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## An Odd Ending I Kings 22:40-53

**Intro:** The last tidbits of information provided at the end of **ch22** are a lot like what you have at the end of a DIY project. If you have ever purchased anything sizable from Ikea then you understand what I'm saying. Your cabinet or piece of furniture comes broken down flat in a box and you get the dubious honor of putting it together. When the task is finished you will have a functional cabinet or table (hopefully) and a bunch of scraps to clean up: corrugated boxes, the odd Allen wrench or mini screwdriver, the directions (in Swedish) and usually a couple of fasteners that you hope were just extras and not missed because you didn't follow the direction.

This last passage may seem like just a lot of sweeping up of loose, leftover pieces. There are no fascinating stories or connected narratives, only bits and pieces about a few kings in the form of familiar and unexciting formulas. What an anti-climatic way to end a book. But that's the thing. It's not the end of a book. The entire document that records the kings of Judah and Israel consists of I & II Kings together and doesn't reach its intended conclusion until II Kings 25. So, why 2 books? Because there is only so much text you can put on a scroll, so the record must be divided and that division comes right after this hodge-podge of royal information. Still, though our text may not be the intended conclusion of the historical record of Hebrew royalty, it can serve as an appropriate ending for our purposes.

There's a storm moving towards both kingdoms and our text provides the first inklings of that dreaded forecast.

**40a** – This declaration was inevitable. Clearly, everyone dies so the fact of Ahab's death is not nearly as important as the fact of his life. At the same time, we can also say that the way Ahab lived his life directly contributed to both the manner of his death and the timeframe. From the description we have in the biblical record of Ahab and his wife Jezebel, we can honestly and accurately say that he was spineless and she was heartless and together they were the embodiment of ruthless wickedness. This would be bad enough if they had just been regular Israelites but they were the King and Queen of Israel – possessing all authority over their realm and their

subjects, or so they thought.

Yes, Ahab was powerful and, by virtue of his inability to say no to his wife, Jezebel was also powerful. But they failed to accept or even consider this undeniable truth: whether it's administrative power, financial power or the ultimate power of life and death, all power comes from God and must be used according to His will. Kings and queens, Presidents and Prime Ministers, Pastors and parents, all are accountable to the Lord and will one day answer to Him.

Of course, we know from our study that it wasn't just an arrow that killed Ahab. Ahab died because he rejected God's grace, he rejected God's mercy and in the end, he rejected God's clear, protecting Word. If you will not accept God's grace and mercy, as described and provided for in His Word, then you will have to accept God's judgment. Ahab's destruction was inevitable – that little arrow from a “random” shot just brought a fine point to the end of his sad story.

**40b** – Well, I guess somebody's got to do it! Now, we don't want to prejudge this fellow but thankfully, the author gives us all we need to know about this guy in the last 3 verses. There are so many “old sayings” that would work in this instance: a chip off the old block, the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree... But, the real lesson of this verse is much more sobering – a life of ruthless wickedness and unrepentant iniquity leaves a disastrous legacy. Ahaziah's lifestyle wasn't much better than that of his father and mother, which doesn't bode well for him or for Israel.

**41-50** – For all intents and purposes, Judah has nearly become a lost kingdom to the author. We have to go clear back to **ch15** to refresh ourselves on just who Asa was. The author has given no direct attention to the kingdom of Judah since that time. Nor will he give any more after this brief blurb about Jehoshaphat until **II Kings 8** and even then it's still just a short reference. We won't settle back into Judah until **II Kings 11**. We can assume that the author doesn't want to focus on Judah or Jehoshaphat at this moment. The dynasty of Omri has his full attention.

Jehoshaphat and his reign receive quite a bit more press in the Chronicles. In fact, **II Chron** gives us 4 full chapters (**17-20**) that describe Jehoshaphat's exploits as king over the southern nation of Judah. We're not going to read

all of those 4 chapters but I would like to look at a few choice passages so as to familiarize ourselves with this Judean king ([II Chron 17:3-5, 10-12; 18:1a; 19:4; 20:1-7](#)). Jehoshaphat sent leaders and priests out to his entire kingdom to teach the people God's Word. Because of this, God blessed his reign so much that the fear of the Lord came upon the neighboring nations so much so that they were afraid to make war against Judah and Jehoshaphat. He was also the only king on record to defeat the combined armies of 3 nations by putting his worship team on the front lines.

These verses tell us that Jehoshaphat was a man of great faith and yet we see little of that here. The author reveals the focus of his interest when he says that Jehoshaphat reigned for 25 years, yet he just gives him 10 verses while Ahab's son only reigned for 2 years and he gets 3 verses in this chapter and all of [II Kings 1](#)! Clearly, the author has an interest in Jehoshaphat but it's a limited interest.

But, Jehoshaphat does receive 10 verses, so what are we told here about this faithful king? Most of the information about Jehoshaphat is provided in formulas that should be familiar to us by now. There's one that deals with his chronology and ancestry ([41-42](#)), his theology ([43](#)), his bibliography ([45](#)) and his obituary ([50](#)). Included and intermingled in these formulas are quit quips about foreign policy ([44](#)) religious purges ([46](#)) and ships ([47-49](#)).

After spending so many weeks reading and studying about apostate Israel, [v43](#) is refreshing. There's still a kingdom not wholly given over to Baal worship! Even with the attached qualification of [43b](#), it's still good news! His insistence on purging the kingdom of the remaining male cult prostitutes shows us that Jehoshaphat was not just a reformer on paper. He reformed Judah even more deeply than his father Asa had done. But why 3 verses about ships?

Well, [v47](#) provides a clue as to how Jehoshaphat warmed up to the idea of becoming a shipping magnate. The kingdom of Edom's power was somewhat weakened at that time: there was no king to call the shots, only a deputy. So, it appears that Edom was subservient to Judah in those days which would give Jehoshaphat unhindered access to Ezion-Geber, sitting at the very top of the Gulf of Aqaba. From there he could build his fleet and ply his maritime pursuits to his hearts content. All the shipbuilders, pipefitters and welders in Judah were fully employed (with royal benefits) and the

government of Judah could fully expect to reap in the lucrative returns from this adventure on the high seas. Sadly, this was not to be because the entire fleet was wrecked – in port! How is that even possible?

Maybe the author is attempting to portray Jehoshaphat as aspiring to some Solomon-like ventures (9:26-28) only to show him falling far short of any Solomon-like success. Maybe he is trying to imply that the days of Solomon's glory has given way to an era of decline. I doubt that is his point here since that point has been quite obviously made with Solomon's immediate successor Rehoboam. No, it's more likely that the author mentions Jehoshaphat's naval fiasco here for the simple reason that Ahaziah of Israel was mixed up in it (49). It may be that after the fleet was smashed, Ahaziah suggested they try again with more help from Israel but by this time, Jehoshaphat had had enough and we can see why more clearly in [II Chron 20:35-37](#).

How did it come to this? Let's follow the steps that lead to this maritime disaster. This cooperative commercial venture was the natural result of Jehoshaphat's public policy efforts in v44. He had made peace with Ahab, the king of Israel, and would certainly have continued that with Ahab's son Ahaziah. Apparently, the author of Kings sees this alliance in a negative light; he sees it as a perilous precedent. Certainly, the writer of Chronicles does because he records that a prophet shows up and reads the riot act to Jehoshaphat for foolishly aligning himself with such an apostate king ([II Chron 19:2-3](#)).

But the author of Kings is also critical of Jehoshaphat, if not so directly. In our last study, he revealed Jehoshaphat's insane naïveté in foolishly agreeing to join Ahab in his doomed excursion against the Syrians in Ramoth-Gilead. Later, in [II Kings 8](#), he'll inform us that it was actually wedding vows that provided the cement for this unwarranted alliance: Ahab's daughter Athaliah was married off to Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son. While this may make perfect sense from a geo-political worldview as a way to stave off strife between these 2 related nations, it was in reality a spiritual disaster that nearly led to the complete destruction of redemptive history in 841BC!

You see, what Jehoshaphat failed to consider and never dreamed could happen was that his own Jehoram would choose to follow in the footsteps of

his father-in-law Ahab, not his own godly father. To make matters worse, when Jehoshaphat died, the throne passed to Jehoram. When he died, the throne passed to his son Ahaziah. But, when Ahaziah died, his mother Athaliah, widow of Jehoram, queen mother of Judah, had just about had enough of this succession business and took it upon herself to ascend to the throne of Judah. Now, to consolidate her power and eliminate any rightful claims to the throne, she had all of Jehoshaphat's male descendents slaughtered. All died but one, a child that God preserved alive.

So Athaliah would nearly wipe out the entire divinely-chosen Davidic line of kings! How could such a horrendous tragedy ever see the light of day? It could and it did because a godly king thought he could enter into an ecumenical alliance with apostates. Jehoshaphat made peace with Ahab – this wasn't astute public policy – it was foolishness, a dereliction of his duty as spiritual protector of Judah. It nearly decimated God's redemptive plan. It's like a malignant brain tumor that begins as a single mutated cell that grows day by day until it incapacitates and then kills its host.

Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab was like that; just a bit of matrimony that doubled as a slick piece of diplomacy. But he wasn't around a decade or so later to see his sweet daughter-in-law turn Jerusalem into a butcher shop. All this pain and loss because he believed light could have a little bit of fellowship with darkness. This just reinforces the reality of the unintended consequences of unrepentant sin. Sin that is persisted in will take you farther than you are willing to go, it will keep you longer than you are willing to stay and it will cost you more than you are willing to pay. No one ever engages in sin expecting it to end badly but it always does and the Bible is clear in its warnings to us.

Please note that I'm, not questioning the sincerity of Jehoshaphat's personal piety; clearly, he was a man of great faith and resolution to passing his faith on to his nation. What we need to recognize here is the foolishness of his public policy. On the one hand, we see him teaching his people the Word of God and calling them back to faith in the God of their fathers. On the other hand we see him hobnobbing and intermingling with pagan apostates. Why the great discrepancy? The answer is simple – his personal faith did not seem to affect his political decisions.

He's not the only one to experience such debilitating lapses in judgment. A

Christian can possess personal faith in Jesus Christ without exercising discerning judgment in their everyday decisions. This reality should scare us to the place of earnest, fervent prayer. Have you learned from personal experience what happens when you lean on your own understanding? I would hope we all have! Still, how many times do we see people with undoubted faith and yet that faith never seems to carry over into their family life, work life, financial matters or their understanding of social-moral issues? How often are God's people given over to compromise in all areas of life? The principle that our text screams out to us is: compromise is the folly of the righteous. Jehoshaphat's kingdom was nearly wiped out by it.

**51-53** – Well, here's a guy that will never be accused of being righteous! In fact, there's not a compromising bone in Ahaziah's body; he is wholly given over to sheer, undiluted wickedness. Like Jehoshaphat, the summary of his reign is almost entirely given in familiar formulas. We see his **tenure (51)**; his commitments (**52-53a**) and his danger (**53b**). According to **v52** he was committed to a triple tradition – this was the trifecta of iniquity, the original Axis of Evil. In other words, Ahaziah embraced all the perversion and paganism that had accumulated in Israel to date; both the bull-cult of Jeroboam and the Baal-cult of his parents. The first phrase of **v53** reveals his true heart. This is sheer, unadulterated rebellion – there can be no doubt about the destiny of such a king and a kingdom.

MY question for Ahaziah is “Why?” What was so appealing about Baal and bulls? We saw how blessed Jehoshaphat was by his faithful commitment to Yahweh. We saw how his nation was blessed with peace simply because the fear of the Lord fell upon all the surrounding nations. My goodness, the Philistines brought him gifts of appeasement! Who ever heard of that happening? Do we ever see a similar state of blessing for Israel or any nation that followed Baal or any other false idol? Of course not! So, again, what was so appealing about Baal?

The appeal of Baal worship is the same appeal of all sin: to feed the desires of the flesh. The main draw of idolatry is that you get to create the god that you want to worship. Of course, you must create that god in your own image since that's the only information you have to go by but its doable. Just pull out all the desirable characteristics that are found in your version of humanity and ascribe those to your god. Oops, you already see the big problem – there are no desirable characteristics found naturally within



humanity. So, let's go with some of the less-desirable traits, seeing we have plenty of them. What you end up with is a god that is capricious, vindictive, petty and entitled. Not someone you would necessarily want to meet in a dark alley, let alone bow down to and attempt to please.

As a poor substitute for the true and living God, idolatry is a great insult to God and not just to Him. Idolatry is an insult to man because men and women were created in the image of God to reflect the glory of the true and living God. To create a god in your own image and worship is a dangerous thing because we tend to take on the characteristics of what ever we worship – we become like what we worship. But, if you want to be religious and still enjoy the pleasures of sin, then idolatry is the way to go. Just know, the freedom it promises leads to bondage and its pleasures eventually lead to pain and death. Whether the idol we worship is money, fame, power, or sexual pleasure, entertainment or an inflated ego – none of these can ever equal what we receive when we worship the true and living God through His Son Jesus Christ.

The author gives us a glimpse of Ahaziah's future in the last phrase of [v53](#). Provoked is a strong word. What the author means is that Ahaziah's godlessness aggravated; galled and goaded Yahweh to anger so much so that He determined to destroy Ahaziah just as He did his father Ahab. It's almost as if Ahaziah was flaunting his wickedness, defying Yahweh to judge him. Did he have any real sense of the danger he was in? He should have, the evidence was all around him and right before him – in the life of Jehoshaphat, in the destruction of the fleet at Ezion-Geber, in the death of his father...

Did Ahaziah know what he was facing? Do people today know what they are facing? We live in a society that is adamant about having the right to choose their own belief system – they believe they have the right to not be offended, the right to choose their own identity, the right to pressure others into accepting their ridiculous and damaging claims... Do they know the real dangers that they face? They need to – Jesus said that we will all face the One who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell ([Mt 10:16b](#)). You may say that you're not as bad as all of that. That may be true, it could be that you are fairly righteous but if you haven't accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior then your righteousness is of the self-made kind and that type of righteousness doesn't spend in heaven. Don't let your supposed

righteousness compromise reality. It was disastrous for Jehoshaphat and will be for you too! 😊