

Bad Alliances, Consequences, and Solutions

Though Israel was officially divided between the north (Israel) and the south (Judah), there was still interaction between the two. Sometimes that interaction involved war, but at other times it involved making alliances and working together. While that sounds decent enough, the sad consequences of these alliances would soon be realized. Take the case of Ahab and Jehoshaphat.

Recall that Ahab was a wicked king, remembering especially the influence of Jezebel upon him and the nation. Jehoshaphat, on the other hand, was a basically good king of Judah who wanted to serve Yahweh (2 Chron. 17). Sadly, one recorded vice of Jehoshaphat was that he was prone to make alliances with evil kings, and this got both him and Judah into deep trouble. The fallout from this alliance alone would be devastating for the future of Judah. How so?

Alliances often involved marriage, and in this case, Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, married Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah (2 Chron. 18:1). Though Jehoshaphat did good during his reign, this influence over Jehoram would prove very damaging. When Jehoram became king, he killed his own brothers, walked in the ways of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of God (2 Chron. 21:4-6). The only reason God didn't destroy "the house of David" at this time was because of his promise to David (vs. 7).



When Jehoram died, his son, Ahaziah, became king over Judah.* Ahaziah made an alliance with Joram of Israel, and they were both killed by Jehu in the purge of Ahab's family (2 Chron. 22:5-9). Jezebel was also killed at this time (2

Kings 9). At this point, things get even worse. Athaliah, who was not killed in this purge, takes the bold move of usurping the throne of Judah. In doing so, she "destroyed all the royal offspring of the house of Judah" (2 Chron. 22:10). Imagine the grandmother who tries to completely wipe out her own grandchildren out of fear that one of them might become the next king. She was that evil.

All of this was made possible because of a bad alliance initially made between Jehoshaphat and Ahab. The "butterfly effect" of this wreaked havoc on Judah and nearly ended up with the complete destruction of David's dynasty. The reader is made to wonder how any of this can be worked out. How would God spare the house of David?

God would indeed spare the house of David once again. Athaliah almost killed all the offspring, but she missed one in particular. 2 Chronicles 22:11-12 records:

"But Jehoshabeath the king's daughter took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and placed him and his nurse in the bedroom. So Jehoshabeath, the

daughter of King Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah), hid him from Athaliah so that she would not put him to death. He was hidden with them in the house of God six years while Athaliah reigned over the land.”

Jehosheba (as spelled in Kings) was the sister of Ahaziah, also the daughter of Jehoram (and presumably Athaliah), and the wife of the high priest named Jehoiada. Together, Jehosheba and Jehoiada kept Joash safe for these six years while Athaliah’s reign of terror continued over Judah.

At the end of those years, the time came to make a move. Under Jehoiada’s leadership, a coup was staged. He brought in captains of hundreds who would keep guard and protect young king Joash. The boy was brought out and the crown was put on his head as he was anointed and proclaimed to be the king (2 Kings 11:12). Athaliah heard the noise and came out to see what was happening at the temple. When she saw it, she cried, “Treason!” Then Jehoiada commanded the captains to bring her out and put her to death. She was promptly dispatched.

Jehoiada wanted to restore Judah back to God: “Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they would be the Lord’s people, also between the king and the people” (2 Kings 11:17). This initiated reform in Judah, in which the altars of Baal were torn down and the temple was repaired. As long as Jehoiada was around, Joash (or Jehoash) did what was right (2 Kings 12:2). Sadly, once Jehoiada was gone, Joash reverted to wickedness and listened to evil, idolatrous counselors. He even had Jehoiada’s son, Zechariah, murdered.

All of this demonstrates how influences can work. The influence of the terrible alliance between Jehoshaphat and Ahab did terrible damage in Judah. Jehoiada was able to turn that around for a short time, but as is so often the case, the kings once again turned away from the Lord. God sent prophets to provide the warnings and turn them toward repentance. Ultimately, however, both Israel and Judah would fall because of their failure to adhere to God’s covenant.

Doy Moyer

*Not to be confused with the fact that Ahab also had a son named Ahaziah who reigned over Israel. He also had a son also named Jehoram (Joram) who likewise reigned over Israel. The same names are used, but these are different kings.