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Trinity Presbyterian Church
2623 N Robison Road
Texarkana, TX 75501

Website: www.rbvincent.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/rbvincent

Our Scripture lesson is taken from 2 Kings 11, beginning at verse 1.

1 When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family. 2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes, who were about to be murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah; so he was not killed. 3 He remained hidden with his nurse at the temple of the LORD for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.

The word of the Lord. [“Thanks be to God.”]

May we pray.

Lord, we pray on this Lord's Day, Mother's Day, that we will extract great truth by antithesis of what a mother should be by seeing what a mother should not be. We pray that you would bless the exposition of Scripture, that we may learn from it intellectually, that we may be moved by it emotionally, and that you would move on our wills by the Holy Spirit to grant us choice to choose the way of the Lord, to be at peace, and to rejoice even in the middle of the storms of life.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now I mentioned this and decided to continue my study on Bible characters; this is number 122, and we have spent two Lord's days looking at Ahab and we come now to the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. And I thought, well, do I change my pattern, or do I take this character who is the very antithesis of a good mother, and preach on her?

And so I'm preaching on Athaliah, and I hope that as we understand who Athaliah is and was, and who her mother was, that we can understand this is not the kind of mother I want to be. And I thank Almighty God for my mother who was the antithesis of Athaliah, my mother who loved me, my mother who served Christ by praying for me even when I was lost, and I thank God for my mother.

And so now as we look at this passage, I want us to turn over to 2 Chronicles for a moment for a fuller look at this character. 2 Chronicles, and this would be chapter 21, page 703. And you also have there a handout.

CONFUSING GENEALOGIES

This is my poor work. I was not satisfied with anybody else's chart and it's a very confusing genealogy because there are two kings Ahaziah and two kings Joram. And Joram has two names, Jehoram or Joram.

So you've got a king Joram of Israel and a king Joram of Judah. You've got a king Ahaziah of Israel and a king Ahaziah of Judah.

And then sometimes people misunderstand that the Hebrew word *ben* (bēn, בֶּן), which is son, can refer to a son, a grandson, a great-grandson, or skip four or five generations as we see in the gospel of Matthew. And so the same is true for the Hebrew word for daughter, *bath* (bat, בַּת), and so a *bath* can be a daughter, granddaughter, great granddaughter, and so on.

So these are things that are confusing. You can see that I clipped out things and put them in. I don't know what happened to my T-square, but they're all wacko and then I decided foolishly to write with my little pen in there. So you can write notes on the back if you like, but that document.***

So, as we turn here to 2 Chronicles chapter 21, I'm going to give a bit of a running commentary with you there on page 703. Notice that King Jehoshaphat was a godly king. He wasn't perfect. In fact, the worst thing that King Jehoshaphat ever did was to unite with the northern kingdom of Israel because the northern kingdom of Israel, not only had it departed from God's authorized worship, which was at the temple in Jerusalem—that was the sin of Jeroboam I—but under Omri, it went into full-fledged apostasy because Omri had some, perhaps, genetic connection to the Phoenicians.

PHOENICIA

And by the way, Tyre and Sidon, which is where Omri's relationships are formed, it's interesting if you look at the little chart at the very top middle, Tyre and Sidon, Ethbaal, or Ithobaal, was a priest of Astarte before he became the king. That's the father of Jezebel.

And so it's interesting that he killed the king, and I believe it was the sister of the king that he killed left and went and founded the city of Carthage in North Africa (Actually, Dido (Διδώ) was the great niece of Jezebel and the first cousin, once removed of Athaliah. She was the founder of Carthage.).

So the Phoenicians—and we get a lot of words from the Phoenicians, Tyre and Sidon. We get the word phonics from the Phoenicians because the Phoenicians are the people that established an alphabet that is pronounced as over against hieroglyphics and cuneiform and so on (I made a **huge blunder** at this point. While the Phoenicians gave us the first phonetically pronounced alphabet, the word “phonics” is not derived from “Phoenicia.”).

Φοινίκη, ης, ἡ (Hom.+) Phoenicia, in NT times the name of the seacoast of central Syria, w. Tyre and Sidon as the most important cities Ac 11:19; 15:3; 21:2.” (Frederick William Danker, ed. (2000), *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. Third edition (Chicago/London: Chicago University Press), p. 1062)

φωνή, ἡς, ἡ ... “an auditory effect, sound, tone, noise” (*Ibid.*, p. 1072)

So the Phoenicians—and Ethbaal was a priest of the Asherah, and his daughter Jezebel ends up marrying the son of Omri. So we have that there.

Now we go down, we're there 2 Chronicles 21:1.

Then Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David. And Jehoram his son succeeded him as king. (2 Chronicles 21:1)

WICKED INFLUENCE

Now notice:

Jehoram's brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat, were Azariah (once again we have that famous name, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael and Shephatiah. All these were sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. ³ Their father had given them many gifts of silver and gold and articles of value, as well as fortified cities in Judah, but he had given the kingdom to Jehoram because he was his firstborn son. (2 Chronicles 21:2-3)

You realize that's why we have had throughout history a lot of lunatics? Because the firstborn is often not the most qualified. Just look at the British royal family as one example and how that happens. So you get inbreeding and you get, like for example, the children of Queen Victoria, all the female daughters of Victoria carried a gene that was passed on in the case of the Tsarina of Russia, the last Tsarina of Russia, Alexandra, the wife of Nicholas II, she passed that gene on, which was hemophilia (which now we have treatment for that, but back then they didn't). So you look at all the inbred houses of Europe and you look at history. History is a testimony that the firstborn is not necessarily the best-born.

And so what happens is this guy becomes the king and look at what he does here. It says in verse 4:

When Jehoram established himself firmly over his father's kingdom ... (2 Chronicles 21:4)

Look at what he did. His father thought that he would remove all the jealousy, all the tension, all of the conflict. "I've made wonderful plans so that there will be no problems." But notice what happens. What does he do?

He put all his brothers to the sword along with some of the princes of Israel. Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab. (2 Chronicles 21:4-6)

See there, he married a daughter of Ahab.

He did evil in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless, because of the covenant the LORD had made with David, the LORD was not willing to destroy the house of David. (2 Chronicles 21:6-7)

Keeping your hand there in the Bible, you look down here and you see on the chart Israel on the left, Tyre and Sidon in the middle, Judah in the right, you can see that when Ahab marries Jezebel, they have three children. Their three children are Ahaziah, Jehoram, and Athaliah and so you can see the order of reign there on the left-hand side:

Ahaziah,
Jehoram, and
Athaliah.

And so the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel is the one who marries Jehoram, and Jehoram is this very wicked man who determines to murder all his own brothers. That's striking, isn't it? And so, we read further down, and it talks about the afflictions that God sent on the nation of Judah because of that sin, and he says there in verse 10:

To this day Edom has been in rebellion against Judah. Libnah revolted at the same time, because Jehoram (Look at this carefully), Jehoram had forsaken the LORD, the God of his fathers. He had also built high places on the hills of Judah and had caused the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves and had led Judah astray. (2 Chronicles 21:10-11)

EVIL LEADERS LEAD PEOPLE ASTRAY

Now we see this, the effect of a leader. I think the applicability of this is not so much to our country as it is to the Christian church.

Think about a Christian church. Think about the influence of a leader of a Christian church, and if a leader of a Christian church is not faithful to Scripture, if that leader is not faithful to the Lord, what will that leader cause? That leader will cause the church eventually to become apostate.

That's why it's dangerous to be in a church where the leadership doesn't really love the Lord, know the Lord, and seek the Lord.

And so this is what this man does. This man does what?

He caused the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves and had led Judah astray. (2 Chronicles 21:10-11)

What does it mean that they prostituted themselves? It meant that they forsook the Lord.

Never forget that Israel was the wife of the Lord. We speak of it figuratively, but that's how she's regarded. She entered into a covenant with God at Mount Sinai, and so she's the wife, in a sense, of the Lord (Ezekiel 16; 23; Hosea 1:2-2:13). So when she left the Lord to follow other gods, it's always regarded as not simply adultery, but prostitution.

And that also reflects something else, as we've seen in these studies on biblical characters, pagan worship was characterized by sacred prostitution, that is, the favor of the God was sought for fertility, for blessing of crops, for children to be born, all of that, that god's favor was sought by ritual prostitution where someone, like the king, would engage with a prostitute who represented the god, and that's fertility. *, **

So it's really strange, isn't it? Wow, that's so different from what we think of as religion, even false religions. That's so different. And so, again, that's the meaning of that.

Now, here's an interesting thing. Look at verse 12:

Jehoram received a letter from Elijah the prophet (and so it's near the end of the life of Elijah and he sent this letter to him), which said: "This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: 'You have not walked in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or of Asa king of Judah. (2 Chronicles 21:12)

Verse 13:

But you have walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and you have led Judah and the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves, just as the house of Ahab did. You have also murdered your own brothers, members of your father's house

(notice what he says next, this is Elijah the prophet before he died), men who were better than you. (2 Chronicles 21:13)

Men who were better than you. That's a striking thing. And so this man murders those who were better than himself and he does that out of fear and then he goes on and he says, verse 14:

So now the LORD is about to strike your people, your sons (notice he had more than one wife, this is an important thing we'll see in a moment), your wives (plural), and everything that is yours, with a heavy blow. (2 Chronicles 21:14)

Now look at verse 15. Man, you don't want to have the Lord mad at you. Look at verse 15:

You yourself will be very ill with a lingering disease of the bowels, until the disease causes your bowels to come out.'" (2 Chronicles 21:15)

Whoa! Ouch! Oh my, I can't imagine a worse death than that, can you? I mean, that's horrible.

THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW

What do we learn about God from the Old Testament? The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament, except there's no Jesus atoning for the sins of people, and so you see particularly, you see particularly the severity of God's judgment on people in the Old Testament.

In fact, Paul says, "behold the kindness and the severity of God."

Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. (Romans 11:22)

And so, I mean, this is severe. This is severe, you think of that.

And then it says in verse 16:

The LORD aroused against Jehoram the hostility of the Philistines and of the Arabs who lived near the Cushites. (2 Chronicles 21:16)

All this hostility, and look in verse 17:

They attacked Judah, invaded it and carried off all the goods found in the king's palace, together with his sons (plural) and wives (plural). Not a son was left to him except Ahaziah, the youngest. (2 Chronicles 21:17)

And so we have Ahaziah, the son of Joram, who is the son both of Joram and of Athaliah. And he says "except the youngest."

Then verse 18:

After all this, the LORD afflicted Jehoram with an incurable disease of the bowels. In the course of time, at the end of the second year, his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great pain. His people made no fire in his honor, as they had for his fathers. Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. (2 Chronicles 21:18-20)

Now I don't know about you, but the next sentence in verse 20 is not something I want said at my funeral. Would you like that said at your funeral? Wow.

He passed away, to no one's regret, and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings. (2 Chronicles 21:20)

So here's a man, under the influence of his mother, became so wicked that when he died, no one regretted it. "We're glad he's dead." Wow.

I mentioned that I attended the funeral of Sandy's father's favorite cousin, and it was all about Jesus, and I reflected on...

I stood actually and spoke there in that Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, and I said, “As a preacher, I’ve heard so much malarkey at funerals over the years.”

And two examples stand out. One was a case where a man’s mother had died, and he had asked that I speak by reading Scripture only, and the pastor of her church said these words. And I couldn’t believe this was said in a Baptist church, of all things.

Baptist churches are just like Presbyterians, except we do recognize one another in certain stores. (Sorry.) So anyhow, he said, he said about how wonderful this lady was, and he said, “And I believe that when Mrs. So-and-so entered heaven, the Lord God stood up out of respect for her.”

That’s blasphemy. That’s blasphemy. Stood up. The Lord stands up off his throne out of respect. “Oh my, let me stand up, get off the throne and stand up out of respect! I’m so glad you’re here miss So-and-so, you deserve to be here and we respect you so much that I’m standing out of respect!”

Where do preachers get stuff like that? Maybe they’re afraid of losing a paycheck. I don’t know. I never worried about losing a paycheck, and I always figured God would take care of me and he always has.

I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed.
(Psalm 37:25–26)

He’s ever generous, and he gives money away to others.

A MOTHER’S INFLUENCE

And so in chapter 22, 2 Chronicles 22:1:

The people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, Jehoram’s youngest son, king in his place, since the raiders, who came with the Arabs into the camp, had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign. 2 Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in

Jerusalem one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri. (2 Chronicles 22:1-2)

So Athaliah is the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and she is the granddaughter of Omri.

He too walked in the ways of the house of Ahab (now look at that next clause in verse 3), for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong. (2 Chronicles 22:3)

Think about that for a moment. As we celebrate mothers this day, and as we celebrate the fact that even a man can become a mother, as Paul referred to himself in 1 Thessalonians 2:7, as he cared for the people of God as a mother:

But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. (1 Thessalonians 2:7)

In other words, it isn't simply being biologically a mother; it's caring for other people, it's nurturing other people. St. Paul was a mother to the believers in Thessalonica, and so that ought to encourage all of us, whether we're men or women, whether we've ever had a child or never had a child, we can be tender and care for others as St. Paul referred to himself in 1 Thessalonians 2:7.

So notice here that his mother encouraged him doing wrong.

A MOTHER'S GREATEST DUTY

What is the greatest obligation of a mother as we think of it on Mother's Day? The greatest obligation of a mother is to nurture her children to know the Lord. That's the greatest obligation.

It isn't enough biologically to give birth to a child. A dog can give birth to a dog, a puppy. What is the great burden of being a mother?

It is to nurture the children that God gives, whether they're her own or by adoption through marrying a widower, it is to nurture those children to know the Lord and to guide them in the ways of righteousness and truth, to know the Lord and to be able to serve the Lord in this world in a practical way.

Fathers are wonderful, but no one so shapes the life of a child as a mother, and so we see here the antithesis, this woman.

The job of the mother is to encourage children to do what's right, to make sure that they can take care of themselves when they grow up, to make sure that they love the church of the living God.

There's nothing greater for a mother to do than to impart to her children a love for God's people, God's church, which is not the building. The building houses the people of God. The building houses the church.

And so the greatest gift a mother can give to her children is to inculcate in them, to instill in them a love for God's people, a love for public worship, a love for the written word of God, studying it privately and listening to it publicly, and so on.

ACCURSED MOTHERS AND AN ACCURSED FAMILY

Now, we're going to read further, skipping down on page 705, we'll look at verse 7.

Through Ahaziah's visit to Joram, God brought about Ahaziah's downfall. When Ahaziah arrived, he went out with Joram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab. 8 While Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he found the princes of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's relatives, who had been attending Ahaziah, and he killed them. (2 Chronicles 22:7-9)

You remember the great coup. We're not going to get on that today; that's for down the road. But what happens is, God had had a belly full of the Omride dynasty, that's King Omri and his son Ahab and then Ahaziah and Joram, and he'd had enough of them.

And so he raises up a general who happened to be Jehu, and he's anointed by God's prophet to become king, and he wipes out the house of Ahab, including the great mother of all mothers, **negatively**, Jezebel.

And I'm always struck at what she did, that when she's about to be killed and she knows she's going to die, she had to put her makeup on. We'll look at that another day. But she knows she's going to be killed. She's got these two eunuchs, one on one side and one on the other, and she is accosting Jehu.

She knows that she's going to die, but she has to fix herself first. I don't know. I mean, I remember when just before COVID broke out, and the last Sunday that I preached here when we had visible services, the water system in Texarkana had gone off, and we were in the hotel at the Hampton Inn and there was no running water, and I was so grateful that Sandy always likes to have a bucket of ice, because that was the only water I had. And at least I could wet my hair down even if I didn't shave when I came to preach that morning.

But see, Jezebel had to make sure she was nicely coiffed and decked out before she was thrown down by the eunuchs. Anyhow, that's another story for another day.

And so here's what happens in verse 10. It says:

When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family of the house of Judah. (2 Chronicles 22:10)

A GODLY AUNT AS A GODLY MOTHER

Now notice verse 11. Now this is a godly mother.

But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes who were about to be murdered and put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Because Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of the priest Jehoiada, was Ahaziah's sister, she hid the child from Athaliah so she could not kill him. (2 Chronicles 22:11)

Let that sink in for a moment. Now if you look at the chart that I passed out, the chart is this, she is the daughter of King Ahaziah.*** And so she's his daughter and what does that mean?

Is she the daughter of Athaliah and of King Joram? I don't believe so. Remember, he had other wives. He had other children.

And so she is a daughter of the king, and she is the aunt of this little baby, Joash, and as a good woman, as a godly woman, she protects the life of little baby Joash and hides him in the temple.

She was married to a much older man, and that was the high priest. Because of political things, people marry.

ARRANGED MARRIAGES

And by the way, I need to say this about marriage. I once attended, in fact more than once, I attended an engagement party. The most meaningful engagement party I ever attended was a pastor, a Christian pastor, who lived in an adjoining parish to us in Louisiana, and it was an arranged marriage.

His son, who was in medical school, called his father and said, "Dad, I think I'm ready to get married. Will you find a wife for me?" And so we got to...

(A lady and her grandchild walk out down front, and they did come back.) "Hey, God bless you. We're sure glad you're here today. I want you to come back. We love you."

And so what happens is these two fathers sat down in this large room, and they went through the things, and said this was an arranged marriage. And it's pretty amazing. And he said, "We've waived the bride price." They waived this, and then they had a big meal celebrating.

Now, I'm just going to ask you this, looking at arranged marriages throughout history, as over against what happened with Sandy when the first time I ever saw her, my hand went up from her hand, "I saw her face and I became a believer," and fell in love with her at first sight.

Arranged marriages have a better track record than a marriage like Sandy's and mine. I'm just saying. I'm not advocating it. I'm just saying.

But this was an arranged marriage, and so she marries the high priest who was much older. What do you do?

See, the world says, “If you don’t love a person, you should not engage in physical relations.” But Scripture says, “If you’re not married to a person, you shouldn’t engage in physical relations,” because physical relations have been designed by God to produce love. And we tend to put the cart before the horse.

So it’s an arranged marriage. God arranged for relations to produce the love that sustains a marriage (Genesis 25:63-67; Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5). Anyhow, so just that tidbit there.

And so what happens here is that she decides to kill everybody, and she is wiping out her own children. Wow! And grandchildren.

A MURDERING GRANDMOTHER

This is the antithesis of a good mother. I mean, she’s a murderess, and she murders all these children, and she never knew, she never knew that one escaped. Her own son, who’s dead, his son survived.

Where was he taken? He was taken into the temple itself where she never went because she did not follow the LORD; she followed Baal, the sex god and fertility god of the Canaanites and particularly the Phoenicians.*, ** So she doesn’t go to the temple, and he was safe, and I think that leads us to one final thing to say, and that’s this.

PLACES OF SAFETY: THE TEMPLE AND THE CHURCH

As we reflect again on Mother’s Day. Where is the place of safety for a baby? Where is the place of safety for a little child? If there’s one place in particular, and that place is right here, that’s where children are safe.

Children are safe in this place, Wow! Raise your children in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Raise your children in a place of safety.

The world is a dangerous place. St. Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians chapter 5. When people are put out of the church, they’re under the particular attack of Satan, the evil one.

When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, I hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 5:4–5)

But inside the church, that is, being part of the body of Christ, is a place of safety.

And so little Joash is preserved in the temple of the Lord until he's six years old, and if you want to read a really great Bible story, it's how she's finally executed, and it's kind of like at the very end, as she faces execution and she knows it's coming, and she realizes what's been going on, she tears her clothes and she cries out, "Treason! Treason!" (2 Chronicles 23:13)

Wow! But it isn't treason. It's the restoration of the kingdom to the house of David because David is in the line of the Messiah.

THE LORD JESUS IS BOTH THE LEGAL AND BIOLOGICAL SON OF DAVID

And there's one other thing that's striking.

If you compare the genealogy in Matthew, which is the legal genealogy of Jesus. And that means that it follows the line down through his stepfather (Matthew 1:6-7, 15-16), Jesus was not the son of Joseph, but he was legally the son of Joseph.

I don't know about you but if God made a promise to me that of my descendants, he would place one of them on my throne forever to rule and reign over everyone forever, and it was just an adopted kid, I'd feel like God had lied to me.

So if you compare the gospel of Matthew with the gospel of Luke, you discover something very interesting. The gospel of Luke uses a bit of Greek grammar, and that is a genitive of a relationship. It never says what the relationship is, but you will hunt in vain in the gospel of Luke chapter 3 for any reference to Jehoram, Ahaziah—none of those people are there.

They're left out of the biological genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is biologically descended from Adam through King David on down, and he is genetically, biologically descended from King David.

Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli . . . the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse . . . the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. (Luke 3:23, 31-32, 38)

So God keeps his promises, doesn't he? He promised that to David. He swore on an oath that of David's literal seed, of his descendants, he would place one of them to be on his throne (2 Samuel 7:12-13; Psalm 16:10; Psalm 110:1; 132:11; Acts 2:25-36)***

And there was much opposition to that. That line was almost wiped out but God in an amazing way preserved the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, who was the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the literal biological descendant of David; not through King Solomon, but through another son of David called Nathan (Luke 3:31). That's an interesting thing, isn't it, Nathan?

Be sure and welcome Nathan after church today, and we're grateful that you are part of our fellowship now.

May we pray.

Lord, as we come to a close of a sermon on Mother's Day that has many sub-points, we pray that we would glean from it what is important to glean, that we would honor our mothers, not only our biological mothers, but those who have shaped us for good and for God.

And Lord, the greatest way we can honor a mother on this day is to give our hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ. And if there's anyone here today or watching today on the internet, we pray that today would be the day of ceasing to resist the pull and say yes to Jesus, I surrender all.

Lord, we thank you for our own mothers and for those who have shaped our lives, and we thank you for the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth, and we pray that we may always be loyal to the church

who is our mother. Lord, we pray that you would bless us and keep us this day through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Notes

Baal*

In addition to its appearance in compound names of people and places (e.g. Jerubbaal, Jud 9:16; Baalzephon, Ex 14:2), בַּעַל is the name of a great active god in the Canaanite pantheon and has other religious connotations.

The god Baal met in the OT is the West Semitic storm god, b'1 (sing.) and b'lm (pl.), encountered in Egyptian texts (from fourteenth century B.C. on), Tell Amarna Letters (fourteenth century B.C.), Alalakh Tablets (fifteenth century B.C.), Ugaritic texts (fourteenth century B.C.), Amorite proper names from Mari, Tell al-Rimah, and Chagar Bazar, and later in Phoenician and Punic texts. Both within the Bible and outside it the name appears either absolutely or in construct with place names; e.g. Baal-peor (Num 25:3, 5), Baal-berith (Jud 9:40), Baal-zebub (2 Kgs 1:2). (Baal-zebub, “lord of flies,” is a parody on his name found elsewhere, b'1 zbl, “Prince Baal.”) These names do not denote various gods with the epithet “lord,” but local veneration of the same West Semitic storm and fertility deity called simply Baal, “Lord.”

Scholars used to think that the plural form with the article, “the Baalim” denoted different local numina, but the plural form of the name occurs outside the Bible and the mention of “lovers” and “strangers” (Jer 2:25) suggest another use of the plural than that of a numerical plural. The article occurs frequently in Hebrew with proper names whose meaning is transparent.

Since the biblical writers did not intend to teach the Canaanite religion, we know more about Baal’s roles, consorts, and cult from the extra-biblical literature than from the OT; but the

picture of Baal presented in the OT comports well with the extra-biblical sources.

He was also called Haddu (=Hadad). He is above all the storm god who gives the sweet rain that revives vegetation. Dry years were attributed to his temporary captivity or even death. But at his revivification fields, flocks, and families became productive. **In addition, he is a war god and fertility deity who consorts with Anat (is later equated with Astarte). Both by reciting the myth of his role in reviving life at the autumn new year festival and by magical ritual of sacred marriage represented in the cult by the king, the queen and a priestess, the West Semites hoped to ensure the earth's fertility.** [This ritual is witnessed to in Babylon but not clearly in Canaan (cf. H. Frankfort *Kingship and the Gods*, also Kitchen, K. A., *Ancient Orient and the O.T.*, Inter-Varsity, 1966, p. 104). It should be noted that the identification of Baal as an annually dying and rising god with the Babylonian Tammuz has lately suffered. New Sumerian tablets published by S. Kramer show that Tammuz died once for all and C. H. Gordon has argued that Baal too had no annual death and resurrection. See the whole discussion with refs. in E. M. Yamauchi, "Tammuz and the Bible" *JBL* 84: 283–90. R.L.H.] Archaeological cultic objects with exaggerated sexual features, as well as the myths themselves, support the OT notices about the degraded moral features associated with the cult.

Throughout the period of the judges, Israel succumbed to this infectious cult (Jud 2:11ff.; 6:25) and had to be rescued from its tragic consequences by Yahweh's judges. During the period of the Omrides, Baal worship became the official state religion of the northern kingdom (1 Kgs 16:31). Leah Bronner has presented convincing argument that **Israel's miracles by Elijah and Elisha served as a polemic for God against the very powers attributed to this pagan nature deity, namely, fire (18:17ff.; 2 Kgs 1:9–16), rain (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:41–46), food (17:1–6, 8–16; 2 Kgs 4:1ff.); children (4:14–17); revivification (1 Kgs 17:17–23; 2 Kgs 4:18–37; 13:20–22, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics Against Baal Worship*, Leiden, 1968.)** But their miracles did not rid the land

of this degraded cult and it brought about the captivity of the northern kingdom (Hosea).

It also infiltrated the southern kingdom (2 Kgs 11:18; 21:2ff.), and in spite of Josiah's reform (23:4ff.), brought the nation into exile (Ezek 16; 23 etc.).

The Hosea discourse describes how Israel, who received gifts of grain and oil from YHWH, used these for the worship of Baal (Hos 2:8 [H 10]). The chapter fairly turns on the term *בַּעַל*, not only in the mention of the Canaanite god(s) (e.g. 2:8 [H 10]; 2:13 [H 15]; and 2:17 [H 19]), but in the imagery throughout of God as Israel's husband. Israel will call the Lord her husband (*אִישׁ*, 2:16 [H 18]; cf. 2:2 [H 4]; 2:7 [H 9]) and no longer call him, apparently along with the list of other gods, my Baal (*בַּעַל*). God's supremacy over Baal is constantly affirmed. However man's preoccupation from then and until this day is rather with sex and technology, than with devotion to the almighty God of history, who is also the covenant God.

Bruce K. Waltke (1980), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute), vol. 1, pp. 119-120, emphases mine

Asherah**

אֲשֶׁרָה. **Asherah.** Both a Canaanite goddess and a wooden cult object in the OT. The word is translated “groves” in the KJV presumably on the basis of the LXX *ἄλσος* and *nemus* in the Vulgate. Before examining the OT itself we turn to the famous Ugaritic texts from Ras Shamra. It is they which tell us who Asherah was. Her name is a feminine participle of the Ugaritic verb *'tr* (Heb *אָשַׁר* “to go”). **One of her titles is *rabbatu atiratu yammi*, “Lady Atirat of the Sea,” or “the lady who treads on the sea.” She is the consort or wife of the divine El, and as such enjoys the title *qaniyatu elima*, “progenitress/creatress of the gods.” Her most famous son was Baal. A characteristic of all mythological literatures is “in the beginning there were two.” In the Bible, however, we meet “in the beginning there was one.” The issue is not simply arithmetic. The fact**

that one does not read about Mrs. God in Gen 1 and 2 may be one of the Bible's ways of stating that only God finds fulfillment in himself.

In one of the famous mythological texts from Ugarit, the Kret epic, it is predicted to Kret of his bride that “she will bear you seven sons/and an eighth (daughter) ‘Octavia’/she will bear you the lad Yasib/who will suck the milk of Asherah.” Hence, (divine) life is guaranteed and bequeathed.

To turn to the OT, there is no actual description of an Asherah there. Was it a tree, a pole, some kind of tree symbol, an image? It apparently was not a natural object but one that was constructed by man, an artifact. It was “made”: 1 Kgs 16:33; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3; it was “set up”: 17:10; 2 Chr 33:19; Isa 27:9; it was “built”: 1 Kgs 14:23. Only once is the verb “to plant” used, Deut 16:21, and here the meaning is “implant.” The conclusion then is that **in the OT Asherah stands for the Canaanite goddess represented by a carved wooden image implanted into the ground, usually adjacent to an altar dedicated to the god Baal and located on a hilltop under a leafy tree (Patai).**

It is in the period of the divided monarchy that the Asherah cult flourished both in Israel and Judah, though its existence before is documented by the command in Ex 34:13, the prohibition of Deut 16:21, and the incident at the threshold of Gideon's life of service to God, Jud 6:25ff. Rehoboam's career marks the beginning of this in Judah (1 Kgs 14:23). **In the north the cult received its greatest momentum from the incentive of Jezebel who was responsible for the presence of “four hundred prophets of Asherah” (18:19). Even a reform-minded king such as Asa (15:13) or later Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:4) was unable to liquidate the movement. It was knocked down, but not knocked out.** There was an almost inevitable resurrection even in the wake of reform. Compare son Manasseh's policy (2 Kgs 21:7, even to the point of placing the image in the temple) on the heels of father Hezekiah's reform (18:4). **Apostasy and idolatry just behind revival! What one generation attempts to get rid of a subsequent generation**

may trot back in, however reprehensible it may be. All too frequently this has been the pattern in the human race.

Victor P. Hamilton (1980), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute), vol. 1, pp. 81-82), emphases mine

Peter's Pentecost Sermon***

When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Samuel 7:12–13)

Because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. (Psalm 16:10)

The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” (Psalm 110:1)

The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: “One of your own descendants I will place on your throne— (Psalm 132:11)

David said about him: “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, 27 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

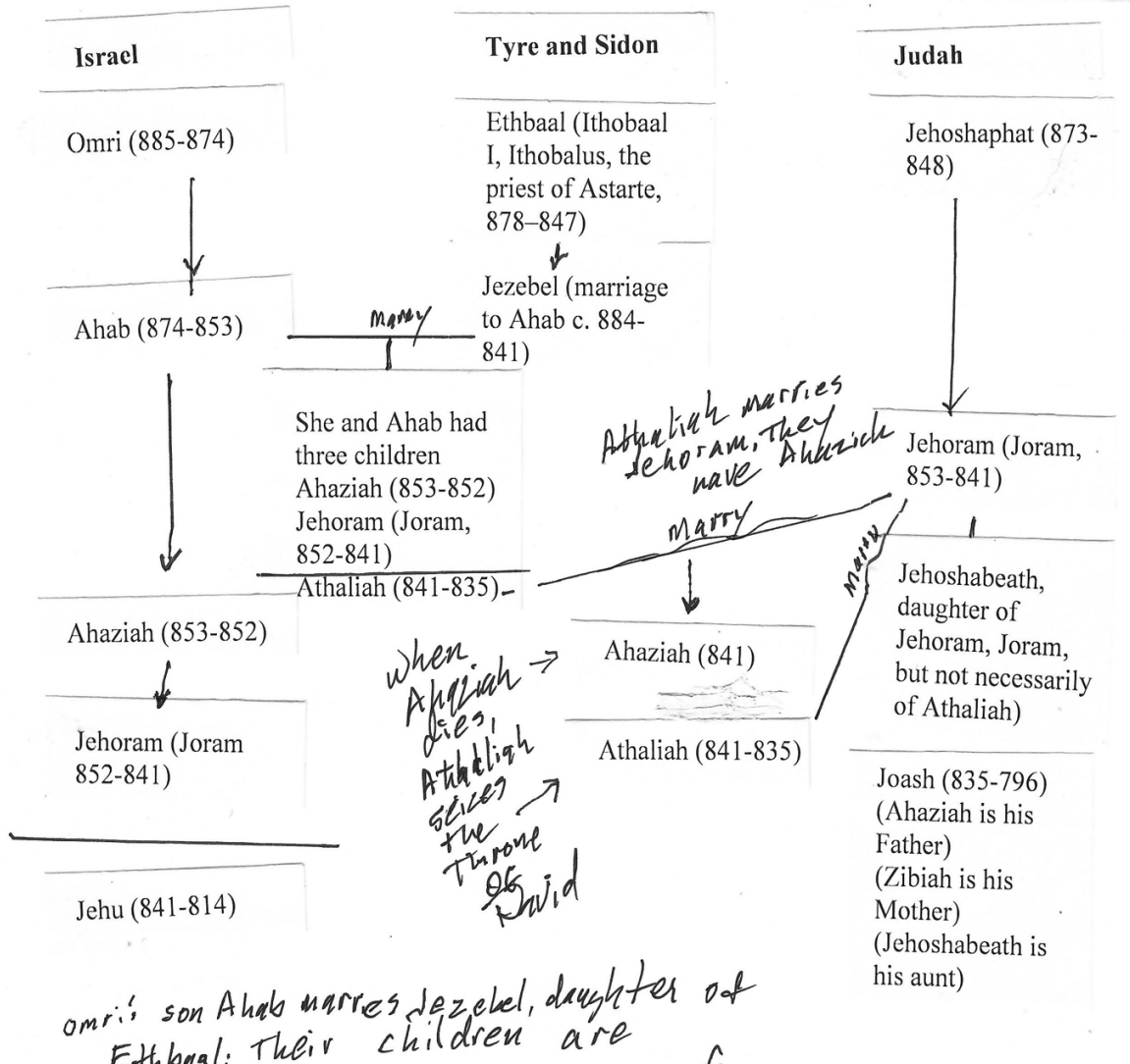
Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received

from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand 35 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:25–36)

Chart ****



Omri's son Ahab marries Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal; Their children are Ahaziah and Jehoram, kings of Israel; their daughter, Athaliah, marries Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah. Their son is Ahaziah, king of Judah; Their grandson is Joash, but Jehoshabeath may be the daughter of Jehoram by another wife.
 There are two King Ahaziah, and two king Jehorams (Jorams)