

Revival Kings of Judah (2)

Jehoshaphat

Jehoshaphat is the second of Judah's revival kings. He was the son of good king Asa. There are 4 chapters in 11 Chronicles that record the history of Jehoshaphat, chapters 17 – 20. There are also details found in 1 Kings 22 and 11 Kings 3.

Reading: Study 1 – 11 Chron 17 v 1 – 6 and 12a, 11 Chron 18 v 1 – 7, 18 – 22 and 29 – 34

Study 2 – 11 Chron 19 v 1 – 7, 11 Chron 20 v 1 – 6, 12 – 18, 22 – 24 and 29 – 33

BACKGROUND:

For 41 years Jehoshaphat's father, Asa, a good king had reigned in Judah. During the final 5 years of Asa's life he failed to rely on God and there was failure and decline. To the north of Judah was Israel, where for 3 years Ahab and Jezebel had ruled. Of Ahab the bible records "*did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him.*" Baal worship was the national religion in Israel. This is important to remember for in the latter part of Jehoshaphat's good reign he had the desire to re unite Judah and Israel. When Jehoshaphat came to the throne Israel was at war with Benhadad, king of Syria. This all has an effect on the story of Jehoshaphat.

Breakdown of Life of Jehoshaphat: (headings taken from Believers Magazine – June 2004)

11Chron 17 – Consolidation - He built upon the achievements of his father

11Chron 18 – Compromise - v1 "*joined affinity with Ahab*"

11 Chron 19 - Contrition - v4 "*he went out again...and brought them back unto the Lord*"

11 Chron 20 – Conquest - a great victory; a story of faith and a great God

CONSOLIDATION:

In the **first 6 verses** of chapter 17 we have the record of the first acts of Jehoshaphat as king. He was 35 when he ascended the throne and immediately set to consolidating what his father had gained and v1 "*strengthened himself against Israel.*" From the very first he set his defences against the anti God regime in the north. v3 and 4 records that because he walked in the commandments of God "*the Lord was with Jehoshaphat*". These characteristics of the new king should mark the Christian Eph 6 v 13 "*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.*"

From these opening verses we can also note that God is faithful. For example as Jehoshaphat followed the Lord we read in v5 "*the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand*". This is also true for the Christian Heb 11 v 6 "*God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*"

"In the third year" (v7 – 9) Jehoshaphat consolidates the truth of God. He sent gifted and able men to teach the word of God and scripture records their names. They taught the law of the Lord from the book of the law. There is still the need of gifted men to teach the word of God, to consolidate the truth of God 11Tim 2 v 15 "*workmen ...rightly dividing the word of truth.*"

So Jehoshaphat built the defences and the people of God were built up by the teaching of the word of God. These are conditions for revival and v12 "*Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly.*"

In v10 – 19 there are **days of revival**. There was ‘peace abroad’, the enemies of Judah were subdued and *“the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms”*. At home there was prosperity, *“riches and honour in abundance”*. God has so much he longs to give to us Eph 1 *“all spiritual blessings”*, but do we enjoy them as we should? Are conditions in our lives ready for revival, fit for the blessing of God.

In v13 – 19 we find that in the midst of peace and prosperity there was **preparation**, there was vigilance against an attack of the enemy. Mighty men of valour, men who were armed, skilled and prepared; men like v16 *“Amasiah...who willingly offered himself unto the Lord”* were placed throughout the kingdom. How important it is to be prepared, to be vigilant 1 Peter 5 v 8 *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

COMPROMISE:

Following the revival, the peace and the prosperity of chapter 17 is chapter 18. Of chapter 17 we can say Ps 118 *“This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.”* At the beginning of chapter 17 Jehoshaphat *“strengthened himself against Israel.”* but in v1 of II Chron 18 (after 18 or 19 years) *“he joined affinity with Ahab”*. Chapter 18 is marked by compromise; compromise that led to catastrophe. This is important, it is vital for us as Christians today, the principle of separation, the unequal yoke. In the life of Jehoshaphat it was a recurring problem. He had the desire to reunite the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel but this was not the will of God. He also attempted to bring about this union without addressing the fundamental difference between them, Judah followed the Lord but Israel served Baal. Israel had not repented or turned again to the living God. The teaching of the New Testament is clear 11 Cor 6 v 14 *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?”* and James 4 v 4 *“Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God .”*

Jehoshaphat pursued a closer alliance with Israel in 3 areas – marriage, military and commerce – and all ended in disaster.

Marriage - 11 Chron 18 v 1 *“joined affinity with Ahab”*. The son of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, married the daughter of Ahab, Athaliah. This was a disastrous union and twice in the succeeding years large numbers of the seed royal were slaughtered as a result of Athaliah being brought into the royal house of Judah (see 11 Chron 21 v 4 and 11 Chron 22 v 10).

Military – 11 Chron 18 v 3 *“we will be with thee in the war”*. The battle for Ramoth Gilead was also disastrous. Ahab was killed and Jehoshaphat barely escaped with his life. He had been in desperate trouble and we read in v31 *“but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him”*. However, Jehoshaphat did not learn his lesson, for in 11 Kings 3 he unites with Jehoram, son of Ahab, to fight against Moab. On that occasion the Lord intervened, through the prophet Elisha, to prevent disaster.

Commerce – 11 Chron 20 v 35 *“join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly: And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish”*. Again a prophet of the Lord comes with a message of rebuke from the Lord, Eliezer by name, and in v 37 *“And the ships were broken”*. At long last good king Jehoshaphat seems to understand the danger of the unequal yoke, for in 1 Kings 22 Ahaziah again approaches Jehoshaphat with the offer of a commercial union v 49 *“But Jehoshaphat would not.”*

May we learn the lesson *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers”*.

There are some interesting things to note in 11 Chron 18. The background to 11 Chron 18 is found in 1 Kings 20 where the Lord gave Ahab a great victory over the king of Syria. The peace treaty that followed required the king of Syria to return the cities of Israel taken by Syria. After 3 years of peace Ramoth Gilead was still held by the Syrians and Ahab was determined to take it back. He desired the support of Judah and this was the real reason for the great feast recorded in v2. In the midst of this feast, a time of enjoyment, Jehoshaphat was persuaded *“to go up with him”*. Jehoshaphat should never have been in the situation, a feast in Samaria, in which he was persuaded to say v3 *“we will be with thee in the war.”*

v 4 –17 **Micaiah the faithful servant of the Lord**. Jehoshaphat was a little uneasy v4 *“Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today.”* But it was too late; Jehoshaphat should not have been there allied to Ahab and Jezebel. It results in the good king ignoring and rejecting the word of God. The faithful servant of the Lord, Micaiah the son of Imla, is called. Micaiah is urged to agree with the 400 prophets whom Ahab had gathered and v12 *“declare good to the king”*. But Micaiah was different from the other 400 prophets, he was faithful to the Lord v13 *“As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.”* Micaiah spoke the word of the Lord, knowing it was unpopular, knowing that he was likely to suffer as a result. He was faithful to God and his word. He did not try to make it more palatable, he did not water it down, he did not change the emphasis; he spoke the truth of God. Ahab was under the judgement of God, this would be his last opportunity to hear the word of the Lord and repent. Are we as faithful in presenting God’s word?

v 18 - 22 **Administration in heaven**. Why should Micaiah be overwhelmed, intimidated and afraid in the presence of two earthly kings upon their thrones for v18 *“I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne”*? Micaiah saw the host of heaven, angels good and bad, gathered around the throne of God (cf. Job 1 v 6). In heaven the decree was made v19 *“Ahab...go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead”*. A spirit (fallen angel) stood before the Lord and was given authority to go and *“be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets”*. This was Satanic activity, allowed by God’s overruling appointment, to accomplish the purpose of God.

Ahab planned and schemed (see v29), but the decree of heaven could never be thwarted. Apparently at random, by chance, an arrow *“smote the king of Israel...and about the time of the sun going down he died.”* The decree of heaven, judgement on Ahab was accomplished - Psa 103 v 19 *“The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.”*

CONTRITION:

As Jehoshaphat returned from the disastrous battle another servant of the Lord, “Jehu the son of Hanani the seer”, meets him. The message from the Lord is v2 *“Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?”* (compare this with Jehoshaphat’s view in 18 v 3). This is the king of whom Jehu says, *“hast prepared thine heart to seek God.”* In respect to Ahab and Israel, Jehoshaphat’s vision was distorted.

Jehoshaphat hears the **rebuke from the Lord**, his heart is touched and he responds to the word of God v4 *“he went out again through the people...and brought them back unto the Lord God”*. However, the people were not committed, they made an outward show but 20 v 33 *“the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers.”* In chapter 17 had consolidated the achievements of his father – gifted men taught the law of the God and mighty men defended the cities. Here in chapter 19 things progress v5 *“he set judges in the land”*. What was taught in chap 17, in chap 19 had to be obeyed and judges were appointed to administer the law – James 1 v 22 *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only”*. The responsibility of the judges’ v6 *“Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgement.”* This is true of anyone, of everyone who seeks to serve

the Lord in whatever capacity. Jehoshaphat exhorts the judges in v9 to serve *“faithfully, and with a perfect heart.”* This too should mark anyone involved in the service of God.

In v7 we read some **characteristics of God** that should also mark these judges...and us.

1) No iniquity with the Lord our God 2) No respect of persons (no partiality – see James 2) and 3) No taking of gifts. These characteristics can be seen in the life of the Lord Jesus as he was here on earth e.g. in Luke 18 and 19 as the Lord Jesus passed through Jericho he brought salvation to one of the poorest men in the city, Bartimaeus, and one of the richest, Zacchaeus.

CONQUEST:

Chapter 20 is a great chapter of faith in God that resulted in victory. The chapter begins *“It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab...came against Jehoshaphat to battle...and Jehoshaphat feared.”* Everything was going well in Judah, Jehoshaphat had brought the people back to God and righteous judges had been set throughout the land, and it was now that the test came. The attack of the enemy came suddenly and expectedly. This is the way it is at times, suddenly and unexpectedly when things are going well the test comes 1 Pet 5 v 8 *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”*. The test comes for our benefit James 1 v 3 *“the trying of your faith worketh patience”*.

In **times of danger and uncertainty** Jehoshaphat *“set himself to seek the Lord”*. The king and the people gathered themselves together *“to ask help of the Lord”*. Their first response to the coming enemy was to pray. In v 5 – 13 there is recorded the prayer of Jehoshaphat on that day.

1) v6 *“art thou not God in heaven”* – An acknowledgement of the greatness of the God in whom they trusted, a God in whom they could have confidence 2) v7 *“art not thou our God”* – A great God who is our God. Jehoshaphat remembers what God has done in the past for the nation. 3) In v9 there is a remembrance of previous covenants and promises made by God, *“then thou wilt hear and help”*. 4) The problem is rehearsed before the Lord, v10 *“And now behold the children of Ammon”*. 5) At v12 they committed the problem to the Lord, confessing their own weakness and dependence upon God *“neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.”* 6) Having committed the problem to the Lord, they waited on the Lord. This is one of the hardest things to do; to wait for answered prayer cf. Ruth 3 v 18.

In v14 – 19 as the people waited, **the answer came from the Lord**. The answer came through a man, Jahaziel, who spoke the word of the Lord. Are we ready to be the answer to prayer? As we pray and wait the Lord may use us to answer prayer. The answer from heaven was one of encouragement and victory and it contained great promises from God that we can claim today.

1) v15 *“for the battle is not yours, but God’s.”* Joshua at Jericho (Josh 5 v 14) and Gideon (Jud 7) had to learn this great fact. 2) v17 *“stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you”*. Moses at the Red Sea had a similar promise and great victory (Ex 14 v 13). 3) v17 *“fear not, nor be dismayed...for the Lord will be with you.”* Asa, Jehoshaphat’s father, had learnt this in his battle against the Ethiopians and Paul, in the city of Corinth, was given the same promise Acts 18 v 9,10 *“Be not afraid...For I am with thee”*.

Jehoshaphat believed God, rested on his promises and praised him. In v18, 19 there was thanksgiving and praise for answered prayer. More than this he obeyed v20 *“And they rose early in the morning and went forth”*, as the Lord had commanded. They went forth to meet the enemy, confident in their God. As they went the exhortation from the king was v20 *“Believe in the Lord your God”* and he appointed singers *“that should praise the beauty of holiness”*. The army advanced singing and praising, and it was as they believed, obeyed and praised that the salvation of the Lord was seen v22 *“the Lord set ambushments”*. After the great victory they returned to Jerusalem with joy and v30 *“So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.”*

