

[R4776 : page 73]

MURDERS HER GRANDCHILDREN EASTER SUNDAY'S LESSON

– APRIL 16. – 2 KINGS 11:1-20. –

"Blessed are they that keep his testimony, and that seek him with the whole heart." – Psalm 119:2.

JEZEBEL'S daughter, Athaliah, on the death of her husband, became Queen Dowager of the Kingdom of Judah, her son Ahaziah becoming King. In Oriental lands the King's mother is still the highest authority in the Kingdom, as, for instance, in China. This was the custom with the Jews. As Queen Dowager Athaliah had exercised a powerful and baneful influence against the true God and his worship and in favor of Baal worship. Here is not the only instance in which the intermarriage of the kings of Israel with the daughters of foreign kingdoms brought great injury. Her mother Jezebel was another notable illustration. And we remember that it was Solomon's foreign wives who ensnared him.

In line with all this we remember that the Divine command to all Jews was that they should not intermarry with other nationalities. Every deviation from the Divine Law seems to have brought with it serious penalties. This is strictly in harmony with God's arrangement with that one nation alone, that they should be his people in a peculiar sense, that other nations were not his people and that obedience to his laws would bring them blessings and disobedience bring them adversities. That Law is still upon the Jews, but it is not upon others.

A proper recognition of the antitype, or spiritual significance of that item of Jewish Law, should be observed by all; it is applicable to Christians, who constitute, from the Divine standpoint, "a holy nation, a peculiar people." Christians are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Christians are to come out from the world and be [R4777 : page 74] separate. This, however, does not apply to nominal

Christians, but only to the spirit-begotten class, who have made a full consecration of themselves to the Lord. These are counselled to marry "only in the Lord" – only the consecrated. Those who disregard this Divine injunction endanger their own spiritual development, as well as their own happiness and the happiness of the worldly person with whom they become yoked.

MURDERING FOR POWER

When King Ahaziah was slain by Jehu, his mother, the Queen Dowager, realized instantly that this meant her loss of rank and power – the power and honor and riches which her selfish, proud heart so loved. She realized that the moment her grandson ascended the throne she must vacate her position in favor of her daughter-in-law. Her selfish, proud heart resolved that on no account should this be. Rather, she would be a murderess. Forthwith she caused her grandchildren to be slain, except one, an infant, who was hidden by his aunt in a room used for the storage of sleeping mats, and, in our lesson, styled a bed-chamber. Subsequently, he was nursed until his seventh year, in one of the rooms connected with the old temple, which was in disuse during Queen Athaliah's reign, as she favored and upheld the worship of Baal.

One lesson for us here is the power of pride. We may well hope that many could not be influenced to become murderers, even with such inducements. But not many of us will ever have such a temptation either to grasp a throne or to retain hold on one already possessed. Other illustrations of the power of pride leading to murder, in the interest of a throne, are mentioned in history. For instance, King Herod's murder of all the infants of Bethlehem of two years and under was to preserve to himself and his heirs the throne of Israel. History tells us of how Laodice poisoned her six sons, one by one, that she might be Empress of Constantinople. Another mother named Irene, which name signifies *peace*, gouged out the eyes of her own son that he might be incapable of ruling the Empire over which she sought to reign alone.

No wonder the Bible declares that the heart of man in his fallen condition is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! No wonder the Bible tells us that the blessing of the New Covenant which God will establish with the world through Israel, during Messiah's reign, will operate to the taking away of the stoniness of the heart and to the return to mankind of a heart of flesh – a proper human sympathy such as the perfect man had when he was created in the image and likeness of God! How glad we are that Messiah's Kingdom will not merely restrain sin and sinners, but, by restitution processes, take away the stoniness of heart and bring as many as are willing of mankind back to tender-heartedness and into harmony with the Divine Law of Love for God and for the neighbor!

Since we are not kings and queens and have not their temptations, let us note that the same principle of hard-heartedness operates in the business world, in the social world and in the family. In the business world, it operates to the destruction of a rival concern. In the social world, it cuts rivals, prompts to misrepresentation, slander, etc. In the home, as between parents and children, brothers and sisters, it frequently means injustice. The correction for all this is a love of righteousness which will lead each to love and to obey the Golden Rule and, as nearly as possible, to comply with the Divine will, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy mind and all thy being and all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself."

CROWNING THE BOY KING

The young King was named Joash. He was kept in hiding six years and, in his seventh year, was crowned. Jehoiada, the High Priest, whose daughter had rescued Joash, superintended the inauguration ceremonies. With great wisdom he called together the chiefs of the nation at a festival time, when their coming would not be thought strange. Likewise the guards were so disposed as to give every protection to the young King and leave the palace without protection. The ceremony passed off successfully. The Queen Dowager, hearing

the shouts, "Long live the King!" came forth from the palace to the temple to investigate and, realizing the situation, cried, "Treason, treason!"

So it is that injustice sometimes becomes entrenched and fortified in human minds so that an attempt to establish righteousness is considered treason, rebellion, outrage. The lesson to all the Lord's consecrated children is, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." – Prov. 4:23.

When the crown was put upon the young King's head, on top of it was laid the Testimony, the parchment scroll of the ten commandments. Thus was indicated that the Divine Law was superior to the crown. Such should be the estimation of the matter in every well-balanced mind. Divine Law comes first; human laws second. And human laws are usually up to as high standards as the people who make them are worthy.

Judah must have been considerably sunken in the qualities of patriotism and manhood to allow the Dowager Queen to usurp the throne by murder for six years. Similarly states and cities, permitting and recognizing the domination of frauds and combines against the public interests, are usually getting as good treatment as they deserve. It is the heart, the intellect, the mind that is to be educated up to the higher standards – then those high standards will be attained by the body politic.

=====