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Alastair Roberts

Removing Athaliah. The replacement of Judas.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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Transcript

2 Kings 11 Divisions of you which come on duty in force on the Sabbath, and guard the house of the Lord on behalf of the King, shall surround the King, each with his weapons in his hand. And whoever approaches the ranks is to be put to death. Be with the King when he goes out, and when he comes in.

The captains did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded. And they each brought his men who were to go off duty on the Sabbath, with those who were to come on duty on the Sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest. And the priest gave to the captains the spears and shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of the Lord.

And the guards stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, from the south side of the house to the north side of the house, around the altar and the house on behalf of the King. Then he brought out the King's son, and put the crown on him, and gave him the

testimony. And they proclaimed him King, and anointed him.

And they clapped their hands, and said, Long live the King. When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard, and of the people, she went into the house of the Lord to the people. And when she looked, there was the King standing by the pillar, according to the custom, and the captains and the trumpeters beside the King, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets.

And Athaliah tore her clothes, and cried, Treason, treason. Then Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains who were set over the army, bring her out between the ranks, and put to death with the sword anyone who follows her. For the priest said, Let her not be put to death in the house of the Lord.

So they laid hands on her, and she went through the horse's entrance to the King's house, and there she was put to death. And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the King and people, that they should be the Lord's people, and also between the King and the people. Then all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and tore it down, his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Matan the priest of Baal before the altars.

And the priest posted watchmen over the house of the Lord, and he took the captains, the chariots, the guards, and all the people of the land, and they brought the King down from the house of the Lord, marching through the gate of the guards to the King's house. And he took his seat on the throne of the kings. So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been put to death with the sword at the King's house.

Jehoash was seven years old when he began to reign. Second Kings chapter 11 is the completion of a bloody cycle of vengeance upon the house of Ahab, led by Hazeiel and Jehu. In the north this struck a strong blow against Baal worship, but didn't ultimately change the fundamental direction of the nation, as it had been set by Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

The people continued to worship the golden calves at Dan and Beersheba under Jehu. In the south however, it led to the start of a project of reformation under Jehoash. The judgement comes in a series of blows, and these blows come in cycles of three, three of them.

Perhaps this might remind us of the pattern of the plagues that came upon Egypt in the book of Exodus. There are several Exodus patterns in Second Kings chapter 11, as we shall see. The judgements that have already occurred in order are the death of Joram, the death of Ahaziah, the death of Jezebel, the death of the 70 sons of Ahab, the death of the 42 relatives of Ahaziah, the death of the worshippers of Baal, and the death of Jehu.

In this chapter we come to the death of the seed of Ahaziah, and then the death of Athaliah. Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, when she hears that her son is dead, kills the royal family. Her concern is that the royal family, the house of David, will destroy her as a member of the house of Ahab.

The political tide has turned against the Umayyad dynasty, and whereas formerly it would have been a benefit to have an Umayyad queen, now it is a great liability. Jehu has purged the north of the house of Ahab, and he has even killed a great many of the royal family of the southern kingdom, who had gone up to the north to visit Jezebel, and members of the extended royal family. It is worth noting that this is not the first time that a ruler of Judah had killed many members of their own royal family.

Athaliah's own husband Jehoram had killed his brothers, as we see in 2 Chronicles chapter 21 verse 4. When Jehoram had ascended the throne of his father, and was established, he killed all his brothers with the sword, and also some of the princes of Israel. We should consider the likelihood that Athaliah was the one who had incited Jehoram of Judah to this action. Her mother was Jezebel, and she is parallel to Jezebel in many respects.

Both in 2 Kings and in 2 Chronicles, she is presented as a key means by which the infection of the Omrides afflicted the southern kingdom. Once Athaliah and her husband had set this precedent, she was naturally going to fear falling foul of it herself when her own son was killed. We should also recall the cannibalistic women of Samaria in chapter 6. Here is another woman who devours her children, and it seems that in those women we have some foreshadowing of the women of this chapter.

There is once again a split between two women, with Jehoshabab, Jehoram's daughter and Ahaziah's sister, rescuing her nephew, the infant Joash, from the hand of his murderous grandmother and hiding him away. If there was one place in Jerusalem's complex of royal buildings that Athaliah was unlikely to frequent, it would have been the Temple of the Lord. Jehoshabab was the wife of Jehoiada the priest, so she could hide Joash in the temple complex with his assistants, without raising too many suspicions among supporters of Athaliah.

She could raise him as if he were her own son. Jehoiada, we should note, is the first significant priest of the Lord to appear since the days of Solomon. In 2 Chronicles 22, verse 11, we get further details of this event.

As a child being raised in the house of the Lord, under the fatherly guidance of a priest, we might be reminded of Samuel. Not only is Joash a member of Jehoiada's family, he is a member of the household of the Lord. Athaliah's reign, which interrupts the reign of the Davidic kings, is not treated as a legitimate reign, and is accompanied by none of the regnal details that accompany other rulers, even those who won the northern throne through coups.

Had she not been disqualified as an imposter, Athaliah would have been the only queen regnant in the histories of Israel and Judah. In the seventh year, the sabbatical year as it were, Jehoiada makes his move. It is an auspicious time to do so, it's also associated with the Sabbath.

Jehoiada clearly wields significant influence, and enjoys powerful command over a number of units of soldiers. The identity of the Karaites is uncertain. His scheme would be set in motion when the guard changed, at a time when it would be most likely to pass undetected for a critical window of time.

The main body of the soldiers, two units, are set around Joash, who would be publicly revealed. They are to strike anyone who approached Joash. Joash is referred to as the king, he is the true heir of the throne.

This is not a coup, but the overcoming of a coup. The third unit, who have just come from the temple, divide into three, and they are stationed around the palace. Jehoiada armed the men with weaponry of David and the Temple.

They will be restoring the Davidic king on the throne with David's arms. He then brought out Joash, crowned him, gave him the testimony, the book of the law, which represented the king's accountability to the Lord. They proclaimed him king, anointed him, and then they cheered his coronation.

Athaliah, hearing the commotion, goes to the house of the Lord to discover what is happening. Joash is standing beside the pillar, likely the pillar of Boaz, by the entrance of the Temple, representing the king himself as a pillar of the nation. Perhaps it is named after his ancestor Boaz, the great-grandfather of David.

Arrayed before Joash is an assembly celebrating and rejoicing. Just as Joram had declared outside Jezreel to her son Ahaziah, Athaliah cries out that treachery is occurring. Lysa-rei-beel notes that the words for her tearing of her robe and her crying out are extremely similar.

Athaliah is taken from the precincts of the house of the Lord, and she is executed in the king's house. Having executed Athaliah, Jehoiada leads the people in making a threefold covenant between the Lord and the king and the people. Joash would rule in the name and the authority of the Lord, and the restoration of the Davidic throne had to occur on the foundation of that relationship.

Jehoiada also established a covenant between the king and the people. The king does not have absolute rule. The king and the people have mutual obligations.

The king is under the Lord, who is the true king, and he is responsible to the people. Having established this covenant, the people go to the house of Baal and tear it down, much as Jehu had done in Samaria in the preceding chapter. Joash is then ceremonially

processed to the palace and enthroned there.

Following Joash's enthronement, the land and the city rejoice and have peace. This completes the great outpouring of judgment upon the Omrides and Baal that had first been initiated in the ministry of Elijah. As the southern kingdom of Judah had been so polluted by the idolatries of the north, it should not surprise us to see many similarities between the judgments that fall upon both.

Peter Lighthouse observes some of the parallels. In chapters 9-10, we have Jehu's secret coronation. Trumpets announcing him as king, shouts celebrating him, a king crying treason, Jehu having Jezebel killed, and the house of Baal being destroyed.

In chapter 11, the same pattern plays out, but now in the southern kingdom. Joash has a secret coronation, trumpets and shouts announce him, a queen cries treason, Jehoiada has Athaliah killed, and then the house of Baal is destroyed. We should also notice themes associated with the exodus.

A royal figure is trying to kill off all of the baby boys. One is hidden so that he can later lead and deliver his people. After a succession of blows against the enemies of the Lord and their false gods, a new covenant is formed and the house of the Lord will then be restored.

A question to consider, how are the figures of Jezebel and Athaliah connected and paralleled in their lives and in their deaths? Acts chapter 1 verses 15-26 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers, the company of persons was in all about 120, and said, Brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry. Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out.

And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language, Akkeldama, that is, Field of Blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it, and let another take his office. So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until the day when he was taken up from us, one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.

And they put forward to, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, You Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry, and apostleship, from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place. And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Luke's account of the replacement of Judas in the number of the apostles at the end of Acts chapter 1 is an interplay of light and shadow. In the ten days between the Ascension and Pentecost, the upper room is a site charged with expectancy, awaiting the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, Peter's recounting of the gruesome manner of Judas' death presents a grim image of the fate of those who oppose Christ's kingdom.

The upper room is a staging ground for the coming phase of Christ's mission through his church. In addition to intense communal devotion to prayer, the choice of Matthias to replace Judas within the twelve was a necessary part of the preparation that needed to occur. The need for a replacement for Judas is one of several reasons to believe that the number of the twelve was not arbitrary.

The twelve represented the twelve tribes of a renewed Israel. Giving the numbering of the disciples at this point as 120, ten times twelve, is also likely significant. The twelve will represent the heads of the restored tribes at Pentecost, so it is important that a full complement be present.

The gory manner of Judas' death and Peter's application of imprecatory psalms to him sits uneasily with many modern Christian sensibilities. Yet, unsettling as such themes may be to our ears, it is difficult adequately to understand Luke's vision of Christ's mission without an appreciation of the deathly shadow that Christ casts over his opponents. Whether in Judas' prophetically foretold suicide, in the Holy Spirit slaying Ananias and Sapphira for their attempted deception, in Peter's cursing of Simon the sorcerer, or the angel striking Herod and condemning him to a gruesome demise, or even Paul's blinding of Elymas the sorcerer, Luke repeatedly presents the Spirit's mission as one that can have devastating and even fatal consequences for those who oppose it, for those who wrongly seek to claim God's power for themselves like the seven sons of Sceva, or for those who attack his people.

Christ will place all his enemies under his feet, he will overcome the nations that rage against him, and he will judge his wicked servants. While Christ is good, he is far from safe. Not only Christ's salvation, but also the actions and the fate of those who oppose him are foretold in prophecy.

The destruction that Christ's reign brings to his enemies is an important aspect of his kingdom. The Gospel writer's accounts of Christ's enemies are often designed to recall the great adversaries of God's people in history and their fates. For instance, the Herods are depicted in a manner recalling the Pharaohs and Ahab, while Ananias and Sapphira are like Achan.

The account of Judas' actions and his death also stirs various scriptural memories, especially those concerning the treacheries and attempted coups experienced by King David in the latter years of his reign. Peter's declaration that the Holy Spirit spoke about

Judas through David treats David's words concerning his own life as typologically revelatory of what will befall his greater son. In the Gospels, we also see narrative parallels being drawn between David and Jesus.

Judas is the trusted familiar friend. He sits with Jesus at the table, yet he betrays him, as we see in Psalm 41 verse 9, which is quoted in John 13 verse 18. David is betrayed by Ahithophel, his close friend and advisor, in 2 Samuel chapter 15.

David leaves Jerusalem, he crosses the brook Kidron, and he weeps as he ascends the Mount of Olives in 2 Samuel 15. This is paralleled with the ministry of Christ in John chapter 18 verse 1. David is ministered to by a messenger, as Christ is ministered to by an angel. David is assaulted by Shimei with violence and cursing, as the mob come out to take Jesus.

His right-hand man, Abishai, like Peter, wants to strike the king's enemy down, but David prevents him, much as Jesus restores the ear of the high priest's servant after Peter has struck him. In Matthew's Gospel, we are told that, like Ahithophel, a regretful Judas parted ways with the conspiracy that he had initially assisted and hanged himself, in Matthew chapter 27 verses 3 to 10. In 2 Samuel, both the betrayer Ahithophel and the unfaithful son of David Absalom end up hung from trees.

In Matthew, both the betrayer Judas and the faithful son of David suffer a similar fate, although here it is the contrast that the juxtaposition of the two invite that attract our attention. Many have struggled to reconcile Luke's account of Judas' suicide with Matthew's, and solutions with various degrees of plausibility have been proposed. It seems most likely to me that Luke is foregrounding another connection between Judas and David typology here.

Judas is playing the role of Joab. Joab was the treacherous and Machiavellian commander of David's army. He was a man who was twice involved in coups, the first a successful internal coup, restoring control of David's army back from Mamasah during the rebellion of Sheba in 2 Samuel chapter 20.

Joab had been deposed in chapter 19 verse 13, and the second his support of the pretender Adonijah in 1 Kings chapter 1. In 2 Samuel chapter 20 verse 8 to 12 we read the story of Joab's treachery towards Amasa. Is it well with you my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa did not observe the sword that was in Joab's hand, so Joab struck him with it in the stomach and spilled his entrails to the ground without striking a second blow, and he died.

Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri, and one of Joab's young men took his stand by Amasa and said, Whoever favours Joab and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab. And Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the highway, and anyone who came by seeing him stopped. And when the man saw that all the people

stopped, he carried Amasa out of the highway into the field and threw a garment over him.

Joab then is the one who betrays with a kiss. He cuts Amasa's stomach open with his sword so that his entrails pour out. Amasa's bloody body is placed in a field, and everyone who passes it by is arrested by the sight of it.

1 Kings begins in the final days of David's reign as he instructs his son Solomon concerning the kingdom and establishes him on the throne. The opening chapter of the book of Acts is comparably resumptive in its narrative character. It begins at a similar point.

Jesus is about to ascend into heaven and he instructs the disciples in preparation for the new administration. At the start of his reign, shortly before his Pentecostal receipt of the gift of the spirit of wisdom from the Lord, in chapter 3, Solomon has to lay the foundations of his reign by exiling or executing unfaithful members of his father's administration and other rebels - Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab and Shimei - and replacing them in their offices. In 1 Kings 2, verses 28-35, Joab is killed by his replacement, Ben-Aniah the son of Jehoiada.

He is buried in his house in the wilderness. We should carefully observe the close applicability of the imprecatory psalm cited by Peter in Acts chapter 1 to Joab's situation - May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it, and let another take his office. These verses are from Psalms 69 verse 25 and 109 verse 8 respectively.

Judas here suffers a death strikingly similar to that of the man Joab betrayed with a kiss, an instance of the law of retribution. Like Joab, he has a desolate habitation. In the dawning stages of the glorious new administration of David's glorious son, soon to be heralded by the gift of the spirit of wisdom, his office is given to another.

Judas is a tragic figure and one who understandably leaves many modern people feeling uneasy. In characters such as Judas, we see the glorious light of the Kingdom of Christ can cast some very dark shadows. Playing the part of Ahithophel and Joab to David's greater son, Luke presents Judas as one of several cautionary examples of the fate of those who oppose the Kingdom of Christ.

We are squeamish about death, destruction and judgment being brought upon or foretold for the enemies of Christ. This could be an obstacle for our understanding and acceptance of his Kingdom. We want a Christ who is safe, not the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who comes on a white horse against tyrants and rebels.

Striking the nations and ruling them with a rod of iron. We want the Christ of the nativity narratives. Some imagined wrathless lamb, rather than reckoning with the prominent presence of themes of vengeance and judgment in the full New Testament portrait of

Christ.

The replacement for Judas has to fit a number of qualifications. He has to be someone who has witnessed the entirety of Christ's ministry, beginning at the ministry of John the Baptist and going all the way to the resurrection. It is especially important that an apostle have witnessed the resurrected Christ.

The candidates have to be among those who travelled with Christ. It is important that the candidates have had extensive experience of interaction with Christ, hearing him teach, being alongside him and seeing the way that he lives, having been formed under his instruction. They are also more particularly choosing one of the men.

Although there were many women who had accompanied Christ for the entirety of his mission, the office of the Twelve was restricted to men. Even though figures like Mary Magdalene or Mary and Martha or Bethany would have been closer to Christ than certain of the apostles, for the ministry appointed to the apostles it was important that they were males. They were supposed to be the guardians and the founders of the new church.

They were supposed to symbolise the Twelve Tribes of Israel in a restored nation. The fact that they had witnessed the ministry of John the Baptist was also a matter of great importance. John the Baptist was the last great prophet before the advent of the sun, and so it was important that the apostolic witness would take the baton from John the Baptist and bring it forward and pass it on to the rest of the church.

The ministry of the apostles would include elements of proclamation, they would be the chief witnesses of the resurrection, and also elements of pastoral oversight. They would have a special responsibility for overseeing the life of the church, acting as pastors and as guardians. Of the two suitable candidates put forward by the apostles, we don't know a great deal.

Joseph called Barsibus, also called Justus, and Matthias. Of these two men, Matthias is the one who's chosen. After a prayer that the Lord who knows the hearts of all would judge in the matter, Matthias is chosen by lot.

The Twelve now being complete, the ground is prepared for the day of Pentecost. A question to consider. What are some of the other places in the New Testament where we see a special emphasis upon the ministry and the witness borne by John the Baptist?