2 Chronicles - Commentaries by Andrew Miller

Meditations on the Grace and Glory of the Blessed God, Promise Fulfilled, The

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Athaliah was a daughter of the wicked king Ahab, and daughter-in-law of the good king Jehoshaphat. This was a connection entirely opposed to the mind of God, and He marked it, in His righteous judgment, with His sore displeasure. One disaster after another befel Jehoshaphat and his house, because he "joined affinity with Ahab "

When he commenced his reign, it is said that he " strengthened himself against Israel, and placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah... And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat." But afterward he greatly erred in forming an alliance with Ahab to recover Ramoth-gilead, which all ended in disaster and confusion. 2 Chron. 17; 18

Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, who reigned in his father's stead, had Athaliah " the daughter of Ahab to wife." She was filled with the cruel and persecuting spirit of her father's house, and lent herself to Satan to do his work. She was an instrument of cruelty in his hands. For, although her immediate object, in killing all the seed royal, was to take possession of the throne herself, the object of Satan was very different. From the days of Abel, his aim had been to cut off, by means of death, the line of the promised seed, and thereby frustrate the purpose of God, destroy the faith of His people, and break them off from trusting in His word.

God had promised to David that He would establish his seed forever, and build up his throne to all generations. (2 Sam. 7; Psa. 89) Hence, Satan's great object now was to prevent the accomplishment of this promise by destroying all the seed royal. " But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah." Having thus, as she thought, got completely rid of the true heir, she took possession of the throne herself, and " reigned over the land."

This was indeed a sad sight in Judah, and most trying to the faith of the faithful. God had promised the throne, in solemn covenant, to David and to his sons forever, and now a wicked usurper of the apostate house of Ahab occupies it. But faith endures as seeing Him who is invisible. The enemy may appear for a time to triumph, but it is only in appearance, and for a short duration. " The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations." (Psa. 33:11.) God is over all, and above all. His word can never fail. Let us " only believe," and trust in Him. Faith, in due time, will be answered, the promise fulfilled, and every enemy utterly confounded.

Satan had now done his utmost: he could do no more. Death is the last act of his power; but God is the God of resurrection. Where Satan ends, God begins. He quickens the dead. At this very moment, when the hopes of the house of Judah seemed lost, He was watching over, in His faithful love, the true heir of the throne of David. Accordingly, we read, "But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years." Thus Joash, the true heir, was preserved by the intervention of God. " He was rescued from among the king's sons that were slain." He was like one that had been raised up " from among " the dead. It was a resurrection " from among " the slain ones. The power and instrumentality of Satan end when he has brought in death, but the power and instrumentality of God come into operation just where his end. All his malignant efforts, and the cruelty of his instruments, only prove, more fully, the unchangeableness of God's purpose, and the eternal stability of His word.

There are several points of special interest to the Christian in this instructive narrative which I desire to notice in order.

In the wonderful deliverance of the infant Joash from the hand of Athaliah, we have a striking illustration of the resurrection of Jesus, by the mighty power of God. Joash was stolen " from among the king's sons that were slain." Jesus was raised up from among the dead. The former was hidden in the house of God-the latter is hidden in His Father's house on high.

In Athaliah, on the throne of David, we have an equally clear illustration of the present position and guilt of the world, with reference to the crucifixion of Christ, the heir of every promise. The world, led on by Satan, crucified Christ. God holds it guilty of the deed. It " is condemned already." When the Jewish "husband-men saw the Son, they said among themselves,

This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." (Matt. 21:38.) The religious Jew and the godless Gentile joined hands to shed the blood of Jesus. They, together, crucified the " heir of all things," the Lord of life and glory. " The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together." (Acts 4:26, 27.) Here we find gathered around the cross of Jesus, the representatives of every class; namely, Jew and Gentile, king and subject, priest and people. The whole world was, representatively, at the cross, and took part in the crowning act of man's sin. Christ refers to this when He says, " Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John 12:31.) The world was judged in the death of Christ, and its prince cast out. They go together. God will hold every man to his colors. Those that fight under the banner of the Prince of life will at last enter into the joy of their Lord; but those that fight under the banner of the prince of this world must be cast out with him.

The whole power of Satan was concentrated at the cross. He brought up all his forces to this point. He staked everything-the power of the world, and the power of darkness..(Luke 22:53.) He had ever watched, with most malignant jealousy, God's chosen vessel of wondrous grace to man. He missed Him when he slew the babes in Bethlehem. He was overcome in the temptation in the wilderness, and bound by a stronger than he. But he returned to Him again. " The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." He had no power of death over God's unblemished Lamb. He laid down His life of His "own voluntary will." "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." (John 10:17, 18.) His death, then, was not the result of the power of

man or Satan over Him; but of His own perfect subjection to His Father's will. At the same time it clearly proved the extent of Satan's power in the world. As the obedient One He lays down His life. In appearance the enemy triumphs. But it was not so. " Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Heb. 2:14.) This was absolute victory. He bore the judgment of God against sin in His death, and thereby completely annihilated all the rights and power of the enemy forever. Morally, judicially, and absolutely, the true seed royal triumphed over the great enemy of God and man. True, " He was crucified through weakness." But He entered the regions of the dead as " the Son of God with power." His presence was felt throughout the deep caverns of the grave. He burst its bars asunder, and carried off in triumph the spoils of the enemy. " He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive." A risen Christ is Lord of all.

But my reader may be disposed to ask, On whom, at this period of the world's history, does the guilt of the death of Christ rest? Most assuredly, we answer, on all those who side with the world. God has not yet publicly vindicated the honor of His beloved Son, or judged the world for its awful guilt in murdering Him. If the blood of Abel cried to God for vengeance on Cain, surely the blood of the holy, spotless Jesus cries for vengeance on those who not only shed it, but despise it. If we are not justified by faith in the shed blood of Jesus, we are condemned by it. We are either by faith on the side of Christ, or in unbelief with the world, and, as it were, approving of what the world did, though we may not say so in words. In the sight of God, we are on the world's ground, and under the world's guilt and condemnation.

In vain did the chief priests remonstrate with Peter and John on this point. They said, " Behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." (Acts 5; 28) It is quite plain, from this and other passages, that these divinely-qualified preachers brought home, to the consciences of their hearers, the truly solemn charge of blood-guiltiness. But the same precious blood speaks of the love of God, as well as of the sin of man. Both found their highest expression in the cross. All who have faith in the blood of Christ are cleansed from all their sins, justified in the presence of God, and " accepted in the Beloved."

3. If Athaliah illustrates the present position of the world, Jehoshabeath illustrates the present position of the church. She was hidden in the house of God with Joash, the rejected and unknown king, whom the world thought to be dead, but whom she knew to be alive. Of all Christians it is said, " Your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3) The eye of Jehoshabeath rested in the fullness of hope on the true and living heir. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." (Heb. 2:9.) " When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Col. 3:4.

And now, let me ask, what sympathy could there be between Jehoshabeath and Athaliah? Surely, none whatever! Could the former take any part in the schemes, plans, or principles of the latter? Could she assist her, in any way, in the administration of her affairs, or conform to the fashion of her court? Oh, no! There was not a particle of fellowship between them. Athaliah was a murderer and a usurper, her garments were deeply stained with the blood of the sons of David. Besides, Jehoshabeath knew that the moment Joash was revealed, the usurper would be hurled from her throne-that his appearance would be the death-blow to her reign; therefore, she was content to wait until then. The " six years " would soon run their rapid course: it was but " a little while," and God would place the true heir upon the throne of David.

The application of all this to the church is very easy. Whole-hearted separation from the world is her true place; and holy, happy, living association with Christ, her divine Lord and Bridegroom. If the believer is indeed enjoying communion with Christ, he can have no fellowship with the world, either in its spirit, principles, or ways. " For I am jealous over you," says the apostle, " with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin [an unearthly virgin] to Christ." (2 Cor. 11:2.) And again, " Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." May we have no sympathy with either the world or its lovers. The first blast of the trumpet will be the death-knell to them all.

4. If, in Jehoshabeath, we see heart for Joash, in Jehoiada, her husband, we see faith in activity for him. The affections of the former were gathered around the person of the prince; the faith of the latter was energetic, in making every necessary arrangement for the glory and stability of his throne. He was a man of faith, energy, and devotedness. In leading so many to make a covenant with Joash, while yet unseen, he illustrates the present energy of the Holy Spirit, in connection with the preaching of the gospel, in leading souls to trust an unseen Jesus, and to rejoice in hope of His coming kingdom and glory.

"And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds.... And they went about in Judah, and gathered all the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David."

At this point of our narrative, I would most affectionately ask-Have you, my dear reader, embraced, by faith, the unseen, but risen, living Christ, as your Prince and Savior? This is a personal question of eternal importance. All that believe in Jesus are within the sure limits of the everlasting covenant. " The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." (Heb. 13:20.) Have you, dear reader, for yourself, before God, faith in this precious blood? The blood that was shed on Calvary is the foundation of every blessing. There is nothing but judgment, overwhelming judgment, before the sinner, that has not been washed from his sins in the blood of Jesus. Oh! can you say to Jesus, with all your heart, " I am Thine, and on Thy side: I cleave to Thee, and trust to Thee alone. The world is guilty. I am guilty, being of it. But Thou art righteous, 0 holy, spotless, blessed Jesus. Yet Thou sayest, Come! Come unto me.' By faith I come, I come to Thee, and bid an eternal farewell to this doomed world of ours. Thy word is plain and sure-' Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' " Through grace, I rest in Thy word, rejoice in Thy work, confide in Thyself, and wait for Thy coming, as Thou hast said, " Surely I come quickly; amen, even so come, Lord Jesus."

5. In the position of the Levites we may see the future position of the church in glory, with reference to its place of nearness to the Person of Christ. They were, typically, a dead and risen people; and also, typical of the church in its priestly character as " a royal priesthood."

"And the Levites shall compass the king round about.... but be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out."

The bride of the Lamb, the beloved Eve of the second Adam, will have her own special place of blessed nearness to the Person of Christ in millennial and everlasting glory. She has the temporary title of " bride," but also the permanent one of "wife." The affections of the bride will be as lasting as the relationship of wife.

Oh, wondrous grace! wondrous glory! What a " blessed hope " the Christian's is! To be chosen by a greater than Jehoiada-" to compass the king round about.... to be with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out." Is the heart of my reader established in this most precious, soul-elevating truth? Is he looking, not for an advent merely, but for a Person? The Christian's true place and proper hope is, " To serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." " We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." We shall see His glory, hear His wisdom, and enjoy His love, "for we shall be like him;" shining in His grace, and reflecting His glory.

6. Every needful step having been taken by the active and faithful Jehoiada, all things were ready. The seventh, or millennial, year was come, and now, Joash, the rightful heir to the throne of David, is brought forth from his secret hiding-place. He comes in the glory of his father's house. He is surrounded with the " spears, and bucklers, and shields, that had been king David's "—the bright memorials of the victories of David. " Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king; and Jehoiada anointed him, and said, God save the king. The king stood at his pillar at the entering in, the princes, and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise."

This was a day of great joy and gladness of heart to Joash, to Jerusalem, and to all who waited for his appearing. Faith was now answered, patience rewarded, and the promise fulfilled. " Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord bath said of the sons of David." But if it was a day of light and joy and rejoicing

to Joash, and to all who had sided with him during his rejection, it was a day of darkness, and gloom, and terrible despair to Athaliah, and to all who had sided with her during her reign. The day of vengeance was come, and oh, what a day to the despisers of the true heir! " Now Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the Lord. And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar." The pillar of immovable promise. This was enough; the first glimpse of Joash filled her whole soul with the terrors of judgment Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason! treason! But Jehoiada answered her vain cry with, Judgment! judgment! " Have her forth of the ranges," was the imperative word of command, " and whoso followeth her let him be slain with the sword,.... and they slew her there."

Thus, Judgment, unmitigated judgment, closed the six years' reign of the guilty Athaliah and all her deluded followers. Solemn, awfully solemn, foreshadowing of the final doom of this guilty world and all its deluded followers, who are willingly ignorant that the true heir is alive in the house of God on high, and justly claims our allegiance!

The scene being now completely cleared of the usurper and her followers, the king is peacefully, gloriously, and triumphantly placed on the throne of his father David. The nobles, governors, and people of the land "set the king upon the throne of the kingdom. And all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword."

What a solemn lesson we learn from these concluding words! " The people rejoiced, and the city was quiet." When? AFTER that they had slain Athaliah with the sword. When, oh! when will this groaning creation rejoice? When will the city of the whole earth be quiet? AFTER the judgment already passed has been executed. AFTER the vials of God's wrath have been poured out. But not until then. Could Joash have reigned in fellowship with Athaliah? Impossible! The scene must be cleared of the enemies of the king before he sits upon his throne.

Christ's "hand will take hold on judgment" before He takes hold of the scepter of righteousness. " Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with THEE?" (Psa. 94:20.) The whole scene must be cleared of His enemies, and Satan bound. Then " the prince of the kings of the earth " will ascend His throne of righteousness, and sway His scepter of peace over a restored and delivered creation. Then UNTO HIM, " whose right it is " to reign, shall all its tribes and tongues roll their loud, and long, and rapturous Hosanna, around a peaceful, happy, and rejoicing millennial earth. "BEHOLD, a king shall reign in righteousness.... and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Isa. 32.

0 blessed hour! when all the earth

Its rightful Heir shall yet receive;

When every tongue shall own His worth,

And all creation cease to grieve.

Thou, dearest Savior I thou alone

Canst give Thy weary people rest;

And, Lord, till Thou art on the throne,

This groaning earth can ne'er be blest.

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