

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

## The Grinch That Almost Stole Christmas II Kings 11:1-21

**Intro: vs1)** We read this verse and think, “Oh, how unfortunate.” But the event recorded here is much worse than unfortunate, much worse even than terrible. What we’ve just read is potentially earth-shattering, history-altering and eternally consequential! How so? We live in the Deep South and the holiday season is almost upon us. Let’s imagine the perennial holiday tradition for all of South LA is to celebrate Christmas by enjoying a hot mug of cinnamon-spiked prune juice (a delicacy); it wouldn’t be Christmas without it! Let’s also imagine that this tasty treat is only made in Alberta, CN and it is sent to us through an above-ground plastic pipeline. Now, what if some grumpy party-pooper in MT got some bad boudin and decided that South LA didn’t deserve to have a Merry Christmas so they punch a hole in that pipeline that’s all open, exposed and so vulnerable.

This exactly what God’s done; He made the coming of His kingdom – thus, Christmas – depend on a promise that He made and He placed that promise, open and exposed, right smack-dab in the middle of all the turbulence and upheaval of human history. This promise is often called the Davidic covenant, when Yahweh assured David that his dynasty would last forever (II Sam 7:16, Ps 89:36). God’s promise means that David’s line of kings – the Davidic “pipeline”- would never end and eventually, the promised Messiah would bring David’s line to its awesome climax!

But, holes started to be punched in that pipeline. The kingdom of Israel was divided and David’s line ruled over a postage-stamp size kingdom called Judah and there the day finally came (around 840BC) when it looked like there would never be a Christmas and human history would be lacking one Messiah. But, never fear, for the text forbids us to despair. The truth **ch11** teaches is that God will never allow His promise or His kingdom to fail.

But, considering the current state of the kingdom of Judah we must ask the question: how did it come to this? How did Athaliah get here in the first place? If you recall, she was the daughter of Israel’s wicked King Ahab who was given in marriage to Jehoram, the son and royal heir of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. She was the mother of Ahaziah, who recently fell victim to

Jehu's coup in Israel. So good king Jehoshaphat and bad king Ahab finalized an alliance between their 2 kingdoms by marrying off a couple of their kids.

Now, as long as Jehoshaphat lived, life in Judah was much the same. What difference did a state marriage make? But after he passes off the scene, things quickly take a turn for the worse. [II Chron 21:1-7](#) says that when Jehoram became king, he killed all 6 of his brothers and "other...princes;" no doubt at the urging of Athaliah because this type of royal behavior was unheard of in Judah. Now Athaliah is conducting her own massacre. Surely Jehoshaphat had never suspected that his expedient diplomacy would lead to such ruin for his family and kingdom. But that's exactly what happens when you disregard your commitment to the Lord when making the important decisions of life.

**1** – Many historical movies open with a message that says Based On Actual Events which leads us to believe it's an accurate depiction of historical fact only to discover that poetic license was used to make the picture more exciting. The same can be said about Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas. Sure, it's a bit of a stretch but if Athaliah had had her way, there would've been no angels singing to shepherds, no swaddling clothes or good news of great joy. IF Athaliah's massacre is successful, there would be no descendent of David born of a virgin. But to call Athaliah a Grinch is pretty much an understatement. When we consider the facts, she resembles someone much worse.

First off, one wonders who could possibly be left for Athaliah to murder. David's descendents had already been severely decimated. Jehoram killed all his brothers then later both the Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah and carried off or killed all of Jehoram's sons except the youngest – Ahaziah ([II Chron 21:16-17; 22:1](#)) who eventually became king. Then, during his 1 year reign, Ahaziah is killed by Jehu along with 42 members of Judah's royal family. As horrible as it sounds, the only descendents left to David in Judah would have been Athaliah's own grandchildren and yet, she rose up and destroyed all the royal heirs. To call her a Grinch would require an apology to the Grinch. No, there is a much darker spirit behind her actions here.

Upon hearing that her son Ahaziah was dead, Athaliah decided that she

would then ascend to the throne, that she would rule Judah, that she would be queen. Of course, in order to do that every possible rightful heir to the throne must be eliminated. Yes, we're shocked at this horrible reality but this is simply the typical trend; this is merely a sample of the inherent hatred the rulers of this world have for Christ's kingdom. It's terrible, yes; but typical. This is the sort of thing you can expect from the movers and shakers of this world when they have the power to do so.

Look at Herod in [Matt 2](#). Reprobate rulers possess a savage hostility towards Jesus Christ, His people and His kingdom and sometimes they are so successful that God's plan and people may seem to be on the verge of extinction. We don't have to wait until [Dan 7](#), [II Thess 2](#) or [Rev 13](#) to see the antichrist; there are plenty of antichrists along the way. Clearly, the spirit of antichrist is at work in Athaliah. I'm sure she had no clue as to God's plan for a coming Messiah, she just wanted the throne. I will ascend; I will rule; I will be Queen... Who does that sound like? I'm not saying she was possessed by Satan but anyone who allows self-will to rule their hearts instead of Jesus is touched by, influenced by the spirit of antichrist. That spirit is alive and thriving in the world today.

**2** – Wherever antichrist is, God always has faithful servants. Here it is Jehosheba, sister of Ahaziah, daughter of Jehoram (different mother) and wife of Jehoiada the priest ([II Chron 22](#)). Somehow in the middle of this massacre she sneaks the infant Joash out of the room with his nurse and hides them in what amounts to be a storage room. Later, they move him into her apartment in the temple complex where she raises him for 6 years. God's promise to David was just 1 infant shy of proving false and falling to the ground. What a crucial moment! Jehosheba was the human agent responsible for preserving the kingdom of God in this world. If it weren't for her, there wouldn't be any Christmas. The Davidic pipeline would've been broken. Here is the lady who saved Christmas.

Do we understand how strategic Jehosheba's action is here? God's promise hung be an frazzled thread and she kept it from snapping. Notice God's method in all of this. There's no spectacular intervention, no amazing miracle where the earth opened up and swallowed Athaliah. God could've done that but He didn't. He had His servant in place. Now, you might think, "Good for her!" but I'm not likely to be in such a critical position like the one she faced. Are you sure? If you're a Christian parent, you have the

responsibility to serve as prophet, priest and king over your household. As prophet, to teach and example the Word of God; as priest, to intercede and wrestle in prayer for them; as king, to rule with proper discipline and protection the eternal benefit of your family. Don't ever think your kingdom service doesn't matter.

**3** – There are actually 2 kingdoms described in this verse; there's the visible reign of the illegitimate kingdom (**3b**) and the secret existence of the true king (**3a**). Athaliah the usurper rules but the chosen king, the rightful heir to the throne secretly reigns, unknown to her. The true king is there all along, behind the scenes, and the pretender doesn't even have a clue. This is one reason why Athaliah was able to reign for 6 years: no one had any alternative! There's often a vast difference between what is apparent and what is actually true. Too many people live under the reign of Satan because they don't know there is a true, legitimate King ready to reign benevolently over their life.

This truth should be an anchor for our faith; not the secret rule of Joash but the reality that a far greater than Joash now reigns – David's descendent, Jesus Christ the Lord. The rulers of this age and the pagans around us don't know this secret, they refuse to believe it, but that doesn't make it any less true. If you believe **Eph 1:20-22**; if you have let that sink down into your heart, it will put iron in your faith and make you able to resist any power that tries to control you. Is there a habit you can't seem to break? Is there a sin that seems to have a strangle hold on your life, that prohibits you from moving forward with God? Are outside influences holding your thoughts, confusing your heart and bringing doubt and fear into your mind? There's a legitimate King that secretly reigns who will empower you to be victorious over them and keep you from despair while the pretenders carry on.

**4-12** – Jehoiada, the husband of Jehosheba, was a priest and a godly man. He was concerned with restoring the throne of David back to the line of David and taking it away from the wicked daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Life under Athaliah had to be miserable for all who were faithful to Yahweh but only 2 people in Judah knew about Joash. But Jehoiada is about to remedy that. He convened a secret meeting with the captains of the royal guard, the bodyguards (Carites, foreign mercenaries) and temple guards. He swore them to fidelity and secrecy and revealed the rightful heir to the throne.

This was a dramatic moment. For 6 years everyone believed there were no surviving heirs to David's royal line and there was no legitimate ruler to displace the wicked Athaliah. The secret had to remain secure because Joash would have been immediately executed if his existence became known to the Queen. These guards must have been shocked and pleased at the sight of this 6 year old king.

Then Jehoiada prepares for an official coronation. He chose the Sabbath as the day for the coup since that was the day the guards changed shifts and they could assemble 2 groups of guards at the temple without attracting any unwanted attention. He gave all the guards the weapons of David, which was fitting since they were going to use them to protect and reinstate the descendent of David to David's throne. He then stations each contingent of soldiers to strategically protect the young king. Then he brought Joash out, put a crown on his head, the Word of God in his hand and anointed him as king over Judah and, as they say...the crowd went wild!

There's a familiar ring to the process of **v12**. First, they brought him out: The king had to be revealed. No one could support him and he couldn't take his rightful throne until he was brought out before the people. Next, the king had to be crowned: this was the public and official recognition of him as king. Third, the king had to come with the Word of God. This was in accordance with **Deut 17:18** which states that the king should have his own copy of the Scriptures.

But the king wasn't the only one with an important part to play because the text goes on to say: they made him king. The king had to be received! He had the royal right to impose his reign but he allowed his reign to be received. Then they anointed him. The king could never fulfill his office without a divine anointing. Finally, the king received praise once he was recognized and established as their rightful king. We must follow the same pattern in receiving Jesus Christ, the last Son of David, the true King; the Messiah. .

**13-16** – By the time Athaliah gets wind of the royal party she wasn't invited to, she busts in on the proceedings, sees what's already happened, tears her clothes and cries Treason! Pot and kettle anyone? It's a marvel she could say it with a straight face. Not wanting to get her nasty blood on the temple grounds, Jehoiada orders her to be hauled out of the temple and

disposed of on the way to the palace. The horse gate was a fitting end for the old grey mare (nag).

No one mourned for Athaliah in Judah. As far as they were concerned it was goodbye and good riddance.

**17-21** – There's another important principle nestled in this passage that's of special significance. First notice the covenant of **v17**. This was actually a covenant renewal or rededication. Covenant fidelity had been soundly rejected by the previous 3 rulers: Jehoram, Ahaziah and Athaliah. Now it was time to return to a mindset and a lifestyle that renews their commitment to Yahweh. But there are 3 parties involved in this ceremony. The king and the people both must again pledge themselves to the requirements of the Law (**Ex 19:1-8**). But, there's also a covenant to be made between the king and the people. This covenant defines the king's obligation to the nation and fulfills the function of a modern constitution.

Secondly, notice immediately after the rededication to the covenant there is destruction (**18**). There was a temple to Baal in Jerusalem! No doubt part of Athaliah's legacy. I'll bet these Judeans were more than happy to get in there and start doing a little demolition. But this wasn't a house cleaning or a remodel – they tore down the structure, demolished the religious paraphernalia and terminated the employment of Baal's priest. They figured that it wasn't just the temple that didn't need Mattan anymore; the earth was tired of having him around as well.

But, there's a principle revealed in the sequence of these 2 events. Covenant leads to destruction. If there's going to be a true, lasting faithfulness to God (**17**) then everything that attempts to sap and seduce that faithfulness must be rejected and thrown down (**18**). When truth reigns the false must be eliminated. If this doesn't happen, then your victory in Jesus will be short lived. You can't have a solid, secure, victorious commitment to Christ unless all that would sabotage that commitment is eliminated. Some may find 18 unpleasant but it was an unpleasantness that was commanded by Yahweh (**Deut 13**). Covenant plus destruction has always been the biblical way. This day in Judah, faithfulness to God meant holy demolition.

Yet, Jesus makes the same kind of demand on all would-be disciples (**Lk 14:25-27**). He makes the same demand on blind moralists (**Mk 10:21**); He

makes the same demand on any lax churches that cling to false doctrines and heresies (Rev 2:16). Paul exhorts believers in II Cor 10:5 to cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Of course, this is only necessary if you have previously made a commitment to Jesus Christ. That commitment now requires a certain amount of destruction in order to keep it secure; in order for it to continue to have an impact on your life and the lives of those around you. We can't be an effective testimony for Jesus Christ when we allow the spirit of antichrist to hold undue authority in our hearts. You can't just paint over it because the rebellion will just bleed through. It must be destroyed; it must be removed for good.

Finally, in the face of such evil and the near ruin of God's redemptive plan for mankind, it's interesting to note that nowhere in ch11 do we hear God speak, see Him inspire or even act through His people on His own behalf of that of His promise. All we see are 2 faithful believers who are wise and resolved to save the day. Because of them the Davidic promise has a future. They take this issue into their own hands by rescuing and hiding Joash, by raising him and instructing him on his royal duties both to Yahweh and His people. In stead of intervening directly, it seems God has simply entrusted this significant work to this faithful couple and has chosen to be dependent on what they do.

God does still work in miraculous ways today but His decision to work through people means that what they do; what each one of us does, truly counts for something. We may not recognize the eternal significance at the moment; we may never know the significance of most of our faithful actions until we arrive in eternity, but we know that we are making a difference because God has chosen to use us to expand His kingdom here on earth. Yes, He calls us, equips us and empowers us to do the work but ultimately, its up to us, His people, to carry the gospel, to reveal the true King that now reigns in secret to a world that is convinced this is a good as it gets. It's our responsibility to not only tell them there is a better way but to show them, through are lives that Jesus is the only way.

You may have never heard of Jehosheba until today and yet, she's the one who saved Christmas. God doesn't need prominent or powerful people to see His will performed on this earth. He's just looking for faithful people,

that's all He needs. That's all He asks for. 😊