

## When Godly Men Destroy Their Children

**Text:** 2 Chronicles 21:1-22:12    **[\*\*Don't read till after the Introduction\*\*]**

### **Introduction:**

Following the reign of Solomon, when the kingdom of Israel was divided, we know that amongst all of the kings who reigned, few were godly and faithful. In the northern kingdom of Israel, not a single king walked with the Lord, leading to a terrible judgment, and the exile brought about by the Assyrians. And while the southern kingdom of Judah outlasted the north by several years, eventually, Judah was judged by God, and exiled by the Babylonians.

Amongst the kings of Judah, however, there were a few; indeed, a handful of godly kings whom God used to prosper the kingdom, during times of faithful obedience. But again, very few of the kings, even in the south, were faithful. And even those who were faithful, of course, were imperfect, reminding us that, "even the best of men, are men at best."

If I were to ask you to name those kings, who were, overall, faithful to God, most of you (who are familiar with the Books of 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles), would provide me with three names, and possibly four: Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah would be the immediate, top three picks, and some of you would add Asa, though the end of his reign was marred by great sin. Indeed, while there were a few other kings who had some years of faithfulness (at the beginning of their reign, such as Joash, or at the very end, such as Manasseh), by and large, only the three or four I had named, would be remembered as "faithful," pretty much for the entire duration of their reign.

But again, even among these faithful, we find some severe acts of disobedience, which have produced devastating consequences, and we are reminded that there is only one Messiah; one righteous Savior for mankind, and that is The Lord Jesus Christ! For our Sunday School hour, as we commit this entire day to "Christian Education," and child rearing (in general), I want to hone in, most specifically, on the reign of Jehoshaphat, one of the top three kings, who have been celebrated for their general faithfulness to God. And I want us to see, how this, even godly man, had greatly contributed to the ruin of his children and nearly to the utter contamination of the Judaic line of kings. And we will seek to do this in three steps:

1) We will consider the utter lack of faithfulness of Jehoshaphat's immediate successors (his sons), and the devastating consequences of their lack of faithfulness.

2) We will locate a critical root to the lack of faithfulness of Jehoshaphat's successors/sons.

3) We will consider the critical part, which Jehoshaphat played, in the destruction of his children.

## **I. The Lack of Faithfulness of Jehoshaphat's Successors & the Consequences Thereof**

[Read 2 Chronicles 21:1-22:12]: In seeking to work through this first step, let us, for the sake of time, summarize (some of) what we have just read, in a list format:

1) Following the death of the godly Jehoshaphat, his son Jehoram reigns in his place (1)

2) Jehoram also had six brothers, whom Jehoshaphat had set up as princes, and leaders of various fortified cities in Judah (2-3)

3) Once Jehoram had established his reign, he had murdered all of his brothers, and also others of the princes of Israel (4). Obviously, he was paranoid, and felt threatened by them in some way, and he wanted to ensure that he maintained total control over the kingdom.

4) He reigned for eight years, and did not walk in the godly ways of his father Jehoshaphat. In fact, he emulated the kings of northern Israel, and most notably, the notoriously wicked king of northern Israel, Ahab, whose daughter, Athaliah (also the daughter of the treacherous and wicked Jezebel), Jehoram had married (6)

5) In spite of this, for the sake of David, God did not take the kingdom away from David's line (7)

6) However, because of Jehoram's failure to walk with The Lord, God empowered various foreign nations who had formerly been subject to Judah, so that they successfully revolted against Judah (8-10)

7) Jehoram had "made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit harlotry, and led Judah astray" (11)

8) Because of his gross idolatry, and the way in which he had caused all of Judah to sin against God, God, by means of Elijah the prophet, pronounced a severe curse against Jehoram, which ultimately led to his vile and disgusting death (12-15)

9) God brought various foreign nations against Jehoram, leading to the demise of his family and his possessions, in accordance with Elijah's prophetic curse (16-17)

10) Jehoram died of an incurable and vile disease, at the age of 40, eight years into his reign. When he died, no one mourned for him. He was despised by his own people (18-20)

11) While they buried him in the City of David, they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings. He did not receive a royal burial.

12) His youngest son, Ahaziah then reigned in his place, because all of his older sons, were killed by raiders. Such was the reign of Jehoram. And what of the reign of Ahaziah?

13) Ahaziah started to reign when he was 22 years old (note: says 42, but probably a copyist's error--otherwise would be 2 years older than his father; see 2 Kings 8:26).

14) Ahaziah's reign lasted for only one year! And he also walked in the ways of Ahab, king of Israel, especially under the advisement of his wicked mother, Athaliah, Jehoram's wife, and the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (vs. 1-3)

15) Vs. 4, "Therefore he did evil in the sight of The Lord, like the house of Ahab; for they were his counselors after the death of his father, to his destruction." Again, see the horrible consequences of wicked influences, brethren!

16) Ahaziah was then killed by Jehu, who had also executed the king of Israel, in accordance with God's judgment upon the house of Ahab. And furthermore, Jehu (who then became the king of Israel) killed all of the princes of Judah (and their children), clearly an act of judgment against Jehoram's own household, who had murdered his own brothers, at the outset of his own reign (7-8)

17) Ahaziah only received a burial, because of his relation to Jehoshaphat, who was a godly king (9).

18) Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and the wife of the now deceased Jehoram, then decided to destroy all of the royal heirs of the house of Judah, so as to set herself up as queen. Only Joash was spared, as he was hidden by Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king (Jehoram). And when Joash was old enough, he avenged his brothers, slew Athaliah, and reigned as king, faithfully, until the death of Jehoida, the priest, who was a godly influence on him.

Conclusion #1- And so, brethren, ponder the absolute chaos and destruction that had come upon Judah and the royal heirs, because of the horrible atrocities committed, beginning with Jehoshaphat's oldest son, Jehoram. Consider the great amount of bloodshed, and the

judgments that fell upon David's household, because of such evil. This was a terrible and disastrous time, in the life of Jerusalem, was it not? And where did it all begin for Jehoram?

## **II. A Critical Root to the Lack of Faithfulness Among Jehoshaphat's Successors/Sons**

All of this was rooted in the treacherous consequences of ungodly influence (not unlike what happened to Israel, and especially Ahab, because of Jezebel; and note that some relief comes through the godly influence of Jehoida the priest--until he dies; notice the importance of influences!).

Come back with me, brethren, first, to chapter 21:6, and then 22:3-4: "And (Jehoram) walked in the way of the kings of Israel (*why?*), just as the house of Ahab had done (*why?*), FOR he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of The Lord." Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab (and Jezebel) had served to corrupt and influence Jehoram, in a way that had severed him from the godly influence of his father, Jehoshaphat, whom we are told, "sought The Lord with all his heart" (22:9). The disease of Ahab, spread to Jehoram, and the health of Jehoshaphat did not! And notice how this carried over into the very short reign of Ahaziah, "Ahaziah also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, FOR his mother (Athaliah) advised him to do wickedly. Therefore he did evil in the sight of The Lord, like the house of Ahab; FOR they were his counselors after the death of his father, to his destruction."

Conclusion #2- And so brethren, here we see that the major component in the downfall (indeed, the great downfall), of Jehoshaphat's successors, was the influence of Ahab's ungodly seed, Athaliah. She caused no small amount of destruction and corruption in Judah, didn't she? All of this was centered upon a terrible influence, which completely overshadowed and quenched the godly influence of Jehoshaphat! Now, before we bring this into the conclusive realm of application, brethren, which seems to be getting more and more obvious, we need to take this one step further, so as to complete the whole process of our main subject for this morning.

## **III. The Critical Part, Which Jehoshaphat Played in the Destruction of His Children**

As terrible as all of this is, it might be semi-palatable, if we left the blame in the hands of Jehoram, who married Athaliah, and who walked away from the ways of his father. But, what makes this most sobering and most nerve racking, is that Jehoshaphat, that godly king, who

loved, sought and walked with God for the whole of his reign, played a significant part in the destruction of his children, which we have just pondered.

Let me begin, again, by stating emphatically that Jehoshaphat was a godly king, who, among the rare few, faithfully served God for the whole of his reign. [Note 2 Chronicles 17:3-13--his sons undid all of this!]

However, here is the critical, costly error, which this beloved man of God had committed: 2 Chronicles 18:1- "Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab." Jehoshaphat allied himself with Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, and he secured their alliance by marriage! He took Athaliah, Ahab's daughter, to be his daughter-in-law, the wife of Jehoram. He poisoned his own seed, and the consequences would be devastating, as we have already seen! Following this, he joins forces with Ahab, and yokes together with him, in a war against Ramoth Gilead. Ahab is killed in this war, in accordance with God's judgment, and while God spares the godly Jehoshaphat, he leaves him with this stern rebuke, found in chapter 19:1-3. [Read these verses now].

And finally, consider these concluding words, concerning Jehoshaphat, and notice the temporal judgment that comes upon him, and why. [Read chapter 20:31-37]. Jehoshaphat did not learn from his sin with Ahab, did he, for he had allied himself with Ahaziah, Ahab's wicked son, as well.

Conclusion #3- And so, brethren, here we find that Jehoshaphat's alliance with the ungodly king of Israel is at the very root of the destruction that had come upon his sons. In forming this alliance; in giving his son in marriage to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, this godly man, nearly destroyed David's line. All of the bloodshed to come (the death of all of his other sons, his grandchildren...etc), the thrusting of Judah back into gross idolatry, and the setting up of all manner of idols (which he had formerly destroyed), can be attributed, in large measure, to this one foolish decision, on the part of Jehoshaphat: He allied himself with Ahab, joining the seed of Ahab and his own seed together, corrupting his own line with the ungodly influences of Ahab, leading to the terrible idolatry and judgments that would come upon his household. Jehoshaphat unintentionally poisoned his own children!

#### **IV. Closing Thoughts/Application**

Brethren, here again, is the sobering truth in all of this: Godly men can destroy their own children. Godly men can bring forth wicked children, particularly by failing to protect them from the ungodly influences that surround us. Our children's hearts are already, naturally bent toward evil, aren't they? It's not like we are starting with pre-Adam, pre-fall children. They are already naturally prone to evil, more ready to be shaped by evil influences. And it is our responsibility to lead them in the way of Christ, and away from the ways of the majority (the world).

Let us never be tempted to assume that our children are children of God, by natural descent, or children of the covenant of grace. Such is only the case, when they themselves have confidently put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, brethren! And until we witness such a conversion, we cannot let our guards down, and presume upon God. Let Adam and Gideon and Eli and David and Solomon and Jehoshaphat, and many, many others in Scripture convince us of this reality. Indeed, we need grace daily, and we don't ever want to give up, but we don't ever want to minimize our responsibility in the rearing of our children, brethren! We only have them for a few short years, but these are the precious years of shaping and influence, are they not? If they are going to walk away from the Lord (and God forbid that that should be the case), let it not be, because of our failure to love, nourish, cherish, shield, protect, and raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord! Let it not be because we have created an alliance with Ahab, bringing the world right into our very homes!

AMEN!!!