

## 2 Chronicles 21-22

Throughout the last 2-3 weeks we've seen the reforms and the net effect, that is the blessing of having godly leadership on the throne there in the southern kingdom of Judah. All of that comes to a grinding halt tonight as we see Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son enter into the equation and ascend to the throne. The last 2 generations have been ruled over in Judah through good and godly kings. Both Asa and his son Jehoshaphat did an overall excellent job in their oversight of the nation. And so the Lord was moving, blessing, granting peace to them and placing His fear on the nations around them.

However, you can not sow to the wind and expect that there won't be a reaping of the whirlwind. If you sow to the flesh you will of the flesh reap corruption. And one of the tragedies of bad decisions and sowing to the flesh is that sometimes harvest time doesn't come until years later. And unfortunately the decisions we make can still be rippling out in a devastating way for years after we're gone. In other words you may make a poor decision today and yet the consequences won't come into effect until you're dead and gone. But still it may devastate your *family*, and perhaps even work ruin in the lives of people you never even knew *personally*. But understand that such is the nature of sin, it never ceases to amaze me how easily we can be persuaded in our own heart and in our own mind that our sin is self-contained. We buy the lie that we're not hurting anyone, it's our life, and if anyone get's hurt it's only going to be us. And that is *never* true; *never*. The decisions we make, be they for the good, or for the bad can't help but impact the people around us (as a minimum) but generally on out from there to a degree of which God only knows (as far as how many people are directly or indirectly affected by our decisions, the things we do, etc.).

And such a situation brings us up to speed with where we're at tonight. Jehoshaphat was a godly king, but along the way he made a # of ungodly decisions. And one of those decisions didn't seem to make much of a difference at the time, however now that he's gone not only will it devastate and all but destroy his family, but it will begin the radical declension, the downward decline and spiritual decay of the entire kingdom of Judah; the unraveling of all that he sought to set in order. Let's begin here in Vs 1 of Ch 21.

### Vs1-6

And so we have here in the person of Jehoram a sinful son, a brutal brother, and a rotten ruler. Now there are a # of things we need to see/recognize here. #1 Understand that for all that Jehoram did, God held him personally accountable. In other words there may've been all sorts of variables that entered in to the equation of his life that helped to persuade him to become the person he became. It's simply a truism that people and places have an influence upon us. However that never justifies the decision that we personally make with regard to that influence. Or to understand that another way no one forced him to be the person he was, no one forced him to follow after the ways of the house of Ahab, no one forced him to murder his brothers. Those are all decisions that he personally made, therefore he was personally accountable.

So to with you, so to with me, we will all stand personally accountable before God with regard to the decisions we make and the paths we take. I was watching a little snippet of news the other day with regard to the Virginia Tech massacre and they were talking about the young man who murdered all those people. And they were talking about what causes a person to turn out that way. And of course the rationalization and justification of a bad childhood and various things were brought up.

And that particular premise starts with the assumption that people are basically good, but that due to a series of unfortunate events in life they turn out bad. Well, that's not what the bible teaches at all. The bible teaches that people are intrinsically bad, sinful, and left to themselves they will self destruct. How many of you have ever had to teach a child to lie, or be mean, or do something they weren't supposed to? No one has because that comes naturally to us as humanity, but we have to discipline our children to be good because that *doesn't* come naturally. When you start with the premise "People are basically good" you're already on the wrong path. People are sinners by nature and they need J.C. to break the chain and set them free. But my point is that he may've had the worst childhood in the history of humanity, but he's still accountable for the decisions he made personally, there are no scapegoats, or justification before God for the roads we take, and the decisions we make.

Having said that, the 2<sup>nd</sup> thing I'd have you realize is that as parents (or for that matter peers) we need to choose carefully the influence we subject our children, or our friends to when they're around us. And what I mean by that is that there may be things that aren't necessarily sin in and of themselves that you don't struggle with that perhaps entice others to sin. For instance we know that Jehoshaphat ventured up into the northern kingdom of Israel to meet on occasion with Ahab. Now, Jehoram being his oldest son, next in line for the throne, no doubt he went with him a time or 2. Dad probably thought it would be good politically to have him there so that there would be a relationship established previously by the time Jehoram took the throne. But here's the deal; Ahab was one of the most wicked kings that Israel ever knew, his wife (Jezebel) was even more detestable than he was. And apparently when Jehoshaphat visited them it didn't phase him much personally, he was able to with stand the temptations and pulls toward ungodliness that surrounded him in that environment. However his son (Jehoram) wasn't as resilient, didn't have the same moral fiber that dad had, his relationship with the Lord wasn't where his dad's was. And so he was intrigued, enticed, fell in love with Ahab's daughter and so his dad arranged for them to be married. Now had Jehoshaphat had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather exposed them to his son for what they were. Had he not sought to mingle light with darkness, the temple of God with idols, righteousness with lawlessness, all those things we spoke about on Sunday morning there in 2 Cor 6, Jehoram would've never been exposed to those things much less had the opportunity to fall in love with Ahab's daughter who took disastrously after her mother.

So it's important as parents, and as peers that we take careful thought as to what we're willing to expose our children to, or our friends to that may not be sin in and of themselves but could stumble them into a potentially sinful/destructive situation. Remember Lot?

He was able to withstand the pull and the pressures of Sodom, but his family couldn't. Peter said with regard to God's destroying of Sodom and Gomorrah but sparing Lot from the destruction that God, "...*delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)--*" 2 Peter 2:7-8

You see, it was killing him to be there yet there was a part of him that didn't want to leave there and it made for the destruction of a good part of his family as well. It's just not worth the risk. Jehoshaphat did well in separating his sons, giving them each enough to be more than occupied and satisfied with. But that didn't matter to Jehoram; he knew the intent of his own heart so he presumed it upon his brothers and had them all put to death just so there wouldn't be a rival threat to him being on the throne.

"He walked in ways of the kings of Israel," now that's not a compliment. Because even though Judah had some godly kings along the way, Israel never did. Every king of Israel after the division of the kingdom was wicked. So to have said of you that you walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and then the context added, "As the house of *Ahab* had done," is a horrible legacy indeed. "For he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife, he did evil in the sight of the Lord."

Last little observation. Wives, wield wisely the influence you have been handed in your husband's life. He may be the leader of your home, but if you think for one second that your input, and your comments don't radically impact his decision making process you're only fooling yourself. And some gals know that, so they take advantage of that and manipulate him so has to be the one who is running the show behind the scenes. It would seem such was the case here, we're told here that he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, specifically of the house of Ahab for (or because of the fact that) he had Ahab's daughter as a wife. Translation, she wielded radical influence in his life, and utilized to serve her own wicked, self-serving ends. Wife, be careful to honor the Lord with the way you encourage, and influence your husband.

Jehoshaphat's sin of hooking up with Ahab had its worst fall out after his death, now it's literally working death and destruction in the entire nation, beginning with his own family.

Vs7

Of course this reminds us that we serve a God of His Word, He's not a man that He should lie. If He says it, He'll do it and as believers, reflecting/representing the Lord to those who are around us, if we say we'll do it, we need to do it. We're to be a people of our word, these days it seems the only way to bind someone to their word is through a legal contract that bears penalties if they try and get out of it. Because if not there's no sense of loyalty to follow through, and it shouldn't be that way as believers. Look quickly at Ps 15 (read)

Of course the last part of Vs 4 is what I'm wanting you to see with regard to our context. "He who swears to his own hurt and does not change."

You are, I am to be a person of my word. If I say I'm going to do something even without thinking and it ultimately inconveniences me or even in some way hurts me. (I offered to sell something at a price, but then someone offered me more yet I've given my word to the 1<sup>st</sup> offer) I can't go back, I have to follow through on my word. God gave His Word to David, that He would leave a lamp burning to him in Israel, that the Messiah would come through His lineage. And so though the things would've justified the Lord's judgment falling upon him, completely snuffing out the lineage, God gave David His Word and so He kept it.

Vs8-10

So we're told exactly why things went south for the kingdom of Judah. It was because Jehoram had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers. Now we've been talking as of late on our Sunday morning gatherings of the fact that sometimes afflictions enter into the arena of our lives simply because we're serving the Lord. We've set ourselves apart *to* the Lord, and because of that there are times when trouble comes to us, affliction visits us. But I think it's also important to realize that on the flipside of that coin it's equally true that sometimes trouble comes to us because *we're not* really walking with the Lord, or following after the Lord. We're walking in sin, and sin has its consequences. And I think that one way to discern which is happening is to simply evaluate honestly your life and see if there's any area in which you've compromised your walk with Christ.

Paul said, "*For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.*" 1 Cor 11:31 If we'd carefully consider (truly) ask the Lord to search us and reveal to us where we've slipped, or what area of the flesh we're indulging, believe me He'll show you. And sure there are consequences, but better to repent now than to continue on in it.

Start sowing to the Spirit so that harvest can come upon you as opposed to the harvest of the flesh. But if God shows you nothing, and you honestly can say before God with a clear conscience that you're not indulging the flesh, or walking in some way in sin, then we realize that something else is going on, and I'm going to cling to Christ as my ever present help in time of need.

You see as long as Judah sought after and served the Lord they had peace, the nations stayed in subjection to them. But when they forsook the Lord those nations rose up and rebelled. And I find that often times the same is true regarding the passions and desires of our flesh. As long as we're serving the Lord, seeking after the Lord our flesh seems to stay in subjection to God's work in our lives, the Spirit is ruling. But when we in some way forsake the Lord, get in to compromise and aren't really serving the Lord, our flesh is quick to rebel, flare up and revolt against us. It's like if we won't submit to God, then our flesh won't be in subjection to us.

Along with that we might see that those who are submitted to God are worthy and can be trusted to be submitted *to*, but when one isn't submitted to the Lord, we really can't find ourselves submitted uncompromisingly to them.

## Vs11

So as to where his dad *pulled down* the high places, he actually *promoted* the high places. Had them built by government funding and encouraged people to worship false gods, caused the nation to commit harlotry, led Judah astray. Harlotry in the *physical* sense because the worship of these gods often involved sexual practices, and harlotry in the *spiritual* sense because they'd been called to be faithful to the Lord as a wife is to be faithful to her husband yet they went out and "cheated" on the Lord, were unfaithful to the Lord in seeking after and serving other gods.

## Vs12-15

Um, gross! It would seem to me that the Lord was basically saying, "You're spiritually diseased inwardly so it'll be the same for you physically." and God caused his physical condition to more or less mirror his spiritual condition.

And this is sorta interesting because Elijah was generally a prophet that did his work up north in Israel, he dealt with Ahab and Jezebel. And he's not really recognized as a "writing prophet" because he didn't write any books like Jeremiah, or Isaiah, or Ezekiel etc... but this is something that was preserved that he *did* write and it seems to me that by the time you got a letter with his return address stamped on it you were in deep trouble with the Lord. And it seems as though he wrote this, but then by the time it made it to Jehoram Elijah had more than likely been taken up in the chariot by a whirlwind so it would've been a bit ominous to boot, sorta like getting a letter from the other side... But on this occasion God gave him a special mission to send a letter down south.

And God rebukes Jehoram, tells him that any of his brothers would've been a better king than he was yet he killed all of them, he's walked in the wicked ways of Ahab, and he's led the nation into harlotry in that their seeking pagan gods. Because of that he was going to be punished, the wages of his sin – death; a gruesomely painful death (I might add).

## Vs16-17

Not only would Jehoram suffer individually but his family would experience the fall out of his decisions collectively. God brought neighboring nations in to invade, and even as he killed all of his brothers, he was the only one left. These nations took and killed all of his sons, except for one, Jehoahaz who was left. Kinda some poetic justice there.

## Vs 18-20

This man was so wicked that when he died not a single person sorrowed over him, he didn't get an honorable burial, nor was he buried with the kings of Judah. It's interesting to me how the natural "bent" of every person is toward sin, things evil. But no one respects a leader who's driven by those things. One commentator said, "Strange indeed is the human heart. It turns to evil, and pursues it persistently; and yet it never really loves those who lead it in the way of evil. . . Love is only inspired by goodness.

Men will follow those who lead them in the ways of corruption, but such following is always inspired by evil selfishness, and never by admiration or love.” (Morgan) Kind of interesting isn't it? Humanity will pursue evil desires individually, but never really respect or admire evil leaders.

Speaking of evil leaders we have another one that surfaces here in the person of Jehoahaz (also known as Ahaziah) Jehoram's son.

## Ch 22

### Vs1-2

Where you read he was 42, it should read 22, 2 Kings 8:26 has it correct this seems to be a copyist error. But we notice that he was the son of Athaliah which means that his mom was the daughter of Ahab, the one who worked ruin in Jehoram (his dad).

### Vs3-4

Like father like son, apparently he didn't learn by watching what happened to his dad. But again I would caution you ladies (not that there isn't plenty of caution for men and the influence of fathers over their children) but a mom can bear down heavy in a persuasive way in the life of her son/daughter. “He walked in the ways of Ahab, *for his mother advised him to do wickedly.*” But no doubt there's a reason that Jesus said, “*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*” Matt 10:37 and It's that individual accountability thing, we've got to decide who's counsel we're going to receive and walk in be it the Lord's or our mom's or our dad's. Now obviously if you have a godly mom or dad then hopefully their counsel will correspond with the word of God. But ultimately it's up to you to seek that out and take heed to the word of God. and Notice it says there in Vs 4 that they were his counselors *to his own destruction.* The proverbs tell us, “*He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.*” Prov 13:20 and Again, “*My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.*” Prov 1:10 Because ultimately, “*...they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; It takes away the life of its owners.*” Prov 1:18-19 When you're seeking counsel it's important that you consider the source from which you're extracting direction. And I want to be careful to seek out those individuals who will instruct me in godliness, seek to point in the direction of God's heart and God's word. Ahaziah gave heed to wicked counsel and like his father he did so to his own destruction.

### Vs5-9

So again like his dad his close association with Athaliah's brother up north would ultimately serve to bring him down. After a battle whereby Jehoram (Israel's king) was wounded Ahaziah went to visit him while he was recovering and he happened to run into God's judgment that was coming down up north. God had ordained Jehu to be the next king of Israel so while he was taking care of business against the house of Ahab, Ahaziah stumbled into the picture so he went ahead and took care of him while he was at it. If he wanted to associate with the north, then he could suffer the same fate.

Again the bible says, “*The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.*” Prov 12:26 and You can read in more detail of this account in 2 Kings 9. But they gave him a dignified burial, not because of who he was or anything he’d done but rather due to the fact that Jehoshaphat was his granddad and he was a godly man.

But the problem was who was going to take the throne now in Judah?

Vs10

Nice lady wasn’t she? Once her son was dead rather than mourning and seeking to establish the next in line of Ahaziah’s sons, she promptly murdered all her grandsons. What a lovely grandma...

Vs11-12

So you have the compassion of Jehoshabeath in stark contrast to the cruelty of Athaliah. Jehoshabeath was Ahaziah’s sister, presumably from a different mom, but once again the house of David is reduced to a single heir. This little child only 1 yr old, Joash; he is the single survivor to the house of David. And it’s so easy to Satan’s strategy here in that there was always an attempt to snuff out the plan of God to bring the Messiah to the earth. He started back in Genesis when Cain killed Abel, but God wasn’t going to work through Abel He chose Seth. And the more refined the plan became the more vehement Satan’s attack on it became. From trying to kill all the male children in Egypt at the hand of the Pharaoh, here he tried to snuff out the lineage of David through Athaliah because of the promise to bring the Messiah through his line. Haman tried to have all the Jews exterminated in the days of Esther and king Herod sought to have all the baby boys age 2 and under put to death at the time of Christ’s birth. But you can’t thwart the sovereign plan of God and here through the wife of this godly priest Jehoiada God saves Joash alive. Kinda neat to see how God has used some of these ladies in His plan throughout the ages, here even in the preservation of the lineage of the Messiah.

But right now he’s only a yr old, so they stow him away there in the temple for the next 6 yrs and his role is probably comparable to Samuel’s. Just growing up around the things of God, helping in inconspicuous ways and God is prepping and priming him to rule. And we won’t get into it tonight but it’s interesting that only 1 Vs is given to Athaliah’s reign, but a whole Ch is given to the preparation and execution of her judgment and the ascension of Joash to the throne. It’s futile to fight against God, His will, will be done. Yrs may go by and you think you’ve gotten away with it (she ruled for 6 yrs seemingly with out a hitch) but don’t be deceived God is not mocked, whatever a man (or for that matter a woman) sows, that will they also reap. What a clear portrayal of the importance of prioritizing the Lord, seeking Him, serving Him, leading lives set apart to Him. It’s just not worth it to take a different path. To prioritize the Lord is to invite blessing upon your life, to prioritize this world, the things of the flesh is a sure invitation to God’s judgment, I don’t about you but as for me, I don’t want to find myself in the wake of God’s judgment, but rather I just want to abide under the spout where the blessings come out, so in the words of Jude, “...*keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*” Jude 21

Prayer Points:

Lord we want to abide in You, seeking You, serving You, submitting our lives to You. Help us to learn *from and* take heed *to* Your word. Knowing that there is both present and promised blessing found in following You, but nothing but painful chastisement and ultimately judgment awaiting for the one who forsakes You. Lord we thank You for Your faithfulness, and help to lead lives that are well pleasing in Your sight.