

Jehoram

I am speaking to you from the grave as a failed king of Judah. Perhaps I can serve as a bad example. I have some complaints for the LORD God of Abraham if I can get an audience. I once thought that maybe I could cut a deal because I did what I thought was right. When I was still alive, I also got an offer from another power who said I could rule in hell instead of serving in heaven. Actually, that's stupid and I know it. Death clarifies things. I always knew it was wrong but in my pride, I thought it was a better way.

My father Jehoshaphat and my grandfather Asa thought they were pleasing the LORD God of Abraham, but what did they get for it? When Asa tried to buy help from Damascus against Israel, this LORD told him through the prophet Hanani that because he had not asked help of the LORD, he would always be at war. Also he developed a terrible disease of the feet despite having served this LORD nearly his whole life. It seemed to me that loyalty was not rewarded.

Jehoshaphat went to great lengths to get rid of all worship except that of the LORD and yet when he agreed to an alliance with Ahaziah of Israel, the prophet Eliezer told him that because of that, his fleet of ships would be wrecked and never sail.

That same Ahaziah, son of Ahab, was injured in a fall and consulted Baalzebub. Elijah the prophet heard of it and when Ahaziah ordered Elijah to come and explain his opposition, two separate parties of 50 soldiers were destroyed by fire called down from heaven by Elijah. The officer of the third group had to plead for his life.

Of course, everybody heard how this "fire-calling" Elijah had killed 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah after calling down fire from heaven in a major contest on the mountain. But despite declaring that Ahab did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him, when Ben-Hadad of Damascus threatened Ahab, the LORD gave him a miraculous victory. Benefits did not seem to be handed out equitably.

I got the distinct impression from everything I knew that this LORD, the one that my family had served, was fickle and violent. I decided to find a different path. I consolidated my power by the time-tested method of killing my brothers and then married a daughter of Ahab. I named my son for her brother, Ahaziah. I brought back the traditional religions that the people loved so much. Think about it, even Solomon had allowed them! I considered my broadminded, tolerant plan to be a change for the better.

Then I got a letter from Elijah. Getting one of those was never a happy occasion! He considered all I had done to guarantee my doom. I didn't really care about his opinion, but he apparently still had access to power. He predicted death for my family and a painful disease for me. Rebels looted the palace, carried off all my wives and all my sons except the youngest. I developed a painful intestinal disease. For 2 years I was miserable and by my outbursts and inappropriate royal commands made my entire kingdom miserable. My popularity rating bottomed out and I died in agony. I doubt if anyone came to my funeral.

2 Chronicles 15 – 21, 1 Kings 20 -- 22