

2 Chronicles 17-20 • Jehoshaphat - The Danger of Compromise

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The last king that we dealt with was a king by the name of Asa, and I'll remind you also that Chronicles only covers the kings in the southern kingdom of Judah. It will mention at times the northern kings, but only because of the storyline connecting to the southern kings. And Asa, who was the last king that we learned about in our last study in 2 Chronicles, was a good king and he sought the Lord and his heart was open to God, and then toward the end of his life he made a dumb alliance with another king to fight off an enemy instead of trusting in the Lord.

And the Bible tells us that as he grew older still, he eventually was afflicted with the disease of the feet. Weird, but it says he only consulted the physicians and he never ever brought his disease before the Lord, and that's the way he died. One of those interesting stories. We're not really sure where his heart was at the time of his death but he just, it was I guess, I guess you could say the end of his reign was marred somewhat. But he reigned for a long time. Asa reigned for 41 years.

Now, as we get into the next king of Judah, who is Asa's son, and his name is Jehoshaphat, we're going... By the way, don't name your kid that. Just, that's just a tip. Joe is fine. Joe's good. Jehoshaphat, I mean, unless you want him to play in the NFL. Have you ever seen some of the names of the guys that are in the NFL and you think, I think his mom did that on purpose so he would be a tough kid. Anyway, I don't know where I got that.

All right, the point I was going to make and we're going to pray here in just a moment before we get into the text. But as we get into this and look at the reign of Jehoshaphat, we're going to find out that the dates of the beginning of his reign actually overlap with Asa's and that's not uncommon.

When a king would become unable to fulfill his royal duties, for whatever reason, and we know that Asa had this issue with his feet many times, another one of his sons would take over that role during the latter part of his father's life in what we refer to as a co-regency. And Solomon and David actually reigned under a co-regency because David became ill toward the end of his life. And Solomon began to minister and help out in terms of the ruling and reigning until

he finally took over in a sole position, but the same thing is going on here where we have an overlap.

As we get ready to get into chapter 17, let's begin with prayer.

Father in heaven, we thank You so much for the opportunity tonight to get into Your Word. And as always, Father Your Word is delightful, and we appreciate the insights that we gain from it. And we ask Father that You would teach us tonight and minister your grace and fill us Lord with insight that we can take home with us. We don't just want to learn Your Word tonight, Father, we want to learn how to apply it.

So, we ask You to guide and direct us in in that very goal, and we praise you, Lord, for Your faithfulness to minister to us at the place of our greatest need. Be with us, we pray, Father. In Jesus' precious name, amen. Amen.

All right. The reign of Jehoshaphat, verse 1. It says, and it begins by saying,

“Jehoshaphat his son (which reminds us that there are no chapter divisions in the original writings. It just moves right on into the text. Jehoshaphat his son) reigned in his place and strengthened himself against Israel.” (ESV)

Now, I want you to stop there for just a moment because the very first thing we see Jehoshaphat doing when he takes over the throne in Judah is to strengthen himself against his brothers in Israel. Remember, there's been a split. There's been a civil war in Israel. Let me put a map up on the screen for you so you can actually see the divisions.



The purple area highlighted there is the kingdom of Judah. The green is the northern kingdom of Israel. Now, remember under David and Solomon, it was all Israel. But Solomon's son, Rehoboam, foolishly split the kingdom in two and now we've got this division. Not only do we have a division, we have war. And so, Jehoshaphat knew that Israel was a threat so the very first thing he did was

he began to strengthen his northern border against any kind of attack from Israel.

But what we're going to see as we get into these chapters is Jehoshaphat hated the fact that Israel and Judah were a divided nation. Well, I should say Israel was a divided nation. He hated it. He hated it. He knew he had to defend himself against some attacks, but he hated the fact that the Jews were a divided people.

And we're going to find out that he hated it so much that he was actually willing to compromise various things in order to try to build back unity. Unity is a wonderful thing, except when it is at the cost of the precious things that God gives us. Anyway, we'll talk more about that as we get into it. But we're told in verse 2 that,

“He placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim that Asa his father had captured. (Meaning some of the cities on their northern border that were actually in Israel, his father had captured, and so he fortified those in order to hang on to them. And it says in verse three that) ³ The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals,”

Obviously, that's not father David. In a literal sense the Hebrew doesn't, there isn't grandfather, basically in the Hebrew, so it's just father. It's the father, it could be maybe many generations removed, but it's still going to say father, all right, so his father David, and it says he did not seek the Baals.

“⁴ but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel. (In the north, who, which had almost given itself completely over to paganism) ⁵ Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand. And all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor. ⁶ His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD. And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.”

You'll remember that the high places were pagan places of worship. Here's the problem. They weren't always used for pagan worship. Sometimes the high places were used to worship Yahweh. But the reason pagans, as we've said before, liked high places was because they felt they'd be closer to their gods. They felt the higher they got, geographically speaking, they'd be closer to god.

It's just a weird sort of a thing, but Jehoshaphat got rid of those, and he also got the Asherim, which are poles that they would have put up around, and they

would have a figurine or a figure of Asherah, this goddess, pagan goddess, and he got rid of those things. You can see that Jehoshaphat did, for the southern kingdom of Judah many, many good things and he also seemed to be a man who understood about teaching the people. Look what it goes on to say in verse 7. It says,

“In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah; ⁸ and with them (he sent along also) the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, (that guy) Shemiramoth, (yeah, that, and then the next guy, and then) Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; (and then that guy too. I mean, some of these are just total tongue twisters) and with these Levites, the priests Elishama and Jehoram.”

And it says, look at this is very important. Verse 9, *“And they taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the LORD with them. They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.”*

And what was the result? Verse 10. *“And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, and they made no war against Jehoshaphat.”*

Now Jehoshaphat was one of the few kings who walked with the Lord who took this extra step. There were a few others. Josiah also at the very end was very much into this as well. But a lot of the kings would make some, they would make reforms. And they would get rid of pagan idols and they'd break down pagan altars and all that, but they would not take the extra step of sending men into the communities and teaching the people.

You've got to remember; you and I are so accustomed to having the Word of God just at our fingertips. They didn't. They didn't have the writings, they didn't, couldn't read about Moses. Yes, they could go to synagogue, they could learn, but to have these teachers going around and instructing, it was just hugely important for the people.

And so you'll notice here that there was just, it says here in verse 10 that, not only did the fear of the Lord fall upon them, but the result of that was that nobody made war against Jehoshaphat and the southern kingdom of Judah. They lived at peace. They lived in peace because the Word of God was spreading among them. Very cool.

Furthermore, verse 11, *“Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver for tribute, and the Arabians also brought him 7,700 rams and 7,700 goats.”*

Now it's interesting that the word, tribute is used because that is usually the word that is spoken or used to describe a vassal who gives tribute and tribute is another word for tax. Okay? When a nation would conquer a neighboring nation, they would levy a tax and that tax would be any number of things could be gold, silver, animals, wood other natural materials or whatever.

It says here that the Philistines and the Arabians brought these things without necessarily having been conquered, but they speak of it here as tribute, which shows that it is a recognition by those nations of the sovereignty of Judah. Does that make sense? They just recognized, they recognized they were in a lesser position and they brought him gifts of their own volition, which is really cool. Verse 12 says,

“Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater. He built in Judah fortresses and store cities, ¹³ and he had large supplies in the cities of Judah. He had soldiers, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem.”

Verse 14 says, *“This was the muster of them (That's just another way of saying, here are their numbers. And then it says just gives you those) by fathers' houses: Of Judah, the commanders of thousands: Adnah the commander, with 300,000 mighty men of valor;*

¹⁵ and next to him Jehohanan the commander, with 280,000; ¹⁶ and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, a volunteer for the service of the LORD, with 200,000 mighty men of valor. ¹⁷ Of Benjamin: Eliada, a mighty man of valor, with 200,000 men armed with bow and shield; ¹⁸ and next to him Jehozabad with 180,000 armed for war. ¹⁹ These were in the service of the king, besides those whom the king had placed in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.”

As this first chapter wraps up, we see Jehoshaphat's reign is marked with great blessing from the Lord because he sought the God of his fathers. He desired to walk with God, to do what was right. He took steps to eliminate paganism that had become rampant in Judah and because of that, the grace of God the blessing of the Lord was very evident in the land. But as I said, as we get into this next chapter, we're going to see that quite obviously it just really gnawed at Jehoshaphat, this idea that he was estranged from his brothers to the north.

He hated it, and he was looking for opportunities to mend fences. There's always a problem when we are, I mean there's never a problem with mending fences from the standpoint of just that. The Bible tells us that, that insofar as it's in your power to live at peace with all men, and what that means is you need to be willing to, if you've got an issue with someone else, you should be willing to say, I want to get this reconciled.

You do know though, that there are times that reconciliation can only go so far. Because if the person, with whom you desire to be reconciled, is living a lifestyle that is completely contrary to the Word of God you're going to be limited in what fellowship and connectedness you can have with that individual. Doesn't mean you can't be reconciled from the standpoint of, I love you, I'm praying for you, we're good. Right?

But from the standpoint of, hey, let's hang, and if you got something to do I'll come do it with you. And I come to you and you come to me and we have this close fellowship. Sometimes that's not possible when the individual is literally just walking crazy minded away from the Lord. Well, that's what's going on up in the northern kingdom of Israel and yet Jehoshaphat wants reconciliation.

Look how chapter 18 begins. Now it's for, there's, tells us 2 things.

“Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, (That's the first one. And then secondly) and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab.”

Now Ahab is the king of Israel and right here we learn of Jehoshaphat's first big mistake as the king of Judah. He made a marriage alliance with the king of Israel, who was a very wicked man. Ahaz, you got to remember, was married to that famous woman named Jezebel. Maybe I should say infamous. Jezebel was a Phoenician princess from the region of Tyre and Sidon, and Ahab had married her to create an alliance with the Phoenicians.

But Jezebel brought Baal worship and was a huge cheerleader for the spread of Baal worship in the northern kingdom of Israel, and Ahab as a man, as a king, was a very wicked man. Let me put on the screen for you a short statement from 1 Kings, chapter 16 that tells you about Ahab. It says,

1 Kings 16:30 (ESV)

And Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him.

And Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the LORD, (look at this) more than all who were before him.

And that's saying something, because Jeroboam, who was the first king of the split, was a crazy wicked guy. But Ahab outdid him. So, this is what Jehoshaphat made the alliance with. A wicked king that was so wicked he was the top wicked guy up to this point. And Jehoshaphat is clearly a godly man. God's been blessing him, and he had to have known that Ahab wanted nothing to do with the Lord. He had to know that and yet he worked hard to bring this unity between these two fractured kingdoms.

And who knows? We don't know if Jehoshaphat had it in his heart to bind the kingdom together again. But again, that would have been an unequal yoke, and this is going to be a dangerous alliance as we're going to see. And we're going to see that Jehoshaphat's willingness to compromise is going to put him and his nation in jeopardy. Verse 2,

“After some years he went down to Ahab in Samaria. And Ahab killed an abundance of sheep and oxen for him and for the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramoth-gilead.”

Stop there. Ahab wants to go to war against Ramoth Gilead. Those are the Arameans. All right. And he wanted Jehoshaphat to go with him. Just bolster his own army. We already read what a significant army Jehoshaphat had. Mighty men, warriors of valor. Ahab thought, hey get this guy on my side I've got a much better chance of succeeding, and remember Jehoshaphat wants to bridge the division between these two kingdoms. What's he going to do? Verse 3, look with me in your Bible.

“Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, “Will you go with me to Ramoth-gilead?” He answered him, “I am as you are, my people as your people. We will be with you in the war.”

Jehoshaphat shows that he's even willing to threaten the peace that God brought to him in order to try to bridge this gap and create unity, greater unity. God is the one who gave Jehoshaphat peace. He had no enemies right now. The Bible tells us in the last chapter, he was at peace, and yet he's being lured into a fighting situation to try to bridge this division that shouldn't have been bridged. But Jehoshaphat, look at Jehoshaphat. It says,

⁴ *“And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, (Hey) “Inquire first for the word of the LORD.” (And)*⁵ *Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together,*

four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall we go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, for God will give it into the hand of the king."

Now Jehoshaphat's not a dumb man. He knows that of all these prophets that are just getting up and talking, not one of them is a prophet of Jehovah God, Yahweh, not one of them. And so he says in verse 6,

"Is there not here another prophet of the LORD of whom we may inquire?" (All right?) ⁷ And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, (Well, there's, yeah, there's this one guy. I suppose we could inquire of the Lord of him. His name is Micaiah, son of Imla. I hate him though. He never prophesized any good concerning me, but always evil. And Jehoshaphat's response is)... let not the king say so."

I think about that response, and I think, hey Joe, that was a pretty weenie response. I got to be honest with you, I think at this point, what you should have said was, "I think this is a bad idea, and I'm heartbroken that the nation of Israel is split into two kingdoms, and I would love to see us healed of that split, but you know what, this is just dumb and this isn't worth it." That's what he should have said, but he didn't.

⁸ *"Then the king of Israel (verse 8) summoned an officer and said, "Bring quickly Micaiah the son of Imlah." ⁹ Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes. And they were sitting at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, (Remember, at that time, Samaria was the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel) and all the prophets were prophesying before them.*

¹⁰ *And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah (I don't know how to pronounce it, Canna, Kana, I don't know) made for himself horns of iron and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'With these you shall push the Syrians until they are destroyed.'"*

Notice this, Zedekiah guy is prophesying. He actually builds a prop, these iron horns. He says, you're going to gore the enemy with this, and it is so go, you're going to be successful. But I want you to notice something. Look in verse 10.

"Thus says the (what does he say?) LORD..."

Right? But did you notice it's all caps? Did you see that in your Bible? It's either all caps or the, or it's a capital L, with a small cap, O-R-D. That means Zedekiah used the divine name. He is purporting to speak in the name of YAHWEH. He's

a pagan, but he knows the Jehoshaphat's there and what all else. And we'll find that there's more going on than even that, but he uses the divine name to lure them even further into this thing. He says, YAHWEH is going to give this thing into your hands. Verse 12,

“And the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, “Behold, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king. Let your word be like the word of one of them (in other words speak exactly what they’ve been saying) and speak favorably.”¹³ But Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, what my God says, that I will speak.”¹⁴ And when he had come to the king, the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?”

And this is the way I think Micaiah probably said it, *“...And he answered, (yeah, sure. Go up and try them) ...They'll be given into your hands. (And it must've sounded pretty lifeless because immediately you'll notice Ahab speaks up)¹⁵ But the king said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”*

You know, this is very interesting you guys. Ahab knows that what he just heard is not the truth. It came out of his own mouth. How many times, Micaiah, do I have to tell you to swear to speak the truth? He knows what he just got wasn't the truth. Isn't that interesting? Well, it's not all that odd people, the Bible tells us even in the New Testament that in the last days people will gather around themselves a great many prophets who will, and teachers who will speak just what they want to hear.

People love to hear just what they want to hear, and they're going to gather people around them to do that. And that's what Ahab did. He had 400 and a lot of people think there's strength in numbers. You got 400 people chirping in your ear, go into battle, Ahab! You'll be successful. You can even convince yourself. Yeah, it's a good idea. But Micaiah, this one lone voice, speaks up, and the king knows that he hasn't been told the truth about this thing. I want you to listen very carefully at Micaiah's real prophecy. Beginning here in verse 16.

“And 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 home in peace.’”¹⁷ And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?”

First of all, what's evil about that? All God is saying is, you know what, these people are like sheep without a shepherd. They just need to go home, in peace.

Now, I ask you, what is evil about that prophecy? It just isn't what he wanted to hear. That's all it takes for it to be evil. Do you guys understand how that fits today in our culture? When you tell somebody that living together outside of marriage is wrong, you know what you've just done?

You've spoken evil. You've just, you've insulted and offended them. When you tell somebody that homosexuality is not what God intended. Oh, goodness gracious. I don't think it's going to be too terribly long before we'll go to jail for saying those things publicly, because even though it's the truth and even though you speak it in love, you're speaking evil in the hearing of those people.

You tell somebody just the simple reality that they're a sinner who is separated from God by their sin. That is enough of that, right? You've offended me at the deepest level. You understand that you don't have to be, you don't have to say evil things. You don't have to say mean things. You can have a smile on your face and say it with honey dripping love, but they're going to hear it as an evil statement because it's not what they want to hear.

I want to be told. I'm okay. I'm okay, you're okay. Book that came out back in the seventies. It was very popular, does that surprise you? I'm okay. You're okay. The Bible, you know what the Bible says? God says, I'm okay. You're not okay. Anyway, verse 18,

“And 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 on his left. ¹⁹ And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab the king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said one thing, and another said another. ²⁰ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, ‘I will entice him.’ And the LORD said to him, ‘By what means?’

²¹ And he said, ‘I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And he said, ‘You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.’ ²² Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets. The LORD has declared disaster concerning you.” ²³ Then Zedekiah (the guy with the iron props)...came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, “Which way did the Spirit of the LORD go from me to speak to you?” ²⁴ And Micaiah said, “Behold, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide yourself.”

Wow! Now this is fascinating just from the standpoint that we're getting this glimpse on how the spirit realm affects the physical and emotional, right? We wouldn't know this, apart from what we're reading in this passage. We wouldn't

know that the Lord is holding court, if you will, and the heavenly hosts are around him and He says, who will go before us and entice Ahab to go into war so that he'll fall in battle, and some demonic spirit rises up and says, I'll go, I'll be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets. God says, go.

I don't know if that messes with your theology at all, but don't let it. That doesn't make God evil. That means that even the heavenly hosts that are fallen do God's bidding. He is Sovereign overall, and so, this lying spirit is successful as we're going to see. Again, that's all very interesting, but what's also interesting, Jehoshaphat is hearing this. He's a godly man.

He loves the Lord. He's a seeker of God, and he's hearing all of this, and he knows that all these other 400 yahoos are fakes. He knows it. He knew it enough to say to Ahab, don't you have a genuine prophet of the Lord anywhere around? Well, there's this one guy. Get him! They bring him out. He says what he says, and doesn't, that prophecy is just so beautiful in terms of the revelation and the insight. It has to be resonating in Jehoshaphat's heart. Just like when you and I hear the Word of God, it resonates, right? We hear the Word of God and we go yes, yes and amen! Right?

And we're all sitting back here wondering, why isn't Jehoshaphat standing up and saying, enough already. This has gotten out of hand. This is out of control. Rather than saying, listen Ahab I asked you to consult a true prophet and instead you brought all these prophets of Baal, who presumptuously spoke in the name of the Lord, and then when I pressed you further to bring a true prophet, you basically told me that there was one, but you didn't like him because he never told you what you wanted to hear.

At that point, Jehoshaphat should have stood up and marched back to Jerusalem as fast as he could have gone. But all that comes out of Jehoshaphat's mouth is, oh Ahab, you shouldn't say that. There's a willingness here to compromise, right, for the sake of unity. And the point that I want to bring to you is that unity is a wonderful thing and your God is a God who loves there to be peace between people.

Jesus said, *"blessed are the peacemakers,"* right? And God tells us to live in peace with people insofar as we are able. But there are times when you find yourself wanting it so bad that you're right. And that's what's happening here. And it's sad to see it happen. And it creates danger. Verse 25 says,

"And the king of Israel said, 'Seize Micaiah and take him back to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son, ²⁶ and say, 'Thus says the king,

Put this fellow in prison and feed him with meager rations of bread and water until I return in peace.’” 27 And Micaiah said, “If you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me.” And he said, “Hear, all you peoples!”

Last thing he says is you people who are listening, listen, listen to what I said. If your king comes back to you in victory, then I'm a liar, I'm a false prophet. By the way, again, you're not hearing Jehoshaphat say anything.

“So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat (verse 28) the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. 29 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes (meaning your royal garments).” And the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle.”

See, this is weird. Basically, Ahab is saying when we fight in battle, you look like a king. I'm just going to dress like a common soldier. It's almost like Ahab is trying to thwart the Word of the Lord. It's like he heard it, he's not going to obey it, but he's still going to try to thwart it. I'm going to try to do what I can to mess it up. I'm going to just go, nobody's going to take any notice of me, but you go ahead and put your royal robes on. I mean, he might as well have told him to paint a target on his chest or on his chariot or whatever. Anyway, here's the problem with the plan. Verse 30 tells us that,

“...the king of Syria had commanded the captains of his chariots, “Fight with neither small nor great, but only with the king of Israel.”

In other words, the King of Syria told his soldiers, Hey guys, when we get into battle and things really start going, give up easy conquests of regular soldiers to get to the king. Make your way to the king. He knew if you kill the king, the battle's probably going to be over. And so he says, we're gunning for the king, right? Everybody got it. Here we go. So, verse 31,

“As soon as the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, “It is the king of Israel.” (They thought he was Ahab) So, they turned to fight against him. And Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; God drew them away from him. 32 For as soon as the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.”

I don't know, maybe they thought it was a fake. But you can fool some soldiers, but you can't fool God, can you? Look what it says in verse 33.

“But a certain man drew his bow (look at this) at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate....”

Now, I don't know that much about ancient armor. You'd have to talk to Ken Simerly. He's totally into it. I mean, to the point where he sometimes bores us to tears talking about it, but that's okay we love him. But you've got to know that this is amazing. This is just some random soldier, shooting a random bow, in a random direction but the Lord is in this thing, and not only does it hit a man, it hits him right in between where the armor comes together. That's pretty amazing. I mean, this is like a sin seeking missile. And we're told,

"...Therefore he (and that's referring to Ahab) said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and carry me out of the battle for I'm wounded." ³⁴ And the battle continued that day, and the king of Israel was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians until evening. Then at sunset he died."

Did the lying spirit succeed, enticing him to go to battle and to fall there? Yes, indeed. That's what the Lord said, didn't He? He said, you will succeed).

¹*"Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem."*

But you have to wonder how all these things registered with him. He went there longing for unity. Went into a very ill-conceived battle situation that was a mockery of waiting on the Lord and seeking wisdom, ended up practically losing his life, and then finding out that the King of Israel, in fact, did lose his life in the battle. You just have to wonder, he must have been shaken, but you know what, that didn't stop him from getting a stern lecture. Look what it says in verse 2,

"But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, (now listen to this) "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD." ³ Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asheroth out of the land, (referring to those wooden images of Asherah. And he says, also) and have set your heart to seek God."

Notice that Jehoshaphat put him in himself into a place where now he is under the wrath of God. He's put himself in a compromising situation because he became unequally yoked. with an unbelieving king. It's like, man that was a dumb thing to do. Verse 4,

"Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem. And he went out again among the people, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers."

And I have to wonder when I read verse 4, if this action on the king's part is at least partially resultant from this failed military action, and failed attempt to bring unity, and whatever, against the Syrians with Israel, but it says that he redoubled his efforts to go back and teach the people the Word of God. And it says,

⁵ *“He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, ⁶ and said to the judges, (Now) “Consider what you do, for you judge not for man, you’re judging for the LORD. He is with you in giving judgment. ⁷ Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes.”*

(Or anything like that) “⁸ Moreover, in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem. ⁹ And he charged them: “Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart: ¹⁰ whenever a case comes to you from your brothers who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or rules, then you shall warn them, that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come upon you and your brothers. Thus you shall do, and you will not incur guilt.

¹¹ *And behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the governor of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters, (meaning civil issues) and the Levites will serve you as officers. Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the upright!”*

This is what Jehoshaphat should have been doing anyway, not going to Israel. He should have been staying home, and making sure that people are learning God’s Word, and that his leaders and rulers are doing what they're supposed to be doing with justice and righteousness. Chapter 20,

“After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. ² Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar” (which it, we're told is) that is, Engedi.” Let me put another map up for you here quickly so you can see that.



These, once it's the same map that I showed you before, but you'll notice I've got two arrows there now. The yellow arrow is pointing to the capital city of Jerusalem. The red arrow is pointing to En Gedi. These forces came up from the

south, okay? And they are well into Judean territory. When Jehoshaphat gets the word that these enemies are here, this doesn't mean they've started off from their home.

It means they are close to attacking. This is a panic sort of a situation, okay? And that's what happens. It says in verse three that then Jehoshaphat was afraid. So, what did he do? Did he run off and find a neighboring country who would bolster his military forces and say here's a 700 pounds of gold, come and help us fight. That's what some of the other people did. Asa did that, his father. Look what Jehoshaphat did.

³“...*he set his face to seek the LORD and (along with that he) proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.*”

The entire nation would seek the Lord together. This man is a spiritual leader, not just a king. He's not just a civil ruler. He's a spiritual leader, and this is what spiritual leaders do. Guys, if you're married and you have a family, you're a spiritual leader of your home and this is what spiritual leaders do. They lead. If there a problem, you pray and you get your whole family praying. If you need to have a time of fasting, then that's what you have to do. You get people, you say, sit down, give me your hand, we're going to pray, right? This is, that's what spiritual leaders do.

⁴“*And Judah assembled (Why?) to seek help from the LORD; (Those are important statements. And) from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.* ⁵ *And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court,* ⁶ *and said,*” And by the way, what you're going to read now here, beginning in 6 six and following is one of the most amazing prayers you'll see in the Scriptures. Pay attention, feel free to highlight and tweet the good stuff.

“O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations...”

What is he saying, first thing? Did you check that? This is, you're not just our God. You're their God. They may not recognize you as such, but you are their God, and you rule over those nations just as surely as you rule over this nation. This isn't God against God. That's what the pagans would do. They would fight God against God. But Jehoshaphat, the very first thing is, Lord, you are Sovereign over even this.

What are, what is your enemy? What is your enemy? Do you regularly confess to the Lord that He is Sovereign over the thing that you are praying for deliverance from, whatever that may be? Maybe your enemy is a bad marriage. I don't know. Could be other various needs, physical, emotional, spiritual, whatever, whatever your need is. Do you regularly confess, God, you are Lord over that thing just as much as you are Lord over my life.

That is a statement, a declaration of faith in the Lord. I believe, right? You ever think about the nations today that seem to hate the Lord or have their own crazy ideas of god's. You've got some of the nations in the Middle East, some Islamic nations or whatever, and then you think about Russia, and man they're starting to become a hot mess again. Lest you and I begin to become fearful we should come before the Lord, say, Lord, you are the God over that nation. You are the God who rules all nations.

You are the Sovereign Lord. There's no one, there's no thing, there is no name that trumps Your Name. Your Name is above all names, whether on earth or in heaven or anywhere, your Name is above every other name that can be uttered by man. That's a statement of faith on our part. And I love how Jehoshaphat starts his prayer that way. He says, I'm in the middle of verse 6,

*“...In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.
7 Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?”*

Now, look what he's saying. Look what he's saying here in this part of his prayer. He's recounting the power and the might of God. Didn't you do that Lord? And didn't you do it because you made a promise that this nation belonged to Abraham and his descendants? Now, Lord he's bringing this up. We're being threatened, but you see, this is Your promise. You made a promise and did You not, by Your mighty hand, get rid of the inhabitants of this land? He goes on here, verse 8,

“And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, 9 ‘If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.’”

He's remembering the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. You guys remember? Solomon prayed that beautiful prayer, Lord, if your people get messed up, and a neighboring country starts to come against them, and it looks bleak, then when your people come to you, turn to you with all their hearts, and

pray, and cry out to you for mercy, then hear from heaven, turn your face toward your people and deliver them.

And he went on and talked about various other situations that could possibly come about. There's something powerful about reminding the Lord of His own good promises. Lord, this is a promise You made, amen. Right?

¹⁰ “And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy— ¹¹ behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit.”

Now what's he doing? What is Jehoshaphat doing in his prayer? He's reminding God that when Moses was bringing the nation of Israel right up to the border of the promised land, but they had to pass through Moab and that area, he's reminding God that the Lord told Moses to tell the people, don't attack these people. These are your brothers. These are the descendants of Esau. Leave them alone. I've given them this land. You are not to take an inch of it. You are not to assault them in any way. Leave them alone.

And the nation of Israel was obedient to that. Now look what Jehoshaphat's saying. The country you told us to leave alone, they're coming against us now. What is Jehoshaphat doing? He's putting the ball in God's court. People listen to this and learn from this prayer as often as possible. Put the ball in God's court. Get it out of yours. Get it out of your hands, out of your court, put it into His hands. He's not going to flub the play, okay? Get it out of your hands. Verse 12,

“O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? (And then I love this last statement. Oh, I love this) For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

And I've got to tell you something. I love verse 12 because it's filled with humility, sensitivity, and a total reliance on the Lord. We can't do this. We can't win. Amen. We're not even going to go, we're not, we're coming to you, see, because, this is, it's not going to happen. Do you know that God loves that prayer? When you and I look at the enemy that is in front of us and say, we can't do this.

And again, that could be the enemy could be your marriage, it could be any other issue that's just looming in front of you, that just is so big, some area of sin in your life, or whatever, whatever it is, you tell the Lord, I can't do this.

You can. I can't. I'm waiting on you. I'm resting in you. My hope is in you, Lord, right? I love it. I just love it. That's just a such a beautiful prayer.

¹³ “Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. ¹⁴ And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, (actually that's Benaiah, son of Jeal, son of, you got to know his life, his line there) son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly.

¹⁵ And he said, “Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's. ¹⁶ Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel.”

Look at verse 17,

“You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.” Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.” ¹⁸ Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. ¹⁹ And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

You ever been there? God, you are too much. But I want you to notice something. God told him, I'm going to ask you to go out to battle. You're not going to fight, but I am going to ask you to go out. Strap on your stuff, armor, get your shield, sword. You're going to go out there like you're going to fight, but you're not going to fight. Here's the deal. I want you to step out in faith. You're, and trust me, but I'm telling you, you're not going to have to even swing your sword. It says,

“²⁰ And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed.” ²¹ And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, “Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

Now that's an interesting sort of a deal, right? To have your singers go first. That's confidence, right? That's confidence in the Lord. Alright, all you guys, all you vocalists, all you guys, all you baritones over here, tenors, we're going to go, here we go, march! Right? And they're like, wait a minute, where's the army? Oh, they're going to be behind you. You know why? We are so confident. Listen, you don't lead with your singers if you're thinking in physical terms. If you're not trusting the Lord. Alright. Verse 22, isn't that where I am?

“And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD (that's important. And when they began to sing and praise the Lord) set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. ²³ For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.

(The Jews are just sitting there watching this) ²⁴ *When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the horde, and behold, there were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped. ²⁵ When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them, in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much.*

(Wow!) ²⁶ *On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the LORD. (Beracah means blessing) Therefore, the name of that place has been called the Valley of (Blessing) Beracah to this day. ²⁷ Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. ²⁸ They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD.*

²⁹ *And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. ³⁰ So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around. ³¹ Thus Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He 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.*

³² *He walked in the way of Asa his father and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. ³³ The high places, however, were not taken away; the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their fathers. (People began to rebuild and repopulate some of these high places*

during Jehoshaphat's reign) ³⁴ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Jehu the son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

⁵ After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly. ³⁶ He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber. ³⁷ Then Eliezer the son of (that guy) Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish."

It ends with Jehoshaphat doing another dumb. And it says he got together with the new king of Israel, who was a son of Ahab, and tried to put together some sailing ships, but they never got out of the port, and God said, because you've done this they're going to be destroyed. Now, what you don't read here in 2 Chronicles, but you have to go to 1 Chronicles or excuse me, 1 Kings and we won't do it because we're going to be done here now.

1 Kings tells us that after those ships were wrecked, Ahaziah from Israel again came to Jehoshaphat and asked him to join him in another sailing venture and Jehoshaphat refused. Oh, he learned, finally, to say no! That feels good sometimes, doesn't it? No! It is possible to say no. We're going to stop there.