. Kings adds: "and between the king and the people," a not unimportant clause. For it relates to certain limitations of the royal prerogative, which were usually agreed upon at the beginning of a reign (2 Sam. 3:21; 5:3; 1 Sam. 10:25).

Jehoiada had taught the new king the ways of the LORD, while he was in his care. The queen was evil, and had led the country away from God. The agreement that the people, the officials, Jehoiada, and the king made would succeed only if they returned to the LORD. The covenant with the LORD in this would be a special effort to get back into good relationship with the LORD.

2 Chronicles 23:17 "Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars."

"Then all the people": That were at Jerusalem, and the parts adjacent, that came from the country, hearing what was done.

"Went to the house of Baal": A temple of his Athaliah had built, either in Jerusalem, or near it. Perhaps on the Mount of Olives, called the mount of corruption (2 Kings 23:13), from the idolatry there committed.

"And brake his altars and his images in pieces": Made an entire destruction of them all, temple, altars, the images of Baal and other deities.

"And slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars": Either as he was sacrificing, or that he might be a sacrifice, or where he had fled for refuge.

Ahab and Jezebel had brought the worship of Baal into Israel. Their daughter, Athaliah, had introduced it in Judah. It appears she had actually built a building to this false god. The very first thing to do to show the LORD they were sincere, would be to tear down the building, the images, and to do away with the priest of Baal. This was the first step in bringing Judah into fellowship with the LORD. We must remember that Jehoiada had been like a father to Joash while he was in hiding. Joash would do what Jehoiada wanted him to do.

2 Chronicles 23:18 "Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as [it is] written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, [as it was ordained] by David."

"Jehoiada appointed the offices": Or rather, restored. For there was no new appointment of offices or officers, but the old officers were restored to their respective offices. The Hebrew

literally translated is: He put the offices of the house of the Lord into the hand of the priests, etc. For in the time of the idolatrous kings, and of Athaliah, those offices had probably been disposed of to persons of other tribes. Partly to gratify their wicked friends, and partly to bring God's house and worship into disgrace.

"Whom David had distributed": Divided into courses or classes (1 Chron. 23:6; 23:24-25).

"In the house": For the house.

"As it is written": A reference to the Pentateuch (compare Ezra 3:2).

"With rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David" (see the margin, and compare the notes on 1 Chron. 25:2; 25:6; 23:5).

The meaning of all this is that the High Priest now restored the regular services of the Temple, as arranged by David, which had been neglected or at least irregularly conducted during the six years of Athaliah's usurpation.

It appears that the worship in the Temple had been limited during the reign of Athaliah. Now the worship in the Temple would be re-established. Jehoiada would go by the example that David started in the Temple. He would be High Priest, his sons, the priests, and all of the others who serve in any capacity in the Temple would be established according to their families. We have discussed before, that musicians and singers are ministers called of God, as well as the priests.

2 Chronicles 23:19 "And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none [which was] unclean in any thing should enter in."

"He set the porters": Compare (1 Chron. 26:1; 2 Chron. 26:13). Jehoiada re-established a Davidic arrangement which had fallen into disuse.

That none which was unclean ... should enter in": Compare (2 Chron. 23:6; Lev. 5:7; Num. 5:19; Deut. 24:1-3; 24:10-11).

Even these porters had to be of the Levites. They were to guard the entrance against intruders.

2 Chronicles 23:20 "And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the LORD: and they came through the high gate into the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom."

"And he took" (see 2 Kings 11:19).

"And the nobles, and the governors of the people": Kings has: "And the Carians and the Couriers" (see Note on 2 Chron. 23:1). "The nobles" (compare Psalm 16:3).

"Governors of the people": Compare (Isa. 28:14). These "nobles and governors" are perhaps "the heads of the clans" (of 2 Chron. 23:2), and "the princes" (of 2 Chron. 23:13). Though the phrase certainly looks like an attempt at explaining the obscure titles of the royal guard.

"And they came through the high gate": Kings, "And they came by the way of the Couriers' Gate" (see note on 2 Chron. 23:5). The Couriers' Gate may have been called the High Gate, as being the grand entrance to the palace. A gate of the Temple has the same designation in (2 Chron. 27:3).

The anointing of the king was done by the priests, but the placing of the king on his throne in his house was a joint participation. All of the officials in the land were involved in this. Partially for the king's safety and partially showing their approval of Joash as king, they accompanied him to his throne.

2 Chronicles 23:21 "And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword."

"And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet": The generality of the people rejoiced, the rest were quiet, and made no opposition. When the son of David is enthroned in the soul, all therein is quiet, and springs of joy are opened.

We can see that the tyrant Athaliah was gone, now all the people rejoiced again. The young king would rule pleasing unto God, as long as the High Priest was living to guide him.

2 Chronicles Chapter 23 Questions

1. When did Jehoiada strengthen himself?
2. Who had Athaliah killed, so that she might be queen?
3. Where had Joash been hidden?
4. Who was the High Priest in the temple at the time?
5. Who does Jehoiada call to the temple?
6. Who did they gather out of Judah to come to Jerusalem to the temple?
7. Why had Jehoiada called these men of authority?
8. Why was it important that Joash reign as king?
9. What was this covenant?
10. What shall a third of the Levites do, when they enter on the chosen Sabbath?

11. Where will the others be stationed?
12. Who are the only ones to enter into the house of the LORD?
13. Where will the Levites' weapons be?
14. Why did the queen not suspicion something was going on?
15. Where did they find weapons to use?
16. What did the weapon being in their hands show?
17. They brought out the young man, and crowned him, and put the _____ in his hand.
18. Who anointed Joash king?
19. What did Athaliah do, when she heard the noise of praise?
20. What did she do, when she saw what was going on?
21. Where did they kill her?
22. In verse 16, we read they made a covenant to be what?
23. What did they do with the altars of Baal?
24. Who had brought the worship of Baal into Israel?
25. Jehoiada had been like a _____ to Joash.
26. Who were the porters at the gate?
27. Who went with Joash to the house of the king, to set him on his throne?