

2 Chronicles 21:4-7 "The Ruin Of Living In Two Worlds"

All right. Let's open our Bibles this evening to 2 Chronicles 21:4.

Chronicles gives to us primarily the history of the kings of Judah. You might remember that after Solomon's death the nation of Israel broke into two parts. Ten of the tribes went north; two of the tribes stayed where God had put His name, in Jerusalem - Benjamin and Judah.

And for many years, from 931 B.C. to 722 B.C. (209 years), the northern kingdom had not a good king among them. They didn't walk with God. They worshipped idols. They practiced some of the idolatry of the heathen. They lowered the standards of the priests. They were trouble. And when the Lord, in 722 B.C., brought the Assyrians in to take them out, they were taken out for good; no promise to go back to the land, no promise to be restored. Nothing. Just taken into captivity. Many died. And for them to go back at all, they had to go back to Jerusalem, the place God had put His name.

In the southern kingdom, they had a lot of good kings. They lasted for quite a while longer. In fact, it wasn't until 606 B.C. (116 years later) that they also faced God's wrath for their idolatry. The Babylonians God sent in. But this time He said to them, "Seventy years you're going to learn to not worship idols in Babylon. Then I'm going to bring you back to this place." And so they had a future. God chastised them, but God had a promise for them because they had stayed where He had put His name. But Chronicles, for the most part, covers the history of the kings of Judah - those in the south, those who had some good kings as well as some not-so-good kings.

But tonight I wanted to take you for a little ride through a couple of verses to look at a man named Jehoshaphat and then to look at his son named Jehoram. Because it really is a pretty good indicator of the fact that you can live a godly life and still leave a lot of destruction behind, just by your example. And Jehoshaphat is one of those guys that, unfortunately, sticks out brightly as such - in both directions. It is maybe the epitome of the Lord saying (through Paul to the Corinthians), "Come out from among them and be separate, and I will be your God, and you will be My people" (2 Corinthians 6:17). Jehoshaphat was an extremely good king. He ruled

from 873 to 848 B.C., twenty-five years of godly leadership. He followed the footsteps of his father, Asa, and Asa had ruled from 911 down to 870 B.C., another forty-one years. So the nation itself, in the south, had almost seventy years of extremely good spiritual leadership. And you couldn't overstate how Jehoshaphat had changed the nation. In fact, you don't have to go back a couple of chapters, but in chapter 17:3 it says this, "Now the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel." (That was the northern kingdom). "Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah" (southern kingdom) "gave presents to Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and honor in abundance. And his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah." And so it goes on, and it says down in verse 9, "So they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the LORD with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people. And the fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat. Also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents," and then verse 12 says, "So Jehoshaphat became increasingly powerful, and he built fortresses and storage cities in Judah." And it goes on and on to talk about how clearly he had made a huge impact upon a nation that, for years, hadn't done very well.

So Jehoshaphat, in his twenty-five years of rulership and in following in the footsteps of his father for forty-years prior to that, taught the nation to obey God's Word, he strengthened the reforms, he brought the nation to a spiritual place. In every category, politically and spiritually, you'd say, "Gosh, what a great guy!" And he was. When he died (and we're at chapter 21), he left seven sons behind; and his eldest son was named Jehoram, and Jehoram was made king. And he turned out to be absolutely one of the most wicked kings that Israel had ever seen. There were probably few that were worse than this fellow. And the obvious question becomes - how can a godly father raise a son who, at 32 years old, goes absolutely over the spiritual edge and in eight years cripples the nation, turns them back over seventy years of progress, and then leaves a son that is even worse than he is? And this whole interruption came in. I know sometimes there's nothing you can do. But at least for Jehoshaphat, biblically, there were things he did that he might have been able to do differently to avoid what followed. Why was the influence for the Lord so well-accepted in the nation and so missing in the life of his own son? And a careful, I think, consideration of his life gives us some

important things to consider because Jehoshaphat turns out to be a guy that really liked to go into the world and watch and see, not necessarily participate. But he was enamored by watching the way the world lived and found himself there, quite often being moved by it. He was a fellow with a foot in two worlds, while his son, unfortunately, ended up squarely in one - the wrong one. And his life, in many ways, was awesome. What we just read of him - phenomenal, unbelievably good. And yet, besides being beneficial and exemplary and fruitful, he didn't leave a son that way. His eldest son followed much in the footsteps of the example of his father. He was a good king with a very large blind spot.

Jehoshaphat, in the Bible records, is only given five chapters - 1 Kings 22 (it's a few books back) and then 2 Chronicles 17-20 and then right here at the beginning (of chapter 21). And if you read them quickly, you find something very interesting about a godly man, and that is he had this affinity to have relations with those who were living in sin, particularly those in the northern kingdom; on a political level, on a peer level, with people that had the same power that he did. He found himself oftentimes going to the kingdom in the north where, like we said, there was no good king; there was only rebellion against God. They lasted 209 years and were shut down. In 1 Kings 22:41 (I'll just read it to you real quick), this is what it says about Jehoshaphat, this fellow that, in many ways, we look up to and we admire. It says, "Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel" (in the north). "Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel." It's all it says in the kingly record, but it says that he was a man who, even as a man of God, did not really fully bring the nation away from the idolatry that they were mired in, if you will; but that he also sought to make a restoration and a peace with folks who were living the most ungodly lifestyles that you can imagine - immorality and perversion, and he seemed fascinated with the lifestyles of those who had set God aside and seemed to revel in going to visit the world. In fact, if you read these four chapters prior to the verses that we are at tonight, you will find that he makes lots of trips north. His vacations were to go hang out with King Ahab, go hang out with Jezebel, go hang out with the perversion and the sexual perversion that worship of Baal produced. And we find him constantly on the wrong side of the fence, if you will. He was so

enamored, especially in the days of Ahab and Jezebel; his son, Jehoram, would eventually marry their daughter. And his son, Jehoram, would be named the same that King Ahab had named his son, and they began to be buddies. But they were from different camps all together. He made deals, he made visits, he made pacts with them. He even participated and supported them in the battling of their enemies. He seemed to be at their beck and call.

If you go back in your Bible just a couple of chapters (to 2 Chronicles 18), it says in verse 1 of chapter 18, "Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab." That was through his son. "After some years he went down to visit Ahab in Samaria; and Ahab killed sheep and oxen in abundance for him and the people who were with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth Gilead. So Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, 'Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?' And he answered him, 'I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will be with you in the war.'" Terrible idea. Horrible move. Join the enemy of God. "Let me just help you prosper." And he made him promises, and he made a relationship with him that was just unbelievable. In verse 4, "Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel" (Ahab), " 'Please inquire for the word of the LORD today.' " ("I'd like to pray about this. Is there a prophet here that can speak to us and tell us what God wants?") "Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men," verse 5, "and said to them, 'Shall we go to war against 'Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?' So they said, 'Go up, for God will deliver it into the king's hand.' But Jehoshaphat" (smart enough to know better) "said, 'Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?' " He knew that the four hundred men standing before him weren't even godly men; he knew how Ahab played his games, and he was able to go, "Yeah, we just need one guy that talks to the Lord." And Jehoshaphat is answered in verse 7 by the king of Israel, by Ahab, and he said, " 'There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil. He is Micaiah the son of Imla.' And Jehoshaphat said, 'Let not the king say such things!' Then the king of Israel called one of his officers and said, 'Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly!' The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, clothed in their robes," verse 9, "sat each on his throne; and they sat at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets" (the fake ones) "prophesied before them. Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, 'Thus says the LORD: "With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed." ' " They were saying all the things the king wanted to hear. Verse 11,

"And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, 'Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king's hand.' Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, 'Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Therefore please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.' And Micaiah said, 'As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak.' Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?' And he" (kind of mockingly) "said, 'Go and prosper,' " (it's a Star Trek line) " 'and they shall be delivered into your hand!' So the king said to him, 'How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?' " He, I think, recognized the sarcasm. And so "Micaiah said, 'All right. I'll tell you what I really saw. I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, "These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace." ' And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat," verse 17, " 'Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?' Then Micaiah said, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left. And the LORD said, "Who will persuade Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?" So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, "I will persuade him." The LORD said to him, "In what way?" So he said, "I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." And the LORD said, "You shall persuade him and also prevail; go out and do so." Therefore look!' " (as he points to these guys) " 'The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.' Then Zedekiah" (one of those false prophets) "struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, 'Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?' And Micaiah said, 'Indeed you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!' " Then the king of Israel ordered him to be taken away, to be put, verse 26, " 'in prison, and feed him with bread and water, until I return.' And Micaiah said, 'If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.' And he said, 'Take heed, all you people!' "

Now you would think, after all of that, that Jehoshaphat - the good king - would say, "Yeah, I've rethought this whole idea. I'm going home. Good luck with your battle. Maybe I'll return." But even though the prophet had spoken and had a reputation for speaking of the Lord, and God hated the sin of Ahab, had determined to destroy him, Jehoshaphat decides he's going with him anyway. This

is foolishness, and it's a horrible example to his family. It would have been enough for you and me to get off a sinking ship. Well, you can begin, in verse 29, to read what took place. But let's just put it this way. The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Maybe we could trade clothing, and you could look like me, and I'll look like you." No, this is a bad idea! But he went along with it. And they went into the battle and just say to the end of the chapter that Ahab gets killed in battle, and Jehoshaphat barely escapes with his life, barely gets out. You would say, "Well, that'll deter him from the lure of worldly associations." Yeah, it didn't. In fact, in chapter 19, Jehoshaphat returns safely to his house. Verse 2 says, "And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, 'Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD is upon you. Nevertheless good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God.'" Here's the problem. He speaks very pointed words to this vacillating king. He tells him how dangerous the road is that he's on. He tells him that his walk with God has been met with grace, that he should consider godly alliances. He gives him a warning about fighting for the wrong enemy and fighting with the wrong enemy. "You shouldn't love those who hate God, not in this way. You don't support that kind of life." And he plainly says what the other prophet had said. So he's got two prophets now, in a matter of weeks, telling him the same thing. And that's the dichotomy. His heart was definitely to seek the Lord. In his governmental oversight, he made great decisions. So much so that, though he was unpopular sometimes with the people, they honored the Lord. God was well pleased with the decisions he made. But there was this nagging kind of longing for friendships and closeness with the kind of people that were opposed to the Lord, opposed to His ways - the wicked ones. Not only opposed. Enemies of God. "Those who hate God," that's what the prophet said. And like I said, he even went so far as to name his firstborn son after Ahab's firstborn son. "Let's just call both our boys the same name."

Later, in another alliance - that we don't have here in Chronicles but we have in Kings - this time with that son Jehoram (the son of Ahab, after Ahab was killed in this battle), the prophet Elisha is there. And he is asked by Jehoram, Ahab's son, about whether or not they should go to battle. And Jehoshaphat is there again. You can read about it. It is in 2 Kings 3. Elisha looks at this young man, Jehoram, wicked guy, and he says to him, "I wouldn't even be talking to you if he wasn't here. If this man of God wasn't here, you wouldn't get the time of day from me. But I'm speaking to you because he's here." And so the musician played, and the hand of

the Lord came upon Elisha, and he warned him about the course that he was taking. And he warned him about overthrowing (at that time) Moab, which was one of their enemies, and there was great indignation there. They hated Elisha as well. But you find Jehoshaphat, a good man, a godly man in the annals of history, losing a son because it seems like he dragged him along to all of the wrong places. The boy would eventually marry into Ahab's family. He would fall in love with what he found there.

By the way, in chapter 19 here, beginning in verse 4, he turns his life around. It's for the next eight verses. But however long that time was, he began to do the right things. He began to be faithful. He really put his head down, and he seemed to just do what the Lord wanted him to do. He told the judges, "You let the fear of the Lord be upon you. You do that. There's no iniquity with God, no partiality. They don't take any bribes." He set the course up to be pleasing in God's sight. And people took notice. He said at the end of verse 11, "You behave courageously, and the LORD will be with the good." And so he was back on track, and then you get to chapter 20 - he leads the people into fasting. There was an attack coming from the Ammonites and the Moabites and the other "ites," and they came against him. And he got the whole nation together and said, "Let's fast and pray. God can take care of us. And He can do great things." In fact, you get to verse 15 of chapter 20 and the Lord, speaking, says, " 'Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: "Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!" Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you.' And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshipping the LORD." And a marvelous deliverance took place. You can read about it through the rest of that chapter, down through verse 30 or so, how that the Ammonites and the Moabites began to kill each other. They got confused in the battle, and the enemy just stood and watched. This is Jehoshaphat, with the hand of God powerfully upon him. And you would presume, as you read through his life, these years of his leadership, that he would be a man who would get it; that God needed to be sought. It was His blessings and not these worldly nations that would bring God's blessing.

And yet the summary of his life shows just a real disharmony. In fact, if you go to verse 31 of chapter 20, it says, "So Jehoshaphat was king over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years. And he walked in the way of his father Asa, and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. Nevertheless," verse 33, "the high places were not taken away." He'd taken down the wooden images, but now he left the high places. "As yet the people had not directed their hearts to the God of their fathers." He didn't move them forward. He didn't help them to go forward. Verse 35 might even surprise you. It says, "After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah," another wicked guy in the north, "king of Israel, who acted very wickedly. And he allied himself with him to make ships." He went into business with him so they could go down to England, to Tarshish. They made ships there on the coast, in Ezion Geber. Verse 37, "But Eliezer" (again, another prophet) "came to Jehoshaphat and said, 'Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works.' Then the ships were wrecked, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish."

Such a contradiction in terms this guy, isn't he? He kind of is good on Monday, not so good on Tuesday; he's great on Thursday and not so good on Friday. God hated this venture. He sent another prophet. It is the last thing that is recorded of Jehoshaphat's life before verse 1 (of chapter 21) records his death. It's the last thing we hear of Jehoshaphat. He comes to the end of his life trying to make some business deals with guys that aren't walking with God, and God hated it; and so much so that, not only did He send a prophet, he made the business go belly up. So here's a king who has tremendous inconsistencies in his life. He serves the LORD. He's a good king (by God's own mouth) who sought to draw the people, as a nation, back to God. He loved the LORD, and he sought him with all that he had. And yet he loved to go to the north to sit in the midst of the perversion of Baal worship with its prostitutes and it's horrible - they even offered their children in the fire. It is Ahab that introduced Baal worship to Israel. He brought it to the forefront. It wasn't a part of their life until it was introduced through the northern kingdom. And he was even so enamored by it that he would go to battle for these guys when the Lord had clearly said, "Don't go." He would involve himself though the Lord said, "You can't fight with those who hate Me. You can't take that kind of side." But he did. He even developed business and political alliances that brought God's anger.

And it does seem to indicate, because we have this Scriptural account of his life, that it was his father's fascination with the world that affected his eldest son the most. It seems like the younger kids, as you continue to read, did okay. But this firstborn son that he took along with him, that eventually would be enamored (like his father was) with the things in the north, obviously felt that he could watch and not touch, and tinker and not be burned. And he couldn't. And neither could his eldest boy. And he just got in deeper, even, than his father. He took him up north often. Jehoram was soon influenced by the low moral climate that he found there; life without God - this was what's experienced in the north - sensual life, fleshly life. As a young man, Jehoram fell in love with one of Ahab's daughters. Her name was Athaliah. You can read her name in chapter 22 as being the mother, by name, and he soon married her. And so, unlike his father who seemed to be able to come home and put his best foot forward again - do the spiritual things right and be back in fellowship and be back on his knees and all - the boy just couldn't separate the two; and he found himself more and more being dragged north, if you will - flirting with sin, couldn't keep his balance, was far weaker than his father. His fall was really far greater than his father as well. And so his wife's wickedness soon overcame him. You can read in chapter 22. Let's look there, verse 1. It says, "Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his place," (this is the northern kingdom) "for the raiders who came with the Arabians into the camp had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, reigned. Ahaziah was forty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother advised him to do wickedly." So, there were great problems here, and it seemed to be the natural consequence of.....this kid is thirty-two years old, the flesh has enticed him, he's watched his dad kind of walk that fine line for years, his heart is filled, and now he's the king in Judah; and he's got a wife who's like Ahab, deep into Ahab's way of life. And the consequences for him and the nation would be severe.

In fact, when he dies - and he only rules for eight years, God didn't give him much time - it is his wife who sought to murder all of the descents of Jehoshaphat so that she could keep the throne for herself. And you might know the story how God spared one little boy - saved him, hid him - or that whole lineage going to Jesus would have been cut off. But this is how bad it got for Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, who married into the family in the north.

What you allow in your life can have a tremendous impact upon you and even more so upon those who look up to you. And I don't think you have to just talk about young children. People watch us. And there is a way that you can live your life so that, though you might feel like you can balance your head getting stuck into the world and then back into the church, if your church life and your home life are two extremely different things, then you're headed for disaster. If your social life and your relationship with those in the body, if your pleasures are found in the world, don't be surprised if one day your kids end up there as well. If you show your kids that doing business with worldly partners is just the price of doing business, then you may end up like Jehoshaphat - having kids that really don't have an understanding between the devotion to God that they need and the devotion to God that they sometimes see in you. James wrote, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). John wrote, "Don't love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15).

We don't get so many looks, clearly, at someone's whole kind of life with very much specifics like we do Jehoshaphat. He's a guy that God paints with a very clear brush. And Paul, in describing even the fallen wickedness of man in Romans 1 and the potential of life without God, concludes in Romans 1:32, "We know the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do we do the same, but we approve of those who do them." And Paul was talking about those who were around the church. They know better, but somehow they are approving of the world around them, and they take great pleasure in it. Look. We're not of the world, right? We don't belong to this place. We're headed out of here one day. It's a good thing. I don't think it's going to get better, but there have to be decisions that we make along the way. Jehoshaphat thought he could handle it. Maybe you think you can handle it. I don't think you can handle it. Galatians 6:7 says, "God is not mocked; what a man sows, he's going to reap." That's just the way it works. Put it in the ground, watch the fruit come up. "Sow to yourselves righteousness," Hosea the prophet says (Hosea 10:12). "Break up the fallow ground of your heart. Reap in mercy. It is time to seek the LORD until He comes and reigns in righteousness." There is a payback, isn't there? And Jehoshaphat was a fellow that was a, like I said, in the list of kings, he and his father for almost seventy years, were good men politically; they were good men governmentally; they brought great reforms. We would have applauded them if we had them as presidents. However, Jehoshaphat's personal life and the choices that he made left disaster behind. And it would bring ruin to the nation. What he and his father built in seventy years would be taken down in ten - eight and then the

son that would follow (Jehoram) was more wicked, lasted a little over a year. And then everything was back to ground zero almost. There's an intimate fellowship that you can have in the church that you can't have in the world. And it'll affect you. It has to. You can't get away and play both sides of the fence. And unfortunately, that's what weakens the church - a bunch of folks thinking they can play both sides of the fence.

Verse 4 of chapter 21 (I knew we were here for a reason) says, "Now when Jehoram was established over the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself and killed all his brothers with the sword, and also others of the princes of Israel. Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel," (the northern kingdom) "just as the house of Ahab had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD. Yet the LORD would not destroy the house of David," (the southern kingdom) "because of the covenant that He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever." So Jehoram became a product, almost, of his father's kind of prurient interests and his sideline, non-judgmental approach to the evils of the world. But look what this kid does. He kills all of his competition. He kills other leaders in Israel. We gather from verse 13 (which is a few verses ahead), where we read the letter than Elijah sent to this young man, "You have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab, and also have killed your brothers, those of your father's household, who were better than yourself." And you get the idea that Jehoram realized he wasn't doing the right thing. He knew right from wrong. He was jealous about his brothers' lifestyle, but he made the choice anyway. They disapproved of his ways, but he had the power, and so he silences them once and for all. And the godliness of his father might very well have been found in his younger brothers; it just wasn't found in him.

And so we read, in verse 6, God's description that he didn't walk in the ways of his father; he walked in the ways of his father's friends - particularly the house of Ahab, where he had spent a lot of time and married into and where dad loved to go. Sexual perversion, temple prostitutes, sacrificing children. Horrible place. All you have to do is read Baal history politically; read it historically, and oh, my goodness! Horrible.

And, like I said, his wife was a real gem. When Jehoram died, and her son Ahaziah had been killed, she actually went and took out every possible successor to the throne; every grandchild, every half-grandchild. Read chapter 22. And if the Lord hadn't stepped in to spare one child, it would have been history. It would have been history.

Verse 7 says something very interesting here, though. It says the LORD had made a promise with David. And so, even though this is a wicked guy - he's in the southern kingdom, he's in the descendency of David, and God has tremendous patience and love for the nation and for His covenant - and so He cuts off (verse 5) Jehoram's influence to eight years. He gets to be forty, and then he's done. God won't allow him to continue any longer in that kind of a position. A letter was sent to him, like I said, through the prophet Elijah (verse 12). It says, "A letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, 'Thus says the LORD God of your father David: "Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah," ' " (that was his grandpa) " ' "but" ' " (as we read, verse 13) " ' "have walked in the way of the kings of Israel," ' " (the house of Ahab and that household) verse 14, the LORD said to him, " ' "behold, the LORD will strike your people with a serious affliction - your children, your wives, and all your possessions; and you will become very sick with a disease of your intestines, until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day." ' " That's pretty ugly. That's the prophet Elijah. "Wise up, sucker! You're doing a dumb thing." And he doesn't listen. He doesn't care because he's learned that somehow you can live on both sides of the fence.

According to what we read here, the last two years of his life saw the loss of all of his family - everyone died in his family except for one son - while he was battling an extreme illness. By the time he became forty, he dies (of what we read here) in very clear and very shocking terms. In fact, we read in verse 16, "The LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabians who were near the Ethiopians. And they came up into Judah and invaded it," to deal with this king, "and carried away all the possessions that were found in the king's house, and also his sons and his wives, so that there was not a son left to him except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons. After all this the LORD struck him in his intestines with an incurable disease. Then it happened in the course of time, after the end of two years, that his intestines came out because of his sickness; so he died in severe pain. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning for his fathers. He was thirty-two years old when he became king. He reigned in

Jerusalem eight years and, to no one's sorrow, departed. However they buried him in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings." So, perhaps due to his perverted lifestyle and his Baal worship, maybe he got sick. We don't know. But we do know that there was not one warning that he took to heart until it was too late. When he died, verse 19 tells us no one cared. No grief, no national despair, no loss of the king, no desire to have him back, no crying in the streets, no state funeral, no sepulcher with the kings. He got nothin'. He just came, and he went. His sinful lifestyle didn't last long. It usually doesn't. God may allow you to live many years in your rebellion, but even those are few years compared to eternity.

So, Jehoram makes the wrong conclusion that many people do when God doesn't immediately act, and that is, "I'm all right. I'm still being blessed. I'm still king. I've still got power. I'm still in good shape." And he continued to do wickedly and I'm sure came to the conclusion what was God going to do about it? And there were lots of warning signs along the way - for this young man - if he'd been paying attention. Verse 8 tells us that he lost Edom as an influence, as a state - a vassal state. They had been paying taxes for protection to Judah for years. His father had ruled over them; so had his grandfather; now they decided they're not going to pay anymore, they're going to step away. Then he lost Libna, then came the letter from Elijah, then came the attack from the Philistines and the Arabians and the Ethiopians and the death of much of his family. It's a hard life he was livin'. But like his father, he seemed impervious to the warnings of God. He'd seen his dad talk to prophets and just walk away shaking his head, "Prophets, you know they're all alike. They're always talkin'." And he died in his sin.

But I think you have to drag it right back to Jehoshaphat's way of life. His dad - not a two-faced guy. He was absolutely true in the ways that he lived, but he lived in two places. Right? He was comfortable in the church, and he was comfortable in the world. And his boy never learned about the fellowship with God, but he learned about the world. His son behind him, if you read verses 3-5 of chapter 22, was even worse than he, and God only allowed him to rule for one year before he got killed in judgment by the hands of a fellow named Jehu, whom God used to clean up the house of Ahab all together. Jehu was a warrior.

So, we can't misinterpret the longsuffering of God for approval or for lack of concern. Don't ever use the argument, "I'm still being blessed, I must be okay" while you're living in cahoots with the world. It doesn't work. There's a Scripture in Ecclesiastes 8:11 that says, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not

executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Or, in other words, to bring you to the conclusion, "This is fine, this is the way I want to live my life." Paul said to the Romans (2:4), "Do you really want to despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God is supposed to lead you to repentance?" Good thing God's hand doesn't reach out from heaven every time you make a wrong turn and slap you on the side of the head. God is waiting for you to repent. Right? It's that goodness that we wait upon. In Numbers 32:23, it was Moses who said, "You realize that you've sinned against God. Take note of it because your sin will find you out."

And Jehoshaphat - at some point in his life, maybe not even in his own life but in the life of his descendants - paid the price for his sin. It had an effect. There was an end result, and the result wasn't good.

So, we're coming up to a new year, and a new year is always fun because you can write down new ideas and new plans and new direction and address things if you're serious about them. And I think that God needs to show us that we live in a world where we're supposed to be a light, aren't we? Not willful, sideline participators in their sin. "Oh, it's an R-rated movie, there's lots of sex and nudity. But, look, I didn't clap or hardly even look." But you were there. And if your kids watch you, they'll learn it just from you. There're some decisions that we need to make because the world is constantly willing to draw us away from God, and you can see the consequences. It doesn't take long. And you open the door, and more sin rolls in.

And I always found Jehoshaphat a fascinating guy because he always leaves the place of blessing, where God applauds his life, to hang around the evils of his day. And it was kind of like Lot living in Sodom, to me. I think I've said before - if Peter didn't say to me in the New Testament, "Lot made it to heaven," I would've concluded he never made it because there's just nothing in the Old Testament that says Lot was a godly man. You don't come away going, "Now there's a guy I'd like to be like." You come away saying, "I don't ever want to be Lot." But if you go and read Lot's story, by the time Lot has moved into Sodom and everything has worked out, he's lost his family to the sin he was enamored by. He barely got out. Imagine the angel of the LORD having to grab him and say, "Come on, man. We've got to go. We're going to get killed here." He got out. Most of his family did not. And those that did get out were terrible people. They all got their dad drunk and slept with

their dad, these daughters, to have children by him. These were not normal godly people. And Lot barely survived the thing. He's got nothing to show for his life except disaster. God's grace. I'm sure Jehoshaphat made it, too. God's grace.

I'm sure you'll make it. But, man, you can leave a disaster in your wake just simply by allowing things in your life that you shouldn't. We have a heavy responsibility to flee sin so that the people who watch us might flee it as well. And if not, just one generation - just from Jehoshaphat, for twenty-five years, to his kid who was in his thirties. So, he saw his dad before he was king, saw his dad after he was king. And one generation finds it all just kind of falling apart. And the children die, and the grandchildren are killed. But there's this ruin that comes when you try to live in both worlds or try to straddle the fence or be enticed with the world around you. Look, better you go to church, open your Bible, worship God. Do like this - hide yourself. Right? There's something good about blinders. They don't put them on horses for no good reason. They just don't want the horse going, "Yeah, I'd like to be over here." It'll kill the rider, and you'll lose the race. This is always good. Right? Paul, when he wrote to the Hebrews, said in chapter 12 that we should fix our eyes upon Jesus. And the word "fix" is the word "*aphorao*." You only find it one place in the Bible, but it means to fill your field of vision with one thing. Fill it with Him. Or, in other words, just don't see anything else. I know it sounds like, "Hey, you Christians are burying your heads in the sand." Well I'd rather bury my head in the sand than see a lot of things that are around us. Wouldn't you? I mean, who needs it?! And the kids that grow up watching us - they'll allow what you allow. They'll allow what you allow. They'll follow your example. I think it was Gayle Erwin - my favorite line of Gayle Erwin - he said, "I tried to teach my kids table manners. They just kept eating like me." Perfect example. And that's the way it goes. Which is why when Paul said (2 Corinthians 6:17), "Come out from among them and be separate, don't touch what is unclean, and I'll receive you. I'll be your Father, you can be My sons and daughters" says the Lord Almighty - just don't get involved. To the extent that you can stand away from the world, you'll be powerful in your witness, and you'll be in a much better position to help others, and you'll be in a much better position to praise the Lord and to bless Him.

Look, Jehoshaphat's life was not filled with downsides only; he had a lot of upsides. Go back and read it again. There's a lot of praise from the Lord to this man. But there's a lot of indication that because he didn't stay with it, he lost his son, he lost a nation, and for years to come, seventy years of faithful leadership was drowned away in less than ten years by two guys.

So maybe 2017 will be the year that the Lord comes, which would be fine. But when He comes, we want Him to find us doing the right thing. Right?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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