

2 Kings Chapter 11

Verses 1-2: “Athaliah”, meaning (“Yahweh Is Exalted”), was Ahab and Jezebel’s daughter. The only woman to reign over Judah or Israel, she seized the throne following the death of her son ‘Ahaziah” and even had her own grandchildren (“all the seed royal”), killed to maintain her grip on power.

2 Kings 11:1 "And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal."

“Athaliah”: A granddaughter of Omri (8:26), and daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. She was zealous to rule after the death of her son, Ahaziah (9:27), and was dedicated to seeing the worship of Baal officially sanctioned in Judah (see note on 8:18). She reigned for 6 years (verse 3; ca. 841-835 B.C.; see notes on 2 Chron. 22:10 – 23:21).

“Destroyed all the seed royal”: The previous deaths of Jehoram’s brother (2 Chron. 21:4), and Ahaziah’s bother and relatives (10:12-14; 2 Chron. 21:17), left only her grandchildren for Athaliah to put to death to destroy the Davidic line. Though the Lord had promised that the house of David would rule over Israel and Judah forever (2 Sam. 7:16), Athaliah’s purge brought the house of David to the brink of extinction. Athaliah duplicated the wicked deeds of her husband, Jehoram (see the note on 8:18).

Athaliah was queen mother, when all of this happened. She was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and was very evil. She had brought the worship of Baal into Judah, when she married Jehoram. The seed royal would be speaking of anyone who might ascend to the throne from the house of David. It seemed not to matter, that she was the mother and grandmother of some of them. She was as wicked as her mother, Jezebel. Notice, the word "all" in the Scripture above. This means a large number of people. She did not want to give up her position as queen mother.

2 Kings 11:2 "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” was Ahaziah’s half-sister. Since “Joash” had been born to Joram through a mother other than “Athaliah” (2 Chron. 24:1), perhaps this was the case with Jehosheba also. She was married to the high priest Jehoiada (2 Chron. 22:11). Thanks to her courage, the sole surviving “son of Ahaziah” escaped notice in Athaliah’s bloody purge.

“Joash”: The grandson of Athaliah who escaped her purge. For six years, “Jehosheba” hid “Joash,” a descendant of David, keeping alive God’s promise of an eternal kingdom.

“Bedchamber”: Literally “the room of the beds.” It was either the palace storeroom where servants kept the bedding or a room in the living quarters of the temple priests.

Another name for Jehosheba was Jehoshabeath. It appears that she secretly entered where Joash was and had his nurse to sneak him out and hide him. He was the only one of the king's sons that was saved alive. This was a very brave thing for her to do seeing how wicked Athaliah was. It appears, that she hid him in a storage room where extra mattresses and things were kept. In fact, it was very near the queen's bedroom. This would have been a place seldom used. They were soon moved to the temple and hidden there.

2 Kings 11:3 "And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land."

"In the house of the LORD": The temple in Jerusalem.

"Six years": 841-835 B.C.

His aunt and Joash were both hidden in the temple for 6 years. It appears, that Athaliah was so caught up in the worship of Baal that she did not come to the temple, and did not know they were there. This wicked queen ruled over Judah during this time.

Verses 4-12: Jehoiada's plan to unseat the idolatrous usurper Athaliah was carefully orchestrated (2 Chron. 23:1-11).

The chief priest "Jehoiada" brought Joash out of hiding to initiate Athaliah's removal from power (2 Chron. 23:1-11). This act was a risk; the guards could have killed both of them right there in the temple. But Jehoiada must have sensed that Athaliah had little military or religious backing.

2 Kings 11:4 "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 showed them the king's son."

"Seventh year": The beginning of Athaliah's seventh year of reign, 835 B.C.

"Rulers over hundreds": These were the commanders of each 100 soldier unit (2 Chron. 23:1-2), names 5 of these commanders. The bodyguards were "Carites" associated with the Pelethites (2 Sam. 20:23), who were mercenary soldiers serving as royal bodyguards. The escorts, literally "runners," were probably another unit of royal bodyguards who provided palace security (see 1 Kings 14:27). Jehoiada received an agreement of support from the royal guards, sealed with an oath of allegiance, and then presented Joash to them. The military leaders supported the plan to dispose of Athaliah and make Joash king.

Jehoiada was the high priest in the temple at this time. He was the husband of Jehosheba (verse 2; 2 Chron. 22:11). He had helped Joash and his aunt. It would not be an unusual thing for the high priest to call these leaders to the temple. They were probably, worshippers of Jehovah.

Jehoiada told them of Joash, and asked them to remove this wicked queen and anoint the 7 year old king of Israel. They all agreed, and took an oath to do just that. These leaders would have to find people throughout the land who would be faithful to the cause. They would come to Jerusalem on the Sabbath, so as not to raise suspicion.

Verses 5-8: Jehoiada outlined his plan to crown Joash as the king. On a selected Sabbath, the royal guards coming on duty, including priests and Levites (2 Chron. 23:4), would guard the palace as usual. They would especially make sure that no word concerning the coup in the temple courtyard reached Athaliah and those loyal to her. The companies going off duty would not return to their quarters as usual, but would instead report to the temple to form a tight security ring around the young potential king. The successful accomplishment of Jehoiada's plan is recorded (in verses 9-12).

2 Kings 11:5 "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;"

These were the rulers over hundreds among the priests and Levites, and which he, as high priest, could command, and whom he could convene without suspicion, being such as he had a connection with, and were unarmed men. And for the better understanding of what follows, it should be observed, that the priests, in the times of David, were divided into twenty four courses, which were by turns to serve a week in the temple. The course that came in entered when the Sabbath began, and that which went out went out when it ended. And each course consisted of a thousand men. Now with respect to both these courses, both that which went in and that which went out, Jehoiada gave them the following charge:

“A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath”: On the beginning of it, to do duty in the temple the week following:

“Shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house”: Which, according to some, was that part of the temple where the king was hid and brought up, supposed to be the north part of it. Or rather these were set at the north gate of the temple, which led to the royal palace, lest any should rush out of that, and kill the king.

This happens after an interval of time, where they have had time to make their plans and get the people involved. All of this had been done so quietly, that the queen had not suspicioned anything. A third of the people, who come in on the Sabbath, are to circle the king's palace and watch it.

2 Kings 11:6 "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."

“The gate of Sur”: The exact location of this gate is unknown. Verse 19 implies that this gate connected the temple with the palace.

This is explaining the sides of the palace, where they are to wait at the various gates. They do not want the palace destroyed. They just want the queen destroyed.

2 Kings 11:7 "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."

The course that went out of service at the end of the Sabbath; these were not suffered, not any of them, to go into the country, but were detained for the present purpose, and divided into two parts.

"Even they shall keep the watch of the house of the Lord about the king": These were placed in the temple where the king was, or where he should be brought forth, and be a guard on his right and left. This interpretation seems to be agreeably to the order of the text here, and is the sense of Jarchi. But there is this objection to it, that, by such a distribution of both courses, no provision is made for the services of the temple. Wherefore Dr. Lightfoot divides them into six parts, each into three. One third of the course that came in for service, the other to keep the watch at the king's house, and the other third at the gate Sur. And the course that went out, one third of them was placed at the gate behind the guard, and the other two to keep the watch of the house for the king's safety. But according to the account in (2 Chron. 23:4), there were but three ranks or orders of them in all. Wherefore the sense of Kimchi, Ben Gersom, and Abarbinel, seems most agreeable, that the first consisted of those that went in on the Sabbath. Not of all, but half of them, the other half being employed in the service of the sanctuary. And the other two of the course that went out, even all of them, they being entirely at leisure, who were divided into two parts, and disposed of as above.

The remaining two-thirds are to guard the house of the LORD. The young king is in the house of the LORD. If Athaliah found out about him being in the temple, she would gather her troops, and try to kill him. The men guarding the house of the LORD would keep that from happening.

2 Kings 11:8 "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."

Afterwards given them (2 Kings 11:10).

"And he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain": Any strange man that was not of them, that came into the ranks in which they were formed, was to be put to death as a spy, who might go and inform the queen what was doing. According to Jarchi, the word for "ranges" signifies the place through which the king went from his own house to the house of God; and here it seems the guards were placed.

"And be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in": When brought forth to be crowned and anointed, and returned again.

These guards were to build a human shield around the king. Anyone, who tried to get to the king, would be killed instantly. They could take no chances with his life. They are to stay with the young king at all times. When he goes to another room, they are to go with him.

2 Kings 11:9 "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."

Of whom (see 2 Kings 11:4).

"And they took every man his men": Everyone his hundred.

"That were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath": Both the courses, (of which see 2 Kings 11:5).

"And came to Jehoiada the priest": With the said courses, at least as many of them as were to be employed in the present service.

There were five centurions, and they did exactly as Jehoiada had commanded them to do. They knew that the LORD's will was spoken through Jehoiada.

2 Chronicles 23:7-8 "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." "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."

2 Kings 11:10 "And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spears and shields, that [were] in the temple of the LORD."

“Spears and shields”: These were probably part of the plunder David captured from King Hadadezer of Zobah (2 Sam. 8:3-12). Dedicated to the Lord by David (2 Sam. 8:7, 11), these articles were stored in the temple. Since the soldiers were already armed, these additional ancient weapons symbolically reassured the soldiers that the temple authorities approve of their actions.

It appears, there was an armory of some sort in the temple. This could have been because they were made with expensive metals, such as gold. We do know from the Scripture above, there were swords, spears, and shields.

2 Kings 11:11 "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."

As ordered (2 Kings 11:8).

"From the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple": From the northeast to the southeast.

"Along by the altar and the temple": The altar of burnt offering, which stood in the court.

These guards stood man to man around all of the walls, so there would be no way an intruder would be able to get to the king. They were so ready, that they did not have their swords in their sheaths, but in their hands.

Verses 12-15: The coronation symbols were "the crown" (political), and "the testimony" (religious), the covenant made between God and the people. Joash (Jehoash), was, by both accounts, the rightful heir to the throne. He was in the line of David and had God's blessing on his reign. Athaliah's cry of "Treason! Treason!" was empty and ironic; she had gained power through her own act of treason.

2 Kings 11:12 "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."

"The testimony" This was a copy of the whole law (Psalm 119:88). According to (Deut. 17:18-20), a copy of the law was to be kept with the king always so that it became his guide for life.

"Anointed" A priest or prophet customarily anointed kings, as here (1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kings 1:39; 2 Kings 9:6).

The young Joash held a copy of the law in accordance with the directions of (Deut. 17:18). The ideas of "crown" and "testimony" are also closely associated with the concept of covenant, so that Jehoiada's putting the crown on Joash's head and the testimony in his hand was likewise a symbolic proclamation that the young lad was David's rightful heir. His ceremony of national covenant renewal followed Athaliah's execution (verse 17).

The anointing of the young Joash was done in the temple of the LORD. It was Jehoiada who crowned him, and it was Jehoiada who anointed him. This shows the approval of the LORD of Joash as king of Judah. The statement "gave him the testimony" means that Jehoiada held the law over his head. This showed that, even though Joash was king, he was still under the law. The clapping of the hands, and the shouts of God save the king, showed the approval of Joash as king.

2 Kings 11:13 "And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard [and] of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the LORD."

Their acclamations and shouts at the coronation of the king. For by this time the people had some knowledge of the affair, and ran, and came flocking to see the new king, and express their joy on this occasion, and whom they greatly praised (2 Chron. 23:12).

"She came to the people into the temple of the Lord": The outward court, where the people were assembled. And she seems to come alone, unattended, in great surprise and consternation, and was admitted to pass the guards, being the queen. And alone, and perhaps by the particular order of Jehoiada, though contrary to the general orders he gave (2 Kings 11:8).

These evil queen had finally heard the noise of the shouting and the clapping of the hands. She came to the temple to see just exactly what was going on. She was not a worshipper of Jehovah, so she had not come to the temple during all of this preparation. Now she comes, not to worship, but to check up on these happenings.

2 Kings 11:14 "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."

"Pillar": Either one of the two pillars, Jachin or Boaz, on the temple's front porch (1 Kings 7:21), or a raised platform in the court of the temple (2 Chron. 6:13).

"People of the land": Probably Jehoiada chose to stage his coup on the Sabbath during one of the major religious festivals, when those from Judah who were loyal to the lord would be in Jerusalem.

It appears up until this moment, Athaliah had no idea there was anything going on, that she should know about. When she walked in and saw the young man crowned king and everyone rejoicing, she suddenly realized what had happened, and cried treason. The people, who had been admitted in to the coronation of the king, blew trumpets proclaiming their new king. This queen had been so evil, none of the people here would help her.

2 Kings 11:15 "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."

Of the priests and Levites.

"And said unto them, have her forth without the ranges": The ranks of the guards, which were at the gate leading to the palace, or rather "within" them. The meaning is, that he ordered her to be had out of the court of the temple, and be put within their ranks, and enclosed by them, that her blood might not be shed in the temple, and yet not escape them.

"And him that followeth her, kill with the sword": That takes her part, and offers to help and assist her, passing through the ranks after her, dispatch him at once.

"For the priest had said, let her not be slain in the house of the Lord": That it might not be defiled with her blood. By which it appears that the guards had orders concerning her before, should she come to the temple (see 2 Kings 11:13).

She was captured in the house of the LORD, but they were not to kill her there. They would carry her out away from the temple to kill her, because they did not want to defile the temple. It was highly unlikely that anyone would have followed her to help her, but if they did, they were to be killed, also.

2 Kings 11:16 "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."

“King’s house ... she was slain”: Execution was not appropriate in the temple area since it was a place of worship (2 Chron. 24:20-22). Thus, the soldiers seized Athaliah and put her to death at one of the entrances to the palace grounds.

This is not a literal laying of hands on her, because she was a queen. They probably surrounded her and walked her away from the temple to be killed. This shamed her even more, to be killed in such a place, where they carried the horses in. She did not deserve to be treated differently, however.

Verses 17-18: The “covenant” was not merely an agreement made in the past but a vow that needed to be continually renewed and entered into again and again, reminding the people of the pledges that had been made at mount Sinai (Exodus 24:3-8). This renewal led to action against Baalism; Baal’s “house”, Baal’s “Altars”, and Baal’s “priest” were destroyed.

2 Kings 11:17 "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."

“A covenant”: The renewal of the agreement between the people and the Lord and between the house of David and the people was appropriate because of the disruption under Athaliah. A similar ceremony was held later, during the reign of Josiah (23:1-3; see notes on Exodus 24:4-8).

At this point, Jehoiada was still in charge of all the happenings. The covenant (agreement), between the LORD and the King had to do with the people of Judah belonging to God. Their first obligation was to their God, and then to their king and nation. This agreement, that was made, was actually between three parties. God was the first part. The people of the land were the second part, and the young king was the third. The king must respect the LORD and the people. The people must obey God and the king. As long as they were obedient to God, they would be blessed.

2 Kings 11:18 "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 house of Baal”: A temple that had been built in Jerusalem and used by Athaliah to promote the worship of Baal in Judah. As Jezebel had promoted Baalism in Israel, her daughter Athaliah had sought its sanction in Judah. During Athaliah’s reign as queen, Baalism gained its strongest

foothold in Judah. This purge of Baalism in Judah paralleled the earlier purge of Baalism led by Jehu in the northern kingdom (10:18-29).

This house of Baal, and the false images and altars had been brought into the land by Athaliah. They tore them down, as they had killed her. They also killed the priest of Baal, Mattan, so that this worship of the false god would die out. Jehoiada appointed officers over the house of the LORD. Jehoiada re-established the worship in the temple. The Levites would again, serve in the temple.

2 Kings 11:19 "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."

Of which (see 2 Kings 11:4).

“And all the people of the land”: As many as were assembled together on this occasion.

"And they brought down the king from the house of the Lord": The temple, which was built on an eminence.

"And came by the way of the gate to the king's house": The gate of the royal palace, where the king's guards were placed, and did their duty.

“And he sat on the throne of the kings”: Where the kings of Judah used to sit, and this finished the formality of his being made king.

Joash had been hidden in a storage room just a very short time, until he could be taken to the temple for hiding. During all of the seven years in hiding, Joash had been hidden in the temple. Even all of the anointing services and the coronation had taken place at the temple, as well. Now, this young king will be taken to his palace and established as king. There was a large group of his captains and people who accompanied him to the palace to be set on the throne. He will keep a large number of these same men to guard the palace.

2 Kings 11:20 "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."

That one of the house of David was set upon the throne, which they might fear was extinct, as it very near was; the lamp of David was almost quenched. Only this single life left, from whom a line of kings proceeded, and the King Messiah. The promise of God cannot fail (see Psalm 132:11), this occasioned great joy.

"And the city was quiet": Was very easy at, yea, pleased with, the dethroning and death of Athaliah. There was no tumult on account thereof, nor such disturbances as she occasioned in her life.

"And they slew Athaliah with the sword beside the king's house": As related (in 2 Kings 11:16), where she was buried, or what became of her carcass, is not said. Some have thought she was cast into the brook Kidron, because Josephus says Jehoiada ordered her to be had into that valley, and there slain.

We just read that she was killed at the entrance, where they brought the horses in to the palace. That would have been very near the palace. Both Scriptures are correct. This evil queen's death would bring joy to all of the people, for being out from under her oppression.

2 Kings 11:21 "Seven years old [was] Jehoash when he began to reign."

"Jehoash": Jehoash and Joash are variants of the same name, meaning "the Lord gave" (see notes on 2 Chron. 24:1-27).

He had to have been just a tiny baby, when he was hidden from the evil queen. I cannot think of any woman as evil as she was. She undoubtedly had killed her children and grandchildren to become queen. Jehoash is the same as Joash. "Joash" means whom Jehovah gave. What an appropriate name for the new king. He would have a big job for such a little boy, but Jehoiada and others would help him. His main help would come from God. There was peace, because that tyrant Athaliah was dead.

2 Kings Chapter 11 Questions

1. What terrible thing did the mother of Ahaziah do, when she heard he was dead?
2. What was this evil woman's name?
3. When she married Jehoram, what false worship did she bring in the land?
4. Why did she kill her relatives?
5. Who hid one of the baby sons of Ahaziah?
6. What is another name for Jehosheba?
7. Where did she hide him at first?
8. Where was he kept hidden 6 years?
9. Why did this evil queen not know he was there?
10. Who was the high priest in the temple at the time?
11. Who did the high priest call to the temple to covenant with?
12. How did the people find out about this?

13. When were they to meet at the temple?
14. How many were to watch the king's house?
15. Who were to guard the house of the LORD?
16. How closely would they guard Joash?
17. Where did the spears and shields come from?
18. How ready were the guards?
19. Who crowned the boy, Joash, and anointed him to be king?
20. Why did Athaliah come to the temple?
21. What did she cry out, when she saw what was happening?
22. What did they do to her?
23. Where did they kill her?
24. Who did Jehoiada make a covenant with?
25. After they had killed the queen, what did they do to cleanse the land?
26. Who chose the leaders for the temple?
27. Who went with him, when they took him to the palace?
28. What does "Joash" mean?