

Used 7

A BAD QUEEN AND A GOOD PRIEST.

"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 Jehovah did they bestow upon the Baalim." "And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and his house." 2 Chron. 24:7 and 16.

The only queen ever to sit on the throne of David was a notoriously bad woman, Athaliah, that wicked woman. During the same period of Judah's history there lived a good priest ~~"of lofty character and devout spirit"~~, Jehoiada, who is described in scripture as having "done good in Israel and toward God and his house." This is an epitaph as commendable as that of Athaliah is disgraceful.

1. A Bad Queen.

1) Her influence over her husband, Jehoram. The evil influence of ATHALIAH was tremendous, right in her own home. Of her husband it is said, "And he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah." Someone has made this smart remark: "When you marry a child of the devil don't forget whom you will have as father-in-law." Under the influence of his wife Jehoram went down to ruin. "Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot, and led Israel astray." Then there came to him Elijah's menacing letter foretelling the wages of all this sin. The sad story about him is quickly told, as the wages of sin are paid in full. "And Jehovah stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians that are beside the Ethiopians."—"And after all of this Jehovah smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease."—"And he departed without being desired." No one regretted when he passed away. The influence of a bad wife is tremendous.

2) Her influence over her son, Ahaziah. "He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab; for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly." What a tragedy, a mother counselling her son to do wickedly! Contrast Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and Monica the mother of Augustine, and Susanna Wesley, the mother of John and Charles. The fate of this poor, unfortunate son of Athaliah may be told in a line: "Now the destruction of Ahaziah was of God" or as the RSV translates it—"ordained of God." "And the house of Ahaziah had no power to hold the kingdom."

3) Her usurpation. It is not surprising that such a woman as Athaliah, in order to get the throne for herself "arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah" with the exception of little Joash, who was providentially hidden in the temple. "But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in the bed-chamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah), hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land." The heroine of this story here appears as the aunt of the little boy Joash, and the wife of the priest Jehoiada, who is to be the hero as the story proceeds.

2. A Good Priest.

1) Jehoiada's Conspiracy. Here was a priest evidently sent to the kingdom for a time like this, to be used of the Lord in working His purposes out. He secured leaders in the kingdom to cooperate with him in an effective plan to resist the queen, and to set little Joash upon the throne. "And all the assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he (Jehoiada) said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as Jehovah hath spoken concerning the sons of David." When the time was ripe, "Then they brought out the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony, and made him king: and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him; and they said, Long live the king."

When Athaliah heard the noise of the people, of the guard, and of those who praised the king, she rent her clothes and said, Treason! treason! She was quickly slain. The result of the conspiracy was Joash crowned, Athaliah slain.

2) Jehoiada's sponsoring of a covenant. "And Jehoiada made a covenant between himself, and all the people, and the king, that they should be Jehovah's people." The results of this covenant were both destructive and constructive, destructive in that Baal worship was abolished, constructive in the appointment of the officers of the house of Jehovah, under the hand of the priests and Levites, "To offer burnt-offerings of Jehovah, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David." And nothing unclean was allowed to enter the house of Jehovah. ~~And~~ And they set the king on the throne of the kingdom. "So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet. And Athaliah they had slain with the sword."

3) Jehoiada's influence upon Joash. An influence of the opposite sort Jehoiada exercised over the young king, Joash. "And Joash did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah all the days of Jehoiada the priest." The main good interest that Joash seemed to have was in the repair of the temple. "And it came to pass after this that Joash was minded to restore the house of Jehovah. Here Jehoiada was his right hand man for the accomplishment of this task. It was he who was instrumental in the setting up of the Joash Chest beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of Jehovah. "It may be noted in this successful fund-raising undertaking, the project was duly authorized; it was thoroughly advertised; its purpose was clearly explained; the appeal was based on scripture; an effective method of collecting the money was used, and assurance was given that it would be properly accounted for." (Goodridge Wilson.)

4. Jehoiada's influence in the heart of the worship in the temple. All the days of Jehoiada not only did Joash do that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, but also they offered burnt offering in the house of Jehovah continually all the days of Jehoiada. Thus Jehoiada was influential not only in the matter of the repair of the temple, but also in the maintenance of the true worship in the temple.

5. Jehoiada's son, Zechariah. Following the death of Jehoiada at the good old age of 130, the people forsook the house of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and lapsed into gross idolatry. In the midst of this situation "the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of Jehovah, so that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken Jehovah He hath forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of Jehovah. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him but slew his son. And when he died, he said, Jehovah look upon it, and require it." Jehoiada's son, Zechariah was probably the last Old Testament martyr. Contrast his dying words which cried for vengeance with Stephen's which cried for forgiveness. This martyrdom is evidently referred to by Jesus in Matthew 23:34-35 when in denouncing the Pharisees He said, "that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar." Such martyrs as he Jesus also may have had in mind when he uttered the beatitudes of Matthew 5:10-12 "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake— Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Some of the most striking lessons for us from the scripture we have just reviewed may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. The curse of marrying a bad woman. "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers."

2. The power of influence, wrongly or rightly used.
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3. The comparative contributions made by Joash and Jehoiada to the temple. The contribution of Joash was for the material needs—the repair of the temple, which was a good and important work that needed to be done, and Jehoiada helped him to get it accomplished. However, thru the influence of Jehoiada the spiritual needs in the worship were observed, in the continual offering of burnt offerings all the days of Jehoiada. It was a burnt offering that Abraham offered up on Mount Moriah, the lamb, the substitute for his son Isaac typifying the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. All the days of Jehoiada there was being foreshadowed by the burnt offerings the sacrifice of the Savior to come.

4. The righteous judgment of God upon sin. This fearful truth brought out repeatedly in the story is emphasized in the final rebuke of Zechariah "Because ye have forsaken Jehovah, he hath also forsaken you." "Be sure your sin will find you out."

5. The patience and long-suffering of God. In the midst of the wrath of God that came upon Judah and Jerusalem for their guiltiness are recorded this evidence of His grace, "Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto Jehovah; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear." The many prophets of God in America today are a striking evidence of the patience and longsuffering of God. Let us take particular note of one more passage in our story which immediately follows the account of the terrible sins of Jehoram, king of Judah. "Hobbit Jehovah would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant he had made with David, and as he promised to give a lamp to him and to his children alway."

Now let us have Peter on the day of Pentecost to make the application of all of this in these words:

"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of th Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him."