

1 Kings 22:41-50

Limits of the Text

1 Kings 22:41-50 is a complete literary unit, a summary of the reign of Jehoshaphat.¹

Towards Authorial Intent

This short section is an assessment of Jehoshaphat's reign from God's point of view, which focused upon the condition of his heart and his obedience to the covenants; it is much like the sections found in 1 Kings 15:1-16:28.

External Context

This is a transitional section moving from the end of Ahab's reign to the reign of his son, Ahaziah. The author of kings briefly returned to Judah before continuing events in Israel.

¹ 1 Ki 22:51-53 is part of the story of Ahaziah and belongs with 2 Ki 1:1-18.

Interpretation

41 Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. 42 Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 43 He walked in all the way of Asa his father. He did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord. Yet the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. 44 Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel. 45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he showed, and how he warred, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 46 And from the land he exterminated the remnant of the male cult prostitutes who remained in the days of his father Asa.²

The reign of Jehoshat's father, Asa, is summarized in 1 Ki 15:9-24.³ Asa followed in David's footsteps and removed idolatrous influences and practices from Judah, though he did not remove the high places, nor did he trust God to protect him from Ben-hadad. Jehoshaphat followed his father's example and did what was right in the sight of the Lord.⁴ Like his father, he removed male cult prostitutes but did not remove the high places. Unlike his father, he made peace with the king of Israel.

47 There was no king in Edom; a deputy was king. 48 Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber. 49 Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships," but Jehoshaphat was not willing. 50 And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father, and Jehoram his son reigned in his place.

The comment on Edom implies that Jehoshaphat was the one who setup the deputy in Edom; this idea is corroborated by 2 Ki 3:9, which says Edom went to war with Jehoshaphat, and 2 Ki 8:20, which says that Edom revolted from Judah's rule. This subservience gave Jehoshaphat the opportunity for a particular economic enterprise; at Ezion-geber, a port city on the Red Sea⁵ controlled by Edom, he made ships to trade for gold, much like Solomon did (1 Ki 9:28, 10:11), but the venture failed, because it was a joint venture with Ahab's son, Ahaziah, (2 Chr 20:35-37). Ahaziah was all for trying again, but Jehoshaphat would not.

The author of Kings portrays Jehoshaphat's relationship with Ahab and his sons as disastrous choices. First, when Ahab persuaded him to ignore God's word and go to battle, he nearly lost his life (1 Ki 22:31-33).⁶ Second, his ship-trading enterprise, a joint

² ESV.

³ His reign is more fully described by the author of Chronicles (2 Chr 17-20).

⁴ Elisha had a high regard for him (2 Ki 3:14).

⁵ More specifically, a port city on the modern Gulf of Aqaba.

⁶ Only the miraculous intervention of God saved him (2 Chr 18:31).

venture with Ahaziah, failed. Third, when Jehoshaphat went to war against Moab with Ahab's son Jehoram, their combined army would have died in the wilderness had not Elisha saved them. Jehoshaphat's son, also called Jehoram,⁷ married Athaliah, a daughter of Ahab, and she caused him to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Ki 8:16-18). Fourth, their son, Ahaziah,⁸ Jehoshaphat's grandson, also did what was evil, due to Athaliah's influence (2 Ki 8:26-27). Fifth, when Ahaziah died, Athaliah, then the queen mother, nearly succeeded in wiping out the royal line, the Davidic dynasty, in a bid for power (2 Ki 11:1-3). This would have ended the Davidic covenant, the line from which the Messiah would come.

In all of these situations, Jehoshaphat is portrayed in a bad light. There is no doubt about his personal love for and obedience to God. There is no doubt that he ruled Judah wisely, taught the people to fear and obey God, and removed idolatry. But when it came to the wicked kings of Israel, Jehoshaphat acted unwisely. What the author of Kings hints at, the author of Chronicles says openly, "Do you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the LORD's wrath is on you."⁹ He should have taught Ahab's family to fear and obey God, as he had the people of Judah (2 Chr 17:7-9, 19:4); instead he allied with them and helped them in their various military and economic pursuits. Thus God opposed his actions in this matter, and Judah suffered for years to come.

⁷ Aka Joram.

⁸ No relation to the king by the same name in Israel.

⁹ 2 Chr 19:2, HCSB.

Three Levels of History

1. Personal history – This is an evaluation of the reign of King Jehoshaphat.
2. National History – This is an evaluation of the reign of King Jehoshaphat, one of the good kings of Judah.
3. Redemptive History – This is an evaluation of the life of Jehoshaphat, one of the leaders of God’s covenant people.

Jesus and the Gospel

This story reflects mankind’s **need for redemption** through Jesus and the gospel.

1. What does this text teach us about ourselves? What need or deficiency in our lives does it expose? We tend to obey God well in some areas of lives but not so well in others. We have blind spots that we tend to ignore.
2. What does this text teach us about God? How does it reveal God’s grace to meet our need? God does not allow us to prosper in these areas but judges us for our sins.

Outline

This “outline” is actually just a summary of Jehoshaphat’s reign:¹⁰

1. Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah for twenty-five years, and he did what was right in the sight of Lord (1 Ki 22:41-50).

Central Truth of the Story

The author of Kings wrote 1 Kings 22:41-50 in order to show exilic Jews that Jehoshaphat’s obedience to God’s word did not extend to his relationship with Israel.

Teaching Outline

God’s people obey God’s word, and today I want you to obey God’s word in every area of your life. From our text today in 1 Kings 22, we will see two areas of our lives where we obey God’s word.

- Obey God’s word by removing sinful habits (1 Ki 22:41-46).
- Obey God’s word by limiting sinful relationships (1 Ki 22:47-50).

¹⁰ See my document on reigns of kings in 1 Ki 15-16:28.