

Jehoiada:

I murdered a queen. The queen of the Southern Kingdom. Yes, you heard me correctly, Jews had a queen who ruled over us. I was not a prophet, but I was the priest who killed the only queen of the Southern Kingdom.

King Joash:

One morning I'm in the temple, hiding out, as I've done every day of my life for as long as I can remember. Jehoiada, my friend and teacher, takes me outside. In the bright sunlight, unlike I typically was allowed. He places a crown on my head, anoints me, and proclaims me king.

Jehoiada:

The Northern and Southern kingdoms split in the year 930 BC. The first two kings of the Southern Kingdom were Rehoboam and his son, Abijah. They intensified the worship of false gods that was introduced by Solomon. Within only a couple of decades under their rule, the people of Israel were dedicated to worshipping false gods. However, for the sake of his promises to David, God allowed the Southern Kingdom to continue to exist, although it was greatly impoverished because he allowed the Pharaoh of Egypt to plunder the country.

The next two kings of the Southern Kingdom were Asa and Jehoshaphat. They made progress in ridding the Southern Kingdom of idols and false gods, but they did not completely eliminate the practice. They were considered good kings for reducing idol worship, and they did enrich the country by defeating many of its enemies. With the country having regained its commitment to God, and being on an economic upswing, you would think that the people would stay the course.

Entered Jehoram. He was the fifth king of the Southern Kingdom, and reigned only eight years. He did immense damage to the morality of the Southern Kingdom. He was an evil king. He made the monstrous mistake of marrying the daughter of Ahab. King Ahab, the most evil king of the Northern Empire. After the marriage, Jehoram reintroduced the worship of false gods and idols to the people of the Southern Kingdom. This was tragic because the people were on course for their land to be completely cleansed of false gods.

Although the Lord continued to let the Southern Kingdom exist, for the sake of David, he allowed a country that David had conquered to revolt...Edom. From that point on, the Southern Kingdom no longer received tribute from Edom, but was forced to incur the costs of armies to defend against Edom. This was a huge financial blow to the Southern Kingdom.

That blow was compounded when the Lord aroused the fury of other enemies who attacked the Southern Kingdom, completely looted it. They took everything, including all of the goods in the palace, and all of the king's wives and children except the youngest, Ahaziah.

Just when the evil King Jehoram thought things could not get worse, the Lord inflicted him with an incurable disease of the bowels. His bowels came out of his body, and he died in great pain. The people did not mourn the death of the evil king. Unfortunately, Jehoram had already caused incurable destruction.

Ahaziah, Jehoram's youngest son, was the sixth king of the Southern Kingdom. Twenty-two years-old when he became king. Young and stupid. By allying with an evil king of the Northern Kingdom, and making an ill-advised war against Aram, Ahaziah was dead within a year. Here is where the story starts to get exciting.

Ahaziah's mother was Athaliah. You need to remember her name, Athaliah. She was the daughter of a king of the Northern Kingdom. An evil king. She was of the house of Ahab, and Athaliah was exceeded in her wickedness by no woman, except possibly Jezebel.

Upon hearing of the death of her son, Athaliah decided to eliminate any competition to the throne of the Southern Kingdom by murdering all of the relatives of the king. Many of those relatives were her own sons and grandsons. Admittedly they were mostly evil, too, but that was still an extraordinary thing to do, because it would have potentially ended the House of David.¹

Believing she had killed off all of her competition, Queen Athaliah ruled the Southern Kingdom for the next six years. You can't imagine the evil she brought into the land during those six years.

Let me say again, Queen Athaliah *believed* she had killed all her competition. The Bible does not say, but here is one theory about what happened next. Queen Athaliah had a step-daughter who seemed to be more of a partner, than competition. The stepdaughter agreed to marry the main priest and keep him in line. This would eliminate the priests of God as one source of protest against her evil actions. What the Queen didn't know was that the step-daughter and the priest were running a scam on her, a scam on the Queen. That's some pretty inside information. How would I know? I married the step-daughter. I am the Temple's main priest. I am Johoiada.

My wife and I hid one of the Queen's grandsons at the Temple during her murderous purge. Of course, the Queen never came to the Temple, so hiding him was simple. When the young boy was seven years old, I could wait no longer because the Queen's evil deeds were destroying our country.

¹ 2 Chronicles 24:7

I called together the commanders of the army and showed them the young prince. I received their commitment to put him on the throne and end the rule of the evil queen. Hidden in the temple were the spears and shields of none other than King David. I armed the commanders and their men and put my plan into motion.

I stood the young prince in front of the people, put a crown on his head and a copy of the Scriptures in his hand, and anointed him king over the Southern Kingdom. The people shouted for joy and blew trumpets to signify their happiness.

Only a few hundred yards from her palace, Queen Athaliah heard the commotion and came to the Temple grounds. She saw the entire scene. She tore her robes, "Treason, treason!" she shouted. I'm sure she expected her commanders to protect her and keep her in power.

Instead, I ordered them to seize her and drag her away from the sacred Temple. They obliged me, of course, and dragged her to the entrance of the palace. They put her to death immediately. That is not the best part.

Taking advantage of the people's reaction, I made a covenant with the Lord, the king, and the people that they would rededicate themselves to being the Lord's people. I also had the people rededicate themselves to the young king. Still, not the best part.

Here is the best part. We smashed the altars and idols to pieces, and killed the priest of Baal in front of the altars. This was the beginning of a purge of idols and false gods from the Southern Kingdom.

All of us were delirious with joy! We took the young king to the palace and installed him as king over the Southern Kingdom. As a priest of the Lord God, I did not think I could be happier. But I was to find out that my happiness would depend on the future actions of a seven-year-old king named Joash.

Hiding was all I ever knew, I never really knew why, but suddenly to be in the sunlight, crowned, anointed... everything was happening so fast, and that was just the start of it.

A few minutes later, an old lady appears with guards, interrupting the party screaming! The commanders around me grab her, drag her away, and kill her. I don't find out until later — she was my grandmother!

The crowd rushes to a large building nearby, the temple of Baal, and they begin to smash it... the building. Then they kill the white-robed man who came outside to protect it. It seemed like only a few minutes longer, and I was in the palace being crowned as king. From the shadows of the temple to the throne of the Southern Kingdom in a few hours max.

What would you have done? Perhaps you would have been wise enough to do what I did. Continue to take the advice and direction of the man I had always trusted, the priest Jehoiada. The man who was also my uncle.

I reigned for forty years, and Jehoiada was my counselor for many of those years. He died at the age of one hundred and thirty, and was buried with the kings in the City of David because of the good he had done for Israel, for God, and for the Temple. I say all of this because of the ominous verse in the Bible that says I did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, *during all the years of Jehoiada the priest.*²

One century into its existence, I became King of the Southern Kingdom. During most of that time, the people had worshiped false gods and idols. The Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem had become shabby and neglected.

I concocted a plan to repair the Temple by specifying the use of various offerings and vows to be used solely for that purpose. Unfortunately, I put the priests of the Temple in charge of the money. After many years of this going on, and the Temple not being repaired, I called for a change. After consulting Jehoiada and the other priests, I put the royal secretary in charge of the money expenditures. He paid the workmen directly, and the repairs soon got done.

The priests had been using much of the money to make sacred objects for the Temple, not repair the building, so it's a good thing I made the change. Years later, the king of Aram threatened Jerusalem, and I had to buy him off by giving him all of the treasures in the Temple and palace. Any of the objects the priests would have made, would have been lost anyway. That may just be rationalization on my part, though.

I did a good job of slowing the worship of idols, I was not able to keep all the people from returning to it. When Jehoiada died, many leaders of the people flocked to me. They convinced me to abandon my devotion to the Temple and allow the people to worship Asherah poles and idols. It was crazy, but I did. When Jehoiada's son, Zechariah, came to prophesy against my actions, I did not repent.

I allowed the people's anger to get to me, pressure me... I ordered the death of Zechariah, the son of my precious mentor and uncle. He laid there, dying, and he called upon the Lord to repay my wickedness. Jesus referenced my despicable actions in a rant against the Jewish leaders of his time.³

At the end of the year, the army of Aram invaded the Southern Kingdom. They killed all of the leaders of the people and severely wounded me. The last thing I saw was the Aramean's carrying off all of our treasures to Damascus. Then, my own officials murdered me in my bed.

² 2 Chronicles 24:2

³ Luke 11:51

I was a pretty good king in the beginning, but failed miserably at the end. Why? Probably because I was the same way as my son. The Bible described him as, “He did right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly.”⁴ A shame, really... “not wholeheartedly.” After all I’d been through, all I’d seen. Be sure those words are never said about you.

⁴ 2 Chronicles 25:2