

**Joke:** A man's wife calls her husband and says, "I have some good news and some bad news. Which do you want to hear first?"

Good news first please. It's been a rough day I could certainly use some good news.

The good news is that your car's airbag worked perfectly.

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It's all a matter of perspective isn't it. Not everything appears as it is. And so with that, I have some good news and some bad news for you today.

Let me start with the bad news. . .our world is full of bad news. Just listen to the news for a few minutes and you are aware of that.

The good news is, bad news rarely prevails. Good news comes along as well. Joy comes in the morning.

One of the worst moments in our nation's history happened on December 7, 1941. The Japanese Navy attacked the U.S. Fleet at Pearl Harbor, killing 2400 Americans and disabling almost all of our battleships. That was bad news.

The good news was, our 3 aircraft carriers were out on maneuvers at the time. So our Carrier Fleet was intact. 6 months later, that Carrier group destroyed 4 Japanese Carriers in the Battle of Midway. And ultimately, we won the war.

History is like that. - Wait long enough, and good news always triumphs over bad.

- On Good Friday, our Savior died. It was the worst news in history.
- Three days later, He rose again. That was the best news in history. And after that. . .
- He ascended to the right hand of the Father.
- He sent the Holy Spirit to live inside of us.
- And He launched the church.

So, here's the thing church. God has a way of taking the bad news and using it for good.

A scribe by the name of Ezra knew that. He and his people were emerging from a national crisis.

- They needed some good news.
- They needed some hope.
- They needed some inspiration.
- They needed some reminders that their great God works all things together for the good of those who love Him.

So Ezra writes stories. Real-life stories, with real-life lessons.

One of those stories was a really bad-news-to-good-news story that involved mayhem and murder over three generations.

During its worst moment, for seven years, the people had no hope.

Maybe you have found yourself wrestling with hope for a season. The people during Ezra's time wrestled with it as well. How did they cope? And better yet how did God rescue them?

Well, that's the story I want to tell you today.

We will start in 1 Chronicles 17 which takes place during the reign of King David. One day God says to David,

1 Chronicles 17:9–14 (NIV): And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning 10 and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also subdue all your enemies. “ ‘I declare to you that the Lord will build a house for you: 11 When your days are over and you go to be with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. 12 He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. 13 I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. 14 I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.’

There are two promises in this passage: One is that there would always be a descendent of David ruling over the nation of Israel. The second was that one of those descendants who would come would be the Messiah, Jesus, and He would not just to rule over the nation of Israel, but our hearts as well, He would come and redeem us. That’s really good news.

And throughout the Old Testament there were prophecies that one day the Messiah would come.

Here’s a couple. . .

Micah 5:2 (NIV): “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

Isaiah 9:6–7 (NIV): For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

From that day in 1 Chronicles 17 onward, everybody knew that when the Messiah came, He would be a descendent of King David.

The Israelites knew it, Satan knew it as well. Satan is not all-knowing, but he is crafty. And when this prophecy was given, he is clued in to the fact that the Messiah must come from the lineage of David. So he set out to see that that didn't happen.

Satan knows that God is always true to His word.

Isaiah 55:10–11 (NIV): 10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

He knows that if he can extinguish the line of David, he can prevent the Messiah from coming and saving mankind from our sins.

So, in 841 B.C. Satan sees and seizes a strategic opportunity to eliminate the line of the David. Here's how it happened.

We just read in chapter 17 of 1st Chronicles that God promised that David will always have an heir on the throne in Israel.

Now fast-forward from there 150 years, to the time of King Jehoshaphat. We studied him last week.

During the course of his reign, Jehoshaphat made what seemed to him a good decision to secure an alliance with his greatest threat, which was the Kingdom of Northern Israel.

Back in those days, a common way to seal alliances was for two kings to marry their children to each other. In this case, Jehoshaphat married his son, Jehoram to the king of Israel's daughter who was named Athaliah.

Follow me for the next few minutes as I lay a little foundation and we'll learn an important lesson in so doing.

At this time in history, Israel is divided into two kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom is simply called, "Israel." And the Southern Kingdom is called "Judah."

The Northern Kingdom was ruled by a king named "Ahab." The Southern Kingdom was ruled by Jehoshaphat.

Ahab, in order to secure his northern border, had married the daughter of the king to his north. That kingdom was called "Sidon." Its king was named "Ethbaal." – The word, "eth" means, "with." Anybody want to guess what the word "Baal" means? The word "Baal," means "Baal."

Baal was the fertility God of the Canaanites.

Ethbaal means “with Baal.” To put it plainly he was a worshiper of Baal.

Ethbaal’s daughter was named “Jezebel.” Maybe you have heard of her before. She is well known for worshiping Baal and corrupting pretty much all of Northern Israel during the time she was its queen.

And Ahab married Jezebel.

So, to cement their alliance, Ahab and Jehoshaphat married their children to each other.

This meant that the wife of the Crown Prince of Judah was not a follower of Jehovah, but a Baal-worshiper.

Everything went along fine, until the day that Jehoshaphat died. On that day, Jehoram became king, and Athaliah became queen.

You’d like to hope that the story goes, “And they all lived happily ever after.” But we know that the world is full of bad news and that happily-ever-afters often follow not-so-happy disasters.

Jehoram’s first act as king was to do what no Israelite king had ever done, it wasn’t to set up altars for Jehovah. It wasn’t to call a decree to serve the God of the Israelites. No they did what many of the pagan kings from places like Sidon often did, he killed all his brothers so that none of them could threaten his right to the throne.

This happens about 40 years before our story begins.

2 Chronicles 18:1 says,

2 Chronicles 18:1 (NIV): Now Jehoshaphat had great wealth and honor, and he allied himself with Ahab by marriage.

That seems innocent enough, doesn't it? It might even be smart – make an alliance with your enemy and he becomes your ally.

This happens about 20 years before our story.

Here's the introduction to our story:

2 Chronicles 21:1–4 (NIV): Then Jehoshaphat rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David. And Jehoram his son succeeded him as king. 2 Jehoram's brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat, were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariahu, 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. 4 When Jehoram established himself firmly over his father's kingdom, he put all his brothers to the sword along with some of the officials of Israel.

Jehoram decided the best way to assure his throne secure was simple just eliminate the competition.

Suddenly, of all the descendants of David are no longer, there is only one direct descendant left and that's Jehoram himself, along with all the sons that he will have over time.

Well, later on that same year, 841 B.C., Jehoram died in battle.

Ezra's comment in verse 20 says a lot. . .

2 Chronicles 21:20 (NIV): Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He passed away, to no one's regret, and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

The people didn't think much of him or that his life even merited a kingly tomb.

And often, when a king dies, his kingdom is vulnerable, because the neighboring nations know that the new king will be young and inexperienced, so that's when they attack.

And the he attack happens. Judah is invaded by her neighbors:

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

Here's where our story officially begins. The kingdom and the Messianic line are hanging by a single thread. Satan has done his best to see that this promise doesn't take place.

But. . .

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV): For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

So, watch what happens. . .



2 Chronicles 22:1–2 (NIV): 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. 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.

But a few months after his coronation, Ahaziah is killed in battle.

No problem, right, after all Ahaziah had sons and nephews in positions at the palace. But the problem is they are all young and powerless. And because of that, the person closest to power was the widowed queen, Athaliah. But if you remember. . .

- She is not Jewish.
- She's the daughter of Jezebel.
- She is not a worshiper of Jehovah. But instead she worships Baal

And that is when Satan launches his plan.

Satan always looks for a way to get us off our purpose, distract us from our potential and destroy our God desired destiny.

Peter tells us. . .

1 Peter 5:8 (NIV): Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Look what happens. . .

2 Chronicles 22:10 (NIV): 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.

Think about that for a moment.

- The king is dead.
- His descendants are dead.
- That means the Davidic line is dead, and with it, all hopes for a Messiah.

This is the Good Friday of the Old Testament.

It seems as though Baal has triumphed. And that Satan has won.

It appears

- All was dark.
- And all hope was lost.

And for seven years, Judah lived under the rulership of a foreign queen, worshiping a foreign god.

But we know that everything is not how it appears.

And here's some more good news. God is really good with situations like this?

Let's watch the story unfold:

2 Chronicles 22:10–12 (NIV): 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. 11 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. 12 He remained hidden with them at the temple of God for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.

Let's continue. . .

2 Chronicles 23:1–3 (NIV): In the seventh year Jehoiada showed his strength. He made a covenant with the commanders of units of a hundred: Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zikri. 2 They went throughout Judah and gathered the Levites and the heads of Israelite families from all the towns. When they came to Jerusalem, 3 the whole assembly made a covenant with the king at the temple of God. Jehoiada said to them, "The king's son shall reign, as the Lord promised concerning the descendants of David.

Let's drop down to verse 12

2 Chronicles 23:12–15 (NIV): When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and cheering the king, she went to them at the temple of the Lord. 13 She looked, and there was the king, standing by his pillar at the entrance. The officers and the trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and musicians with their instruments were leading the praises. Then Athaliah tore her robes and shouted, "Treason! Treason!" 14 Jehoiada the priest sent out the commanders of units of a hundred, who were in charge of the troops, and said to them: "Bring her out between the ranks and put to the sword anyone who follows

her.” For the priest had said, “Do not put her to death at the temple of the Lord.” 15 So they seized her as she reached the entrance of the Horse Gate on the palace grounds, and there they put her to death.

So, when it appeared that. . .

- The forces of darkness were in control.
- Satan had won.
- Good was defeated.
- Evil had overcome

But once again church, what seems and what is aren't always the same.

Truth is church, the God that I serve. The God I'm telling you about today. . .

- Is the God of good news.
- He's the God of the rescue.
- The God of the living hope.
- The God of the second chance.
- The God of the comeback.

With Him, there is always a way out of darkness.

Dreams of Messiah were dead, but then there was a resurrection!

As scripture tells us, Sorrow may remain for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

Athaliah annihilated all the royal heirs, but. . .Seven years later, it was discovered that one heir had survived.

And watch what happened. . .

2 Chronicles 23:16–17 (NIV): Jehoiada then made a covenant that he, the people and the king would be the Lord's people.  
17 All the people went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.

But wait it gets better. . .

2 Chronicles 23:18–21 (NIV): Then Jehoiada placed the oversight of the temple of the Lord in the hands of the Levitical priests, to whom David had made assignments in the temple, to present the burnt offerings of the Lord as written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and singing, as David had ordered.  
19 He also stationed gatekeepers at the gates of the Lord's temple so that no one who was in any way unclean might enter. 20 He took with him the commanders of hundreds, the nobles, the rulers of the people and all the people of the land and brought the king down from the temple of the Lord. They went into the palace through the Upper Gate and seated the king on the royal throne. 21 All the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was calm, because Athaliah had been slain with the sword.

Let me try and close out this message and give some application for us today.

Ezra is recounting Israel's history so that we can learn lessons to help us on our journey as well.

Ezra is letting us know that. . .

There is a war in heaven that is playing out on earth.

Ephesians 6:12 (NLT): For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

And the next verse tells us. . .

Ephesians 6:13 (NLT): Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

The armor of God is the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet that carry peace, a shield of faith to block every arrow the enemy sends your way, the helmet of salvation that will protect your thoughts, as you carry the sword of the spirit which is God's word.

And you need to start every morning putting that armor on because the enemy is just looking for a place that is exposed.

**(Talk about guarding your mind, etc.)**

The second thing Ezra is teaching us is that God always has plans. . .

Psalms 139:16 (TPT): You saw who you created me to be before I became me! Before I'd ever seen the light of day, the number of days you planned for me were already recorded in your book.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV): For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

And listen to what Job told us. . .

Job 42:2 (NIV): 2 “I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

God’s plans are to build up and not tear down.

Satan has plans as well and they are to steal, kill, and destroy

- He wants to steal your joy
- Kill your dreams
- And destroy your destiny

He tried to make sure the Messiah never arrived in Chronicles and then tried to kill the Messiah in the gospels.

But God had other plans and His plans are always good. And always best.

The third thing Ezra is teaching us is that. . .

God always wins.

I’ve read the end of the book and God wins. And as a follower of Jesus we win.

He won on Easter and He is still winning today.

The Athaliahs of our world may rule for a while, but never forever. Weeping may remain for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

And morning is coming. Don’t abandon your praise, your hope, your dreams, joy is coming in the morning. And believe me when I say morning will come.

One more lesson I want you to see today.

Ezra is teaching us that. . .

The company you keep is important.

1 Corinthians 15:33 (TPT): So stop fooling yourselves! Evil companions will corrupt good morals and character.

Don't miss this lesson: Jehoshaphat endangered future generations which followed by building an alliance with a Baal-worshiper. He didn't think much of it. It even might have seemed like a good idea in the moment.

But it nearly destroyed a nation and a Messiah.

Hear this church, God always wins, and if you will stay close to Him, and you will too.

It may look like bad news today, but good news is coming tomorrow.

It might be painful now, but it's about to turn into provision.

Stop measuring your future problems by your present strength.

God wins. And your joy is coming in the morning. And 8 prophesy to you today morning is about to break.