

MURDERS HER GRANDCHILDREN

– *OCTOBER 31. – 2 KINGS 11:1-20. –*

JEZEBEL'S DAUGHTER BECAME QUEEN OF JUDAH – HER BANEFUL INFLUENCE AS QUEEN DOWAGER – SERIOUS RESULTS OF DEVIATION FROM THE DIVINE LAW – POWER OF PRIDE – SELFISHNESS LEADING TO MURDER – THE BOY JOASH CROWNED KING AT THE AGE OF SEVEN YEARS – THE WICKED ATHALIAH SLAIN.

"The house of the wicked shall be overthrown; but the tent of the upright shall flourish." – Proverbs 14:11.

JEZEBEL'S DAUGHTER, Queen 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 exercised a powerful and baneful influence against the true God and His worship and in favor of Baal worship. This is not the only instance in which the intermarriage of the kings of Israel with the daughters of foreign royal houses brought great injury. Athaliah's mother Jezebel was another notable illustration. We remember also that it was King Solomon's foreign wives who ensnared him.

In line with all this we remember that the Divine command to all Israelites 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 Law would bring them blessings; but that disobedience would bring them adversities. (Deuteronomy

7:6-11.) That Law is still binding 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." (1 Peter 2:9.) Christians are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. (2 Corinthians 6:14.) Christians are to come out from the world and be 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 that of the worldly person with whom they become yoked.

MURDERING FOR POWER

When King Ahaziah was slain by Jehu (2 Kings 9:27,28), his mother, the queen dowager, realized instantly that this meant her loss of rank and power – the power, the honor and the 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 styled in our lesson 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 not many could 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 retain hold upon 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 old and under was to preserve to himself and his heirs the throne of Israel. History tells us that 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.

No wonder the Bible declares that the heart of man in his fallen condition is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! (Jeremiah 17:9.) 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 human 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! (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26; Jeremiah 31:31-34.) How glad we are that Messiah's Kingdom will not merely restrain sin and sinners, but by restitution processes will take away the stoniness of heart and bring as many as are willing of mankind back to tender-heartedness and to harmony with the Divine Law of love for God and for the neighbor!

Since we are not kings and queens and do not have 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 misrepresentations, 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, [R5787 : page 315] and to comply as nearly as possible with the Divine will – "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy being and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself."

CROWNING THE BOY KING

The young king's name was Joash. He was kept in hiding for six years, and in his seventh year was crowned. Jehoiada, the high priest, whose daughter had rescued Joash, superintended the coronation ceremonies. With great wisdom he called together the chiefs of the nation at a time of festival, when their assembling would not be thought strange. Likewise the guards were so disposed as to give every protection to the young king and to leave the palace without protection.

The ceremony passed off successfully. The queen dowager heard the shouts, "Long live the king!" and came forth from the palace to the Temple to investigate. Realizing the situation, she cried, "Treason! treason!" So it is that sometimes injustice becomes so entrenched and fortified in human minds that an attempt to establish righteousness is considered treason, rebellion, outrage. To all the Lord's consecrated children the lesson is, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." – Proverbs 4:23.

When the crown was placed upon the young king's head, on top of it was laid the parchment scroll of the Ten Commandments. Thus was indicated the fact 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 queen dowager to usurp the throne by murder for six years. Similarly, states and cities that permit and recognize 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 higher standards will be attained by the body politic.

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