

## Unholy Alliance – 2 Chronicles 18

### I. INTRODUCTION - 2 Cor. 6:14-17

### II. TEXT

#### A. V. 1

**<sup>1</sup> Jehoshaphat had riches & honor in abundance; & by marriage he allied himself with Ahab.**

1. Jehoshaphat was the king of Judah.
2. He's recorded as being a good & godly king, the first of David's descendants who walked with God as David had.
3. The 1<sup>st</sup> half of v. 1 looks back over the previous chapter where Jehoshaphat's blessing by God is summarized.
4. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half looks forward to sum up what's to come. It's not pretty.
  - a. 1 Kings 21: 25 tells us King Ahab of Israel was one of the most evil men ever.
  - b. This is the guy who married the violent & wicked Jezebel.
5. Though Jehoshaphat was a good king, he was rather naïve, as we'll see.
6. He thought he could heal the rift between Judah & Israel by marrying his son to the daughter of Ahab & Jezebel.
7. Right here in the 1<sup>st</sup> verse we have the theme of the rest of the chapter – The godly **cannot** ally themselves with the ungodly. Good has no part with evil.

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7. As Paul says 2 Cor. 6:14

**<sup>14</sup> Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?**

8. Let me be clear: Of **course** we're to follow Jesus' example, Who loved His enemies.
  - a. He spent time with the sinners & moral outcasts of His day.
  - b. But His **goal** was to **call them to repentance**.
  - c. Jesus never **went into business** with them;
    - 1) He never bought a share in a brothel or saloon.
    - 2) He never partnered in a casino or with a shady used-chariot dealer.
9. As we learn in the following story, the people of God should never ally themselves with people who are allied with evil.

#### B. Vs. 2-3

**<sup>2</sup> After some years he went down to visit Ahab in Samaria; and Ahab killed sheep and oxen in abundance for him and the people who were with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth Gilead. <sup>3</sup> So Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?" And he answered him, "I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will be with you in the war."**

1. Jehoshaphat decided to follow-up on the relationship with his in-laws.

2. This was an official state visit, the *first* since the split between Judah & Israel decades before.
  - s. Jehoshaphat brought a large group of officials with him.
  - b. Ahab put on a state-dinner for them.
3. Things were going well.
  - a. Ahab knew Jehoshaphat hoped to see the nation reunited,
  - b. So he made a suggestion on how his plans could be furthered –
  - c. They could go to war together.

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4. A little background is needed at this point.
  - a. Both Judah & Israel were major powerhouses at this time.
  - b. Vying with them for prominence was *Syria* on Israel's northern border.
  - c. The Syrians kept invading Israel, nibbling away at her territory.
  - d. They'd managed to capture the key city of Ramoth in Gilead on the eastern side of the Jordan.
  - e. Using that as a base, they tried to gobble up *more* land.
  - f. But God had helped Ahab halt their advance.
  - g. Though Ahab was incredibly evil, God helped him defeat the Syrians so that Ahab would know how good God was.
    - 1) The hope was that Ahab would see God's kindness & repent.
    - 2) But he only *renewed his rebellion* against God, leaving him without excuse.
  - h. When Israel defeated the Syrians, they *captured* Ben-Hadad, the Syrian king.
    - 1) This was one evil dude! Worse than Ahab.
    - 2) Think Hitler & Stalin all rolled into one & you have Ben-Hadad.
  - i. Because he was evil, he couldn't be trusted.
  - j. But when he promised to surrender Ramoth Gilead & be a good boy, Ahab *foolishly* spared his life, calling him, "Brother" & setting him free.
  - k. Ben-Hadad went back to his capital at Damascus, where he renewed his army, laughing at how he'd tricked the stupid Ahab.
    - l. He had *no intention* of giving up Ramoth Gilead.
    - m. So after 3 years, Ahab decided to *take* it.
5. Ahab realized Ben-Hadad had *no intention* of keeping his promise.
  - a. Why would he? He was an evil man, & Ahab knew it when he made the treaty with him.
  - b. Why would he expect him to keep his promise?
6. *Even Ahab* shows us we must not make alliances with people who are allied with evil.
  - a. Don't make deals with evil because the devil *never keeps his bargains* or delivers what he promises. [\[1\]](#)
  - b. He *promises* pleasure, freedom, & love.
  - c. What he *delivers* instead is addiction, pain, disease, fear, guilt, alienation & despair.

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7. When Jehoshaphat heard the proposal to go to war, he agreed.
  - a. He hadn't gone to Ahab to call him to repentance.
  - b. He made an alliance with him & said, "*I am as you are.*"

- c. But Jehoshaphat isn't *anything* like Ahab.
    - 1) Ahab is evil & Jehoshaphat loves & serves God.
    - 2) There's no agreement between these 2!
    - 3) They're each *irrevocably devoted* to different goals;
    - 4) Jehoshaphat to *God*, Ahab to *himself*.
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### C. V. 4

**4 Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the LORD today." [LORD = Yahweh]**

1. This was *backward*. Jehoshaphat *ought* to have asked God *before* consenting to go.
  2. You don't make your plans then ask God to bless *them*.
  3. You ask God what *His plan* is, then ask for blessing as you pursue **THAT**.
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4. We learn an important lesson from Jehoshaphat here –
    - a. He made a major misstep in allying with Ahab.
    - b. It was good & right that he wanted to hear the counsel of God –
    - c. But *because* of that misstep, from which he fails to back down –
    - d. Even when he **DOES** learn God's counsel – *he fails to follow it!*
  5. The lesson is this: When we take follow a course we **KNOW** is contrary to God's will, it distorts our perception of *everything else*.
  6. Once we *shake hands with evil*, we begin to *lose our grip on truth*.
  7. No matter how paltry our dalliance with the devil, his lies color everything we see, hear, & feel.
  8. History is filled with people who started out well with God, but *knowingly* took a detour from God's will & ended up completely whacked out; raving lunatics.
  9. Fortunately, Jehoshaphat wasn't one of them but he has here *begun moving* in that direction.

### D., Vs. 5-7

**5 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, 400 men, and said to them, "Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" So they said, "Go up, for God will deliver it into the king's hand."**

1. As we read on, we realize these prophets were all a bunch of frauds.
2. Earlier in Ahab's reign, the prophet Elijah had challenged 400 priest & prophets of Baal to a showdown on Mt. Carmel.
  - a. When they were proven to be frauds, Elijah caught & executed them.
  - b. Ahab *replaced* them with 400 *new* guys.
3. There have always been & will always be *religious opportunists* who for the right price will tell people what they **WANT** to hear.
4. Paul says that in the last days, because people have itching ears, they'll accumulate a whole group of teachers who will tickle them. [ 2 Tim 4:3]

**6 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not still a prophet of the LORD [Yahweh] here, that we may inquire of Him?"**

5. Jehoshaphat knew these guys weren't true messengers of God.
6. So he asked Ahab if there wasn't someone with a proven track record of

genuine prophecy – a bona-fide messenger of Yahweh.

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7. Ahab's god was *not* Jehoshaphat's God!
    - a. Ahab's god went along with him & told him what he wanted to hear.
    - b. Jehoshaphat's God was the true & living God, Who calls His people to believe & do what *He* says.
  8. It's important when talking with people who say they believe in "God" to not assume they mean *the God of the Bible*.
    - a. He, she or it may be more = a god of the . . . fill in the blank.
    - b. He's a projection of their desires;
    - b. A kindly dispenser of good-will who nods happily at everything they do.
  9. Jehoshaphat's God was *Yahweh*; **I AM** → The Becoming One; Who becomes for us whatever we **NEED**.
  10. Ahab's god was *Any-way*: The one who becomes whatever I **WANT**.
- <sup>7</sup> So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil. He is Micaiah the son of Imla." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!"**
11. Ahab & Micaiah had some history.
    - a. He'd spoken to Ahab before, telling him he needed to repent or judgment will fall.
    - b. Because Micaiah's message wasn't what Ahab wanted to hear – he called it "evil."
  12. Jehoshaphat was shocked at Ahab's cavalier dismissal of the Word of God as *evil* & told him to not talk like that!
  13. This is telling! Though Jehoshaphat's gotten a bit off track, he's still scandalized by Ahab's lack of spiritual perception—& rightly so.
  14. But to those who ally themselves with evil, good & evil switch places so that what's evil looks good & what's good becomes evil.
  15. This is why Ahab is past repentance & all that's left is for him to fall under the judgment of God.
    - a. He's morally & spiritually so far gone –
    - b. He calls God's Word *evil*.
  16. While it was right for Jehoshaphat to rebuke Ahab for his blasphemy, he ought to have gone one step further & immediately returned home.

#### **E. Vs. 8-11**

**<sup>8</sup> Then the king of Israel called one of his officers and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly!" <sup>9</sup> The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, clothed in their robes, sat each on his throne; and they sat at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. <sup>10</sup> Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.' "** **<sup>11</sup> And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king's**

hand.”

1. This was a *huge, majestic event*, with 2 thrones set up on a high place near the gate of the royal city of Samaria,
  - a. Which history & archaeology tell us was *magnificent*.
  - b. Ahab & his father Omri made Samaria the capital of Israel & used huge amounts of ivory & gold in decorating the palace – which BTW, archaeology has confirmed.
2. Both kings had on their royal finery & there was a large crowd of officials.
3. To cap it off, the leader of the prophets had made a pair of iron horns he was using as a visual aid, saying Ahab was one horn, Jehoshaphat the other & together they would defeat the Syrians.
4. It was an impressive spectacle.

#### **F. Vs. 12-22**

**<sup>12</sup> Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, “Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Therefore please let your word be like *the word of one of them*, and speak encouragement.”**

1. This guy knew the message the 400 were giving Ahab was motivated by political expediency instead of being a genuine word from God.
2. There was a movement building & he wanted to see it succeed; War with Syria was *popular* – so he encouraged Micaiah to go with the flow of popular opinion.
3. Watch Micaiah’s response . . .

**<sup>13</sup> And Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak.”**

4. Micaiah was no mercenary. He was beholden to *no political agenda*.
5. His calling was to be a prophet – & a prophet’s duty is to faithfully speak the message God gives him, regardless of whose toes it steps on & what plans it messes up.
6. May I say, as a pastor & teacher of God’s Word – I echo what Micaiah says here –

Whatever my God says, *that* I will speak.

7. And there are some *applications* to what we’re looking at today I’m compelled to share a bit later.

**<sup>14</sup> Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?” And he said, “Go and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand!”**

8. We know from what follows Micaiah said this in such a way that it was obvious he was being sarcastic. Look at Ahab’s response . . .

**<sup>15</sup> So the king said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”**

9. What? This was bogus, spoken only to fool Jehoshaphat!
  - a. Ahab had **NEVER** asked Micaiah to tell him the truth.
  - b. For goodness sake, he’d hired 400 prophets to counteract Micaiah’s lone voice!

- c. Ahab *didn't want to know the truth*, as every other story about him reveals.
10. Micaiah then delivered the real message . . .
- 16 Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.' "**
11. Because the king was called the "shepherd" of the nation, this was a prophecy of Ahab's defeat & death – leaving the nation without its shepherd.
- 17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" 18 Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left.**
12. This was a direct contrast with the earthly spectacle there at Samaria.
- Micaiah wasn't impressed with their power & majesty –
  - Because he saw a court, throne, & crowd that made Ahab & Jehoshaphat look like petty beggars.
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13. When Charles Colson worked for the White House during the Nixon Administration, it was his task to prepare people to meet the President.
- Many of those who had an appointment to meet Nixon in the Oval Office were *idealists* who were determined to *speak boldly* to the President & *demand* that he take action on whatever they were bringing him.
  - Nixon didn't want to be obligated to do what every one of these idealists demanded, so it was Colson's job to soften them up before they met the President.
  - They would arrive a full hour before their appointment, then be given a tour of the White House.
    - Starting with the simple rooms where not much happened, they'd be taken to locations in the White House of greater & great power.
    - With clever words, visitors would slowly be exposed to the immense power & responsibility of the President.
    - By the time they were finally entered the Oval Office, Colson said nearly everyone was so over-awed they were reduced to a few stumbling words of apology for disturbing the President.
    - They'd shake his hand, have their picture taken, engage in some small talk, then be ushered quietly from the room.
14. The big show Ahab had arranged was meant to do that – & propel his agenda of going to war against the Syrians.
15. Micaiah wasn't impressed & would not be made into a mere political tool.
16. He took his direction from a higher court than Samaria.
- 19 And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. 20 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' 21 So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And *the LORD* said, 'You shall**



persuade *him* and also prevail; go out and do so.’<sup>22</sup> Therefore look! The LORD has put [better – permitted] a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.”

17. Because → Ahab was *past* the point of repentance.

- a. For years Elijah & Micaiah had confronted Ahab, urging him to repent.
- b. But he refused one too many times & now there was nothing left but judgment.

*There is a time we know not when, a line we know not where,  
That marks the destiny of men between sorrow and despair.  
There is a line, by man unseen, & once it has been crossed  
Even God Himself in all His love has sworn that all is lost.*

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18. In the Book of Job we see that the devil appears before the throne of God to accuse the saints.

- a. Jesus called satan the father of lies, so whether this lying spirit was the devil or one of the demons,
- b. When it proposed to deceive Ahab, God *allowed* it.

19. All God is doing here is once & for all granting Ahab his desire—to do his own thing & go his own way.

- a. *For years* God patiently drew & worked on him Ahab.
- b. But now, Ahab’s rebellion is *settled* – so God withdraws & turns Ahab over to His folly.

#### **G. Vs. 23-27**

**<sup>23</sup> Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, “Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?”**

1. “You calling me a liar? *You’re* the liar!”

**<sup>24</sup> And Micaiah said, “Indeed you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!”**

2. Scripture never tells us what happened to this false prophet, but whatever it was, it wasn’t good.

**<sup>25</sup> Then the king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son; <sup>26</sup> and say, ‘Thus says the king: “Put this *fellow* in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I return in peace.” ’ ”**

3. Ahab threw Micaiah into prison to await the end of the campaign.

- a. If Ahab was victorious, he’d be executed as a *false* prophet.
- b. **Question:** Why weren’t the 400 other guys thrown in the pokey too?
- c. This reveals how *political* all this really was, & to what extent people will use *power* in the pursuit of purely political ends.

**<sup>27</sup> But Micaiah said, “If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.” And he said, “Take heed, all you people!”**

#### **H. Vs. 28-32**

**<sup>28</sup> So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to**

Ramoth Gilead. <sup>29</sup> And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.” So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle. <sup>30</sup> Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots who were with him, saying, “Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.”

1. Ahab was a *snake*! He KNEW Ben-Hadad had commanded his men to gun for him, so he hid & sent Jehoshaphat out to get killed in his place.
2. Don't forget that 3 years before, Ahab had spared Ben-Hadad's life.
  - a. The king of Syria made all kinds of promises but kept none of them.
  - b. And now here he is, gunning for the man who'd shown him mercy.
3. Proving yet again – You can't make an alliance with someone allied with evil because they don't keep their promises.

<sup>31</sup> So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, “It is the king of Israel!” Therefore they surrounded him to attack;

4. And that would have been the end of him, except for . . .

but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God

diverted them from him. <sup>32</sup> For so it was, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

5. As the battle unfolded, Jehoshaphat realized Ahab *betrayed* & set him up.
  - a. His folly in allying with Ahab became clear & his *failure to heed* Micaiah's warning came crashing in on him with a flash of insight—
  - b. “What am I doing here? What an idiot I've been. God, forgive & help me.”
  - c. God did – because all He was waiting for was Jehoshaphat's repentance.

#### **I. Vs. 33-9:3**

<sup>33</sup> Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, “Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.”

1. An arrow, *shot at random*, happens to hit the joint between the pieces of Ahab's armor.
2. It's a one in a million shot, a fluke. // No, it's God.
3. Ahab can disguise himself & fool the Syrians, but he can't fool God.
4. All his life Ahab has denied the God Who *really* is, but His arrow still flies true.

5. You can't hide from God. He will always find you. <sup>[2]</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The battle increased that day, and the king of Israel propped *himself* up in *his* chariot facing the Syrians until evening; and about the time of sunset he died. <sup>9:1</sup> Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD?”



**Therefore the wrath of the LORD is upon you. <sup>3</sup> Nevertheless good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God.”**

6. Jehoshaphat returned home *repentant*, but he needed a Word from God to *seal the lesson* learned by his blunder.
7. The lesson was this = You can't ally yourself with those allied with evil because they never keep their promises.
8. When Jehu told Jehoshaphat he should neither help nor love those who hate God, he wasn't referring to basic kindness or even a desire that they'd be saved.
9. The words "help & love" refer to a *covenant partnership*.
10. It's the *same thing* Paul meant in *2 Cor. 6* we began with today – We cannot be unequally yoked with unbelievers.
  - a. We ought to be kind to them & love them in the sense of wanting to see them right with God.
  - b. But we *cannot partner* with those who partner with evil because their goal & agenda is ultimately contrary to God's will.
11. Jehu warned Jehoshaphat he needed to *guard his heart*, which had accomplished some wonderful things, because if he failed to hang on to this lesson, *disaster would fall*.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. VOTE!**

1. There are as many ways to apply this as there are people in this room.
2. But there's an important lesson for us to glean from this *collectively, as the Church*.
3. And it relates to Nov 4 & the voting booth.
4. You've no doubt heard the pundits & analysts saying this is one of, if not the most, important elections ever.
5. It's going to be crucial because there are issues before us that will define, not merely political policy, but the *moral landscape* of our time.
6. You know I regularly speak of the stewardship of our citizenship, & how important it is that the followers of Christ register, get educated, then prayerfully vote their conscience.
7. My saying all that is *not* in any way politically motivated; it's a simple application of our calling to BE salt & light as the followers of Jesus Christ.
8. I'll be voting on Nov 4<sup>th</sup>. And I'll enter that voting booth studied & prayed up.
9. I'm especially concerned to see Proposition 8 passed, defining marriage as between a man & woman.

#### **B. Warning**

1. But now, in light of what we've seen today, I must sound a serious *caution*.
2. There are *purely political groups* who've insinuated themselves into the church & are trying to hijack the Proposition 8 campaign *toward* their own ends.
3. They're a bit like Ahab, hiding in our midst.
4. We've been *inundated* with emails & mailings from groups holding meetings

- after meeting at which they talk about **HOW** to support Prop 8.
- a. The guys who started the “Yes on Prop 8” campaign were just a few pastors who decided to pool their efforts to reach the churches in their area.
  - b. But it’s grown into something very different from what they originally intended.
  - c. Clever political operatives came along, offering “help.”
  - d. But what they saw was an opportunity to get their claws into the Evangelical community.
  - e. Like Jehoshaphat of old, while Evangelicals have a good heart for God, we’re not always all that smart!
  - f. Like Jehoshaphat, we’ve proven time & again to be *politically naïve & easily deceived*.
5. So pastors show up at rallies in support of Prop 8 & sign up on a list that ends up in the hands of some political action committee.
  6. Like Ahab, they have their **400** professionals who know how to do the religious dance & speak in religious terms.
  7. They fool well-meaning but naïve believers as they co-opt the mission of the Church & the Agenda of God’s Kingdom.
  8. These groups are more interested in getting certain candidates elected & expanding their power than they are to see Prop 8 passed.
    - a. But they know those who are *for* Prop 8 are more inclined to vote for their candidates than the other guys.
    - b. So they **USE** Prop 8 as a way to get their guys elected.
    - c. Truth be told, they’re tickled pink the CA State Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage a few months ago.
    - d. They see it as a *political boon*, because it’s stir up Christians to get out & vote, & while their marking *Yes* on Prop 8, they’ll probably put an X in the box for their candidates too.
  8. If we aren’t careful, we could easily find ourselves repeating Jehoshaphat’s error.
    - a. In an alliance with those allied with evil.
    - b. It’s happened many times before in the history of the church, & history has a nasty habit of repeating itself for those who hear – but do not HEED what God says – like Jehoshaphat!
  9. Let’s be more like Micaiah, the faithful prophet,
    - a. Who was more concerned with seeing the Kingdom of God expand in hearts,
    - b. Than the kingdom of Ahab expanding across the Jordan.
  10. Let’s be faithful to proclaim God’s Word boldly – & not short-sell or soft-pedal it so we can *increase our political influence*.
  11. Let’s be *God’s people* first & foremost, far before any other label or affiliation.
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- Praying every night at 6 PM for one minute.

[1] From a sermon by Croggins.

[\[2\]](#) From a sermon by Croggins