



INTRODUCTION

Not always, but often, the Lord sees to it that wicked people meet a wicked end (i.e. the mob boss gets killed by a rival gang). We've read that there was no one else like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord (1 Kings 21:25), and in due time Ahab met an ugly end, bleeding to death from a "stray" arrow. What is God's purpose in allowing such evil to finally befall the wicked?

Ezekiel 18:14-17 "Suppose this son [of a wicked man] has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things: ¹⁵ He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of the house of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife. ¹⁶ He does not oppress anyone or require a pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. ¹⁷ He withholds his hand from sin and takes no usury or excessive interest. He keeps my laws and follows my decrees. He will not die for his father's sin; he will surely live."

JEHOSHAPHAT'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1 Kings 22:41-50 Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. ⁴² Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. ⁴³ In everything he walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. The high places, however, were not removed, and the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there. ⁴⁴ Jehoshaphat was also at peace with the king of Israel.

⁴⁵ As for the other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, the things he achieved and his military exploits, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? ⁴⁶ He rid the land of the rest of the male shrine prostitutes who remained there even after the reign of his father Asa. ⁴⁷ There was then no king in Edom; a deputy ruled. ⁴⁸ Now Jehoshaphat built a fleet of trading ships to go to Ophir for gold, but they never set sail—they were wrecked at Ezion Geber. ⁴⁹ At that time Ahaziah son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my men sail with your men," but Jehoshaphat refused. ⁵⁰ Then Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of David his father. And Jehoram his son succeeded him.

1.) What were Jehoshaphat's main accomplishments, and what could he have done better?

2.) What happened to Jehoshaphat's fleet. Why do you think this is recorded here?

AHAZIAH'S REIGN

1 Kings 22:51-53 Ahaziah son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. ⁵² He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, because he walked in the ways of his father and mother and in the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. ⁵³ He served and worshiped Baal and provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger, just as his father had done.

1.) We cannot overstate the impact that parents have on the spiritual and moral nurture of the next generation. Studies have shown that we can have a profound impact on the lives of our descendants even six generations later! Share any insights, examples, decisions, etc. from generations past that have profoundly affected you and your family.

2 Kings 1 After Ahab's death, Moab rebelled against Israel. ² Now Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself. So he sent messengers, saying to them, "Go and consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury."

³ But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?' ⁴ Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!'" So Elijah went.

⁵ When the messengers returned to the king, he asked them, "Why have you come back?" ⁶ "A man came to meet us," they replied. "And he said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you and tell him, "This is what the LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending men to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!"'" ⁷ The king asked them, "What kind of man was it who came to meet you and told you this?" ⁸ They replied, "He was a man with a garment of hair and with a leather belt around his waist." The king said, "That was Elijah the Tishbite."

⁹ Then he sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men. The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "Man of God, the king says, 'Come down!'" ¹⁰ Elijah answered the captain, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men.

¹¹ At this the king sent to Elijah another captain with his fifty men. The captain said to him, "Man of God, this is what the king says, 'Come down at once!'" ¹² "If I am a man of God," Elijah replied, "may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" Then the fire of God fell from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men.

¹³ So the king sent a third captain with his fifty men. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. "Man of God," he begged, "please have respect for my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants! ¹⁴ See, fire has fallen from heaven and consumed the first two captains and all their men. But now have respect for my life!" ¹⁵ The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king.

¹⁶ He told the king, "This is what the LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Because you have done this, you will never leave

the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!" ¹⁷ So he died, according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. Because Ahaziah had no son, Joram succeeded him as king in the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah. ¹⁸ As for all the other events of Ahaziah's reign, and what he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?

1.) What lessons does this episode have for us when we suffer sickness or injury?

2.) With his life ebbing away, Ahaziah looked to Baal-Zebub. What are some people, places, things that people look to in their last moments?

3.) Given what had happened, the third captain was obviously conflicted about how he should approach Elijah. He was caught in the middle between obeying the king and respecting God. What are some contemporary situations where we may be "caught in the middle"?

4.) Do you see any parallels between the attempted arrest of Elijah and Jesus in Gethsemane?

John 18:3-8 So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. ⁴ Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" ⁵ "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) ⁶ When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go."

5.) Elijah did not have good news for Ahaziah. He went to him on his deathbed and spoke entirely law: "You will certainly die!" God's people have two messages to speak: the law (that points out sin and its just punishment) and the gospel (which comforts with the forgiveness of sins). Why is it unusual to speak a message of only law to someone? Describe real-life scenarios where the situation demands that would speak the law without gospel.

Romans 1:16-17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Matthew 3:7-10 But when [John the Baptist] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 5 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. ² And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? [...] ⁵ [H]and this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

PRAYER