



Writing Life Faith



Life of a King: Athaliah's Treason

The Tenth "King".

You can read Queen Athaliah's story in 2 Kings 11:1-16 and 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:15.

As official court scribe for Athaliah, wife of Jehoram and mother of the late King Ahaziah, and first queen of Judah, I record her words as follows in their unaltered form:

Upon discovering that my son was dead, murdered at the hands of the Israelite Jehu, grandson of Nimshi, I knew it wasn't long before he came for the rest of my family. I couldn't bear to see that happen, so I killed them myself. At least I thought I'd killed all of them. I proceeded to claim leadership in Judah.

Seven years later, I heard a commotion coming from the LORD's Temple. Now, you must realize the Temple was in ruin. There should never have been any noise coming from that building.

When I arrived, I found Ahaziah's seven-year-old son, Joash, wearing the royal robes and the king's crown. All the army commanders were present, and the people were rejoicing.

In despair, I shrieked, "Treason!" Then Jehoiada the priest ordered the guards to evict me from the Temple. What does he think he can do to me?

If you're a fan of firsts, today is one of those days. After her husband the king and her son the king both die brutal deaths, Athaliah finishes off the remaining family and takes the throne for herself. Unfortunately, she isn't the star of today's story, as Jehoiada the priest hides Ahaziah's son Joash away until the opportune moment. We're about to learn something big about God's nature.

First, let's see what Athaliah all did...

The Beginning.

"When Athaliah...learned that her son was dead, she began to destroy the rest of the royal family." (2 Kings 11:1)

Athaliah's reign begins with a lot of death as she secures her place as Judah's first queen. In the meantime, Ahaziah's sister, Jehosheba, takes his infant son and hides him in the Temple. It's the one place Athaliah doesn't think to look. What good can come from the Temple, after all?

The Middle.

"In the seventh year of Athaliah's reign, Jehoiada the priest summoned the commanders...to come to the Temple of the LORD." (2 Kings 11:4)

For seven years, it appeared that evil had won the fight. It's in this season that we learn a lesson about God: **He is always working, even when we don't see it.** For seven years, the people lived without hope as sin continued to reign.

Yet in the background, Jehoiada the priest was equipping Joash to take down Athaliah. If I were a citizen of Judah, I might have given up on God (if I hadn't done so years before). To do that would've been to miss His greatest work. Because God is drawing all things together for His ultimate glory.

When the time is right, Jehoiada calls for the military commanders, palace guards, leaders, and people of Judah to gather. In the Temple, surrounded by Judah's army, Joash is crowned king and given a copy of God's laws. (We'll look at these events more in-depth next week.)

The End.

"When Athaliah arrived, she saw the nearly crowned king standing in his place of authority by the pillar, as was the custom at times of coronation. The commanders and trumpeters were surrounding him, and people from all over the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets..." (2 Kings 11:14a)

Unfortunately for Athaliah, she misses the invitation to Joash's coronation. When she arrives for the party, she shouts, "Treason!" Jehoiada quickly orders her taken outside the Temple, where her bitter reign comes to a bitterer end as her blood is spilled outside the gate.

This was not the end she envisioned, watching her grandson steal the glory. She certainly hadn't planned to leave the kingship to a seven-year-old.

What Defined Athaliah?

Despite Athaliah bucking God's plan and trying to make a name for herself, God's message shines even brighter: evil doesn't get the spotlight. **The enemy may rule for now, but good will always triumph.** Why? Because God is at work. Aside from a series of prolific familial homicides, there was no substance to Athaliah's life. At the end of the day, evil amounted to nothing.

Which leads me into my takeaway from Athaliah's life...

God is Always Working

"Then Jehoiada brought out Joash, the king's son, placed the crown on his head, and presented him with a copy of God's laws. They anointed him and proclaimed him king, and everyone clapped their hands and shouted, 'Long live the king!'" (2 Kings 11:12)

To anyone in Judah, life under Athaliah would have been bleak. They had no reason to believe the LORD was there for them, especially after all the sins they'd committed. What they didn't notice was God's secret plan. **In this case, waiting on God served to magnify what He would do.** If He hadn't let the people wait, there's no shot they would've listened to Joash when he shared his plan to rebuild the Temple. The more the people saw the perils of sin, the more open they grew to the truth.

I'll give you a personal example. In a bonus post from summer, I recalled the aftermath of the wildfires that almost burned down our camp. I neglected to mention the month we spent praying that the fire wouldn't reach camp. From mid-May to mid-June, we prayed. Nothing seemed to happen. The fire moved closer, the evacuation notice stayed in effect, and time ran out. We kept praying.

Then crunch time came. The leadership team had to make a decision by Saturday on whether to run camp or not. It didn't look good. It appeared that nothing was happening. Then, less than 48 hours before a decision had to be made, the notice was lifted. The fires never came any closer to camp. **What seemed like God's silence was really His work in the background.**

As a result, we had countless opportunities to share the power of prayer and trusting God with the campers. As a bonus, waiting on the LORD grew our prayer lives. This only happened because we stayed faithful to God, knowing He would stay faithful to us.

Good/Bad.

Athaliah was the first queen of Judah, but her life looked no different than that of the previous rulers. She tried taking matters into her hands, like many before her. Meanwhile, God had a grand plan, gradually raising up Joash and leading Judah back to Him. Upon discovering God's plan, Athaliah reacted as the devil one day will: *With a shout of shock and dismay before being taken outside God's presence to encounter fate.*

Which is why we need to put Athaliah in her place on the Kings Chart. She is our seventh ruler on the 'BAD' side.

It's been a dark road for Judah, yet it's beautiful to realize that God never abandoned them. Judah continued to trust idols before God, and their kings made poor alliances. Nevertheless, God didn't give up on them. It took two wicked kings and a wicked queen, but we've made it to the other side. Judah is about to enter its longest stretch of good kings...sorta...

This transformation begins just two verses after Athaliah's death, in 2 Kings 11:18a... *"And all the people of the land went over to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They demolished the altars and smashed the idols to pieces...."*



Written by Samuel James
To access more content, visit WritingLifeFaith.com

