

CHAPTER 23

Six years bloody Athaliah had tyrannised; in this chapter we have her deposed and slain, and Joash, the rightful heir, enthroned. We had the story before nearly as it is here related, ~~<2104>~~2 Kings 11:4, etc.

- I.** Jehoiada prepared the people for the king, acquainted them with his design, armed them, and appointed them their posts (v. 1-10).
- II.** He produced the king to the people, crowned him, and anointed him (v. 11).
- III.** He slew the usurper (v. 12-15).
- IV.** He reformed the kingdom, re-established religion, and restored the civil government (v. 16-21).

~~<4201>~~ 2 CHRONICLES 23:1-11

PREPARATIONS TO RESTORE JOASH

We may well imagine the bad posture of affairs in Jerusalem during Athaliah's six years' usurpation, and may wonder that God permitted it and his people bore it so long; but after such a dark and tedious night the returning day in this revolution was the brighter and the more welcome. The continuance of David's seed and throne was what God had sworn by his holiness (~~<3825>~~Psalm 89:35), and an interruption was no defeasance; the stream of government here runs again in the right channel. The instrument and chief manager of the restoration is Jehoiada, who appears to have been,

1. A man of great prudence, who reserved the young prince for so many years till he was fit to appear in public, and till the nation had grown weary of the usurper, who prepared his work beforehand, and then effected it with admirable secrecy and expedition. When God has work to do he will qualify and animate men for it.

2. A man of great interest. The captains joined with him, v. 1. The Levites and the chief of the fathers of Israel came at his call to Jerusalem (v. 2) and were there ready to receive his orders. See what a command wisdom and virtue will give men. *The Levites and all Judah did as Jehoiada commanded* (v. 8), and, which is strange, all that were entrusted with the secret kept their own counsel till it was executed. Thus *the words of the wise are heard in quiet*, ^{<2017>}Ecclesiastes 9:17.

3. A man of great faith. It was not only common equity (much less his wife's relation to the royal family) that put him upon this undertaking, but a regard to the word of God, and the divine entail of the crown (v. 3): *The king's son shall reign, must reign, as the Lord hath said*. His eye to the promise, and dependence upon that, added a great deal of glory to this undertaking.

4. A man of great religion. This matter was to be done in the temple, which might occasion some breach of rule, and the necessity of the case might be thought to excuse it; but he gave special order that none of the people should come into the house of the Lord, but the priests and Levites only, who were holy, upon pain of death, v. 6, 7. Never let sacred things be profaned, no, not for the support of civil rights.

5. A man of great resolution. When he had undertaken this business he went through with it, *brought out the king, crowned him, and gave him the testimony*, v. 11. He ventured his head, but it was in a good cause, and therefore he went on boldly. It is here said that his sons joined with him in anointing the young king. One of them, it is likely, was that Zechariah whom Joash afterwards put to death for reproving him (^{<1400>}2 Chronicles 24:20), which was so much the more ungrateful because he bore a willing part in anointing him.

^{<1412>}2 CHRONICLES 23:12-21

JOASH CROWNED AND ATHALIAH SLAIN

Here we have,

I. The people pleased, v. 12, 13. When the king stood at his pillar, whose right it was to stand there, *all the people of the land rejoiced to see a rod*

sprung out of the stem of Jesse, ^{<29100>} Isaiah 11:1. When it seemed a withered root in a dry ground, to see what they despaired of ever seeing — a king of the house of David, what a pleasing surprise was it to them! They ran in transports of joy to see this sight, praised the king, and praised God, for they had with them such as *taught to sing praise*.

II. Athaliah slain. She ran upon the point of the sword of justice; for, imagining her interest much better than it was, she ventured *into the house of the Lord* at that time, and cried, *Treason, treason!* But nobody seconded her, or sided with her. The pride of her heart deceived her. She thought all her own, whereas none were cordially so. Jehoiada, as protector in the king's minority, ordered her to be slain (v. 14), which was done immediately (v. 15), only care was taken that she should not be *slain in the house of the Lord*, that sacred place must not be so far disgraced, nor that wicked woman so far honoured.

III. The original contract agreed to, v. 16. In the *Kings* it is said that Jehoiada made a covenant between the *Lord*, the people, and the king, ^{<12117>} 2 Kings 11:17. Here it is said to be between *himself*, the people, and the king; for he, as God's priest, was his representative in this transaction, or a sort of mediator, as Moses was. The indenture was tripartite, but the true intent and meaning of the whole was that *they should be the Lord's people*. God covenanted by Jehoiada to take them for his people; the king and people covenanted with him to be his; and then the king covenanted with the people to govern them *as the people of God*, and the people with the king to be subject to him *as the Lord's people*, in his fear and for his sake. Let us look upon ourselves and one another as *the Lord's people*, and this will have a powerful influence upon us in the discharge of all our duty both to God and man.

IV. Baal destroyed, v. 17. They would not have done half their work if they had only destroyed the usurper of the *king's* right, and not the usurper of *God's* right — if they had asserted the honour of the throne, and not that of the altar. The greatest grievance of Athaliah's reign was the bringing in of the worship of Baal, and supporting of that; therefore that must be abolished in the first place. Down with Baal's house, his altars, his images; down with them all, and let the blood of his priests be mingled with his sacrifices; for God had commanded that seducers to idolatry should be put to death, ^{<6535>} Deuteronomy 13:5, 6.

V. The temple service revived, v. 18, 19. This had been neglected in the last reigns, the priest and people wanting either power or zeal to keep it up when they had princes that were disaffected to it. But Jehoiada restored *the offices of the house of the Lord*, which in the late times had been disturbed and invaded, to the proper course and proper hands.

1. He appointed the priests to their courses, for the due offering of sacrifices, according to the law of Moses.

2. The singers to theirs, according to the appointment of David. The sacrifices (it should seem) were *offered with rejoicing and singing*, and with good reason. *We joy in God when we receive the atonement*, ~~<451>~~Romans 5:11. 5:11.

3. The porters were put in their respective posts as David ordered (v. 19), and their office was to take care that none who were upon any account ceremonially unclean should be admitted into the courts of the temple.

VI. The civil government re-established, v. 20. They brought the king in state to his own palace, and set him *upon the throne of the kingdom*, to give law, and give judgment, either in his own person or by Jehoiada his tutor. Thus was this happy revolution perfected. The generality of the people rejoiced in it, and the rest were quiet and made no opposition, v. 21. When the Son of David is enthroned in the soul all is quiet and springs of joy are opened.