



The Danger of Compromise

The ancient and tragic history of the life of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, that is a lesson to every Christian in this modern age of ecumenical compromise.

"...whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom 15:4).

King Jehoshaphat came to the throne of Judah in the fourth year of King Ahab's reign in Israel. Ahab's spiritual character is given in I Kings 16:30-33 —*And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he...went and served Baal, and worshipped him....Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.* He was a promoter of false religion on a grand scale and oversaw the systematic destruction of the prophets of the Lord by Jezebel his wife (1 Kings 18:4).

In contrast with Ahab, we read that Jehoshaphat lived *doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD* (I Kings 22:43). For a time he exercised a godly influence in the land, teaching his people the ways of God (2 Chronicles 17:7-9). Soon however, he was faced with a decision on what his relationship with Ahab would be. Every believer must decide what his relationship with the world and the false religion of his day will be. Like so many today, Jehoshaphat's response to the dilemma was to compromise. It was the easy thing to do! Because taking a faithful stand for God and His ways incurs the scorn of the wicked and means walking a lonely road it seems easier to compromise. Had he known beforehand the future implications of his decision he might have acted differently. The ruin and loss that ultimately follows a disobedient alliance with the enemies of God should cause us to beware of even the slightest deviance from the principles of God's Word. This is a day of widespread ecumenical compromise, but for the Christian who engages in it there is a terrible price to pay.

Jehoshaphat comes to Ahab in II Chronicles 18:1 — *Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.* He entered into a union with this wicked king, perhaps justifying his action on social grounds. Being now wealthy and prosperous it would be fitting to have social contact with his neighbour to the north. How often truth and righteousness are sacrificed for the sake of social respectability! This relationship with Ahab and his wicked household develops in II Chronicles 18:2-3 —*And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead. And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah. Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him. I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war.* The process of compromise may take years but it does develop. The result of this visit is that Jehoshaphat becomes deeply embroiled and implicated with Ahab.

One step of compromise will always lead to another. Having got to Ahab's court, this godly



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man finds himself persuaded to become part of an army led by wicked Ahab. The 'social call' has led to him joining forces with the ungodly, ready to fight in their cause.

Another dimension is soon added to Jehoshaphat's affinity with Ahab as four hundred false prophets arrive on the scene. Unchecked compromise with sin and worldliness always leads to spiritual retreat. Jehoshaphat is now found listening to these liars who profess to speak in the name of the Lord. It is true that he shows some evidence of a desire to hear the truth by prompting Ahab to send for a man of God with a real word from the Lord. Micaiah the prophet is sent for, a preacher whom Ahab hates bitterly (I Kings 22:8).

It is at this point that we begin to notice a sad change in Jehoshaphat. He has asked for a word from the Lord but his association with Ahab the hater of God's word has had a subtle effect. Jehoshaphat requests a word from the Lord after he has pledged his support to Ahab. It is already obvious that he is placing a lesser value upon the guidance of God than he should have done. Had he truly valued the leading of the Lord he would have asked God before he committed himself to Ahab. As it is, he hears Micaiah's plain warning that this battle will end in defeat and the death of Ahab but sadly he does not heed it. He persists in allying himself with a cause that God has appointed to defeat. This in effect means that he dismisses what God has to say and gives preference to the message of the false prophets! It is never too long until compromise destroys any residual desire to know and obey God's will.

A further evidence of the change in Jehoshaphat is his lack of discernment. He becomes so dull that he co-operates with Ahab's battle plan that involves him placing himself in grave risk of death. Only the intervention of God saves him. The Syrians *compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; and God moved them to depart from him* (II Chronicles 18:31). Those who compromise with the world and its false religion become the helpless dupes of the Devil, blindly stumbling from one danger to another!

By far the most serious consequence of his sinful allegiance with Ahab is that he comes under the displeasure of God. As he returns to Jerusalem after the battle *Jehu...the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD* (II Chronicles 19:2). These strong words show what God thinks of believers who act as Jehoshaphat acted.

Mercifully, Jehoshaphat took heed to this word from God and repented. However, only a short time *after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah [Ahab's son] king of Israel, who did very wickedly* (II Chronicles 20:35). Later he yet again aligns himself with God's enemies — with Jehoram, Ahab's son who succeeded Ahaziah. *And king Jehoram...sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying...wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses* (II Kings 3:6-7). Only the merciful intervention of God to miraculously supply water in the desert saves him from death and defeat. Again we are faced with the lesson that once one step down the path of compromise has been taken it is all



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too easy to take another. Once more this foolish harmony with the wicked results in the displeasure of God for *then Eliezer...prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying. Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works* (II Chronicles 20:37).

The consequences of Jehoshaphat's sinful compromise with the enemies of God were felt for many a long day. It is a sobering truth that forging a harmonious relationship with the enemies of God affects generations as yet unborn. The catalog of misery that comes directly from Jehoshaphat's affinity with Ahab and his wicked dynasty makes for sad reading.

As direct result of his sin many of his children were killed. *Now when Jehoram [i.e. the son and heir of Jehoshaphat] was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel* (II Chronicles 21:4). Jehoram — and surely it can be no accident that he bears the same name as Ahab's son — was a godless wretch. *Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah...walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab: for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the LORD* (II Kings 8:16, 18). God was later to smite Jehoram for his sin — *the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. And it came to pass...after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases* (II Chron 21:18-19). Surely no Christian can relish the thought of seeing his children perish under Divine wrath, yet that is the price of compromise with the world and false religion.

Many of his grand-children were also killed including all the males except one. *There was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz [also called Ahaziah], the youngest of his sons* (II Chronicles 21:17). Ahaziah's spiritual character bears testimony to the harm done by the association forged by his grandfather with Ahab. *Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign...and he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son in law of the house of Ahab* (II Kings 2:26-27). He too develops an affinity with Ahab's wicked house that ultimately leads to his death (II Kings 9:27).

Even Jehoshaphat's great-grand-children felt the impact of his sin. All the males except one, Joash, were killed by Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and wife of Jehoram his son (II Chronicles 22:10). Others of his great-grand-children were killed by Jehu whom God used to judge Ahab's house. *And it came to pass, that, when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah [i.e. the great-grand- children of Jehoshaphat], that ministered to Ahaziah, he slew them* (II Chronicles 22:8-9). Jehoshaphat's sin introduced the evil forces of destruction into his home and family.

There were national consequences as well. The nation suffered for about 15 years under the wicked reigns of Jehoram, Ahaziah and Athaliah — Jehoshaphat's son, grandson and daughter-in-law. Nations formerly subject to Judah rebelled. (II Chron 21:10, 16). Society is always affected when God's people ally themselves with the wickedness of sin and apostasy.



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All this personal and national tragedy can be traced back to a godly man's desire to have fellowship with the wicked. Compromise is dangerous and its effects are real. Many a believer has reaped a similar harvest to Jehoshaphat. Their offspring grow up in ignorance of God and in the absence of the gospel light which their forefathers had but gave up in order to have fellowship with the world.

In Ephesians 5:1-14 Paul makes it abundantly clear what the Christian's relationship with the world is to be. Since we are children of God we are to *follow* or imitate Him, verse 1. This will mean that we will *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*, verse 11. The instruction to those who are already caught up in compromise is *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light* verse 14. Awake, come out from among the dead to the light of the Gospel! There is a terrible price to pay for staying among the *dead*. *Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* (James 4:4)

Learn from Jehoshaphat and never compromise the truth for the sake of harmony with the enemies of God and their wicked ecumenical apostasy!