

# Abiding Fruit

*Informing the Mind & Inflaming the Heart*

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## **The Ships Were Wrecked 1 Kings 22:48**

Jehoshaphat (ca. 873 – 848 B.C.) of Judah was one of the few good kings in the Old Testament, but he made a mistake. He decided to go into the shipbuilding business. He probably sought to emulate the great fleet of King Solomon, but the results were not good. In fact, all of his ships were destroyed at Ezion-geber situated in Edomite territory. The reason his ships were destroyed was because he entered into a partnership with Ahaziah, king of Israel. Ahaziah was the son of wicked Ahab, and as such was no better than his father. In addition, Jehoshaphat had given his son in marriage to Ahab's daughter named Athaliah. She nearly destroyed the Davidic line due to her wickedness (2 Chron. 22:10). Jehoshaphat's problem apart from his excellent strengths and spiritual life was that he tended to make alliances with wicked partners. It was these alliances that caused him so much trouble.

Jehoshaphat enjoyed the blessing of God. He grew very rich and very powerful. He built fortresses and storage cities in Judah, and he trained his army. Jehoshaphat walked in the legendary ways of this godly father Asa (1 Kings 22:43). He dealt with sin in the land that remained over from the days of Asa (vs. 46). He walked a straight path before God, but like every child of God, he was not perfect. When I consider the life of Jehoshaphat, he strikes me as a man who was considerate of others, who enjoyed dealing with other people. He was always willing it seemed to make alliances that were detrimental to himself and his people. I get the impression that he just did not consider the implications of his alliances or he did not think that they were very important. Certainly giving your son in marriage to the wicked line of Ahab was not a good move on his part.

Business partnerships with Ahaziah were not wise decisions. We get the sense in the wreckage of the ships of God having a direct hand in preventing disaster falling upon this righteous king. This reminds us that in our daily lives we make decisions that may not be wise or good, and God may intervene very directly or use other means to prevent us from being hurt.

Jehoshaphat did not seek the Baals so prominent in the northern kingdom. He sought the God of his father (2 Chron. 17:3 – 5). He walked according to the Law of God and God rewarded him for this obedience by establishing the kingdom in his hand. He received great tribute from his people. The Bible says that his heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord (2 Chron. 17:6). This is another way of saying that he was a man of faith. He also removed some of the high places and the Asherim from Judah. He also ensured that the Law of God was taught throughout the land thus bringing the blessing of God upon His people, and the fear of God upon the surrounding nations. This resulted in peace during his time. Even the Philistines and the Arabs brought tribute to Jehoshaphat. He grew steadily greater (2 Chron. 17:12). Is it not interesting the blessings of God which we enjoy from God, so often turn into the cause for failure? This is not God's fault of course. It is man's pride and haughtiness. We move from saying what great things the Lord has done for us, to saying what great things I have done for myself.

From this position of strength Jehoshaphat moved to make a marriage alliance with Ahab. He even went and spent some time visiting with Ahab. During this visit, Ahab provided a great feast for Jehoshaphat and during the feast he broached the subject of a military alliance against Ramoth-gilead. Jehoshaphat replied that his people were as one with Ahab's people (see 2 Chron. 18 & also 1 Kings 22 for below).

Jehoshaphat's first request was to inquire of God as to what God thought about this issue (18:4), and so he requested that Ahab call for a prophet of the Lord. Ahab had 400 false prophets at hand who said that God had given Ramoth-gilead into the king's hands. Jehoshaphat was not too impressed by this and desired a prophet of God to speak. Ahab did not get on well with the prophet of God whose name was Micaiah because everytime he sought counsel from Micaiah, God seemed to be against Ahab (which was true). One of Ahab's false prophets was a man named Zedekiah who had made a set of horns out of iron, and using these horns he prophesied that Ahab would destroy the Syrians. The rest of the prophets backed him up. When the messenger who had been sent to fetch Micaiah told Micaiah what was going on, he suggested that Micaiah go along with the other prophets. Micaiah assured him (as only a prophet of God can do) that he would speak only what God told him to speak. When asked the question by Ahab, Micaiah rather mockingly told Ahab to go and fight against Ramoth-gilead and he would triumph. Ahab perceived that Micaiah was mocking him, so he complained to Jehoshaphat about Micaiah's behavior as one who always spoke evil against him. When Micaiah was pressed to be serious about the issue at hand, he replied that he saw the devastation of Israel. Ahab again complains about this statement to Jehoshaphat, at which point Micaiah describes a scene in heaven where the Lord asks if someone would go and entice Ahab to go and be defeated by Ramoth-gilead. An angel (spirit) stepped forward and said that he would go, and when asked by God what he would do, the angel said that he would put a lying spirit in the mouths of the 400 prophets, to which God states he should go and do. Micaiah concludes this vision by saying that the prophets of Ahab were false and Ahab was destined for defeat (*"the Lord has declared disaster concerning you"*). Micaiah is sent to prison for this word.

Now at this point, if you were Jehoshaphat you would say, I'm going back to Judah and Ahab, you're on your own, but he doesn't. What is even more surprising is that Ahab suggests to Jehoshaphat that they switch clothes and deceive the enemy. I see this as a bold move on Ahab's part., and he gets away with it which makes you wonder about Jehoshaphat's trust in individuals. The outcome of the battle is such that Jehoshaphat is attacked since the enemy thinks he's Ahab. When it seems as if he will be killed he cries out to God to help, and the enemy realizing that it is Jehoshaphat and not Ahab turns away from pursuing him. The Bible then tells us that a certain man drew his bow at random and loosed the arrow. It struck Ahab between the armor and breastplate – in a small gap, and thus Ahab died.

It was foolish for Jehoshaphat to continue with his alliance after Micaiah had spoken his word from the Lord. Only God's direct intervention saved Jehoshaphat. At the same time, we see God bringing about the downfall of this very wicked man, Ahab. 2 Chron. 19:1 tells us that Jehoshaphat returned to his house in safety. He is rebuked for going to make an alliance with the wicked. When the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Edomites came to attack Jehoshaphat, he seeks the help of God and God delivers him. In times of great personal danger God seems to have always protected this king who cried out for deliverance. I am encouraged that even though we may make bad decisions, God is working out His purposes for us and for His own glory.

Jehoshaphat's desire to build ships was so that he could get gold from Ophir like Solomon had done (see 1 Kings 9:26 – 28), but they never sailed for the Lord wrecked them because he had entered into an alliance with Ahaziah (see 1 Kings 22:48). After the wreckage, it appears in verse 49 as though Ahaziah wanted to get the project going again, but Jehoshaphat would not. Jehoshaphat has learned his lesson about alliances. We know from 2 Chron. 20:26, 37, that the prophet Eliezer had told the king that God had destroyed the ships because of his alliance with Ahaziah. It often takes the direct intervention by god into our lives to get our attention. If only we could be brought to an end of ourselves so that we could cast ourselves upon the Lord. Such submission will delight God because it is of the essence of faith. Dependence and reliance upon God is the only antidote to depressing setbacks in life. Let us give up our shipbuilding efforts to bring about success for ourselves, and let us let God do His work in us for His glory.