

Week 4, Day 1 - Jehoshaphat

2 Chronicles 17:1-13 New International Version (NIV)

Jehoshaphat King of Judah

17 Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king and strengthened himself against Israel. **2** He stationed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah and put garrisons in Judah and in the towns of Ephraim that his father Asa had captured.

3 The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him. He did not consult the Baals **4** but sought the God of his father and followed his commands rather than the practices of Israel. **5** The Lord established the kingdom under his control; and all Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so that he had great wealth and honor. **6** His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord; furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherah poles from Judah.

7 In the third year of his reign he sent his officials Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah to teach in the towns of Judah. **8** With them were certain Levites—Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah and Tob-Adonijah—and the priests Elishama and Jehoram. **9** They taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the Law of the Lord; they went around to all the towns of Judah and taught the people.

10 The fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not go to war against Jehoshaphat. **11** Some Philistines brought Jehoshaphat gifts and silver as tribute, and the Arabs brought him flocks: seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred goats.

12 Jehoshaphat became more and more powerful; he built forts and store cities in Judah **13** and had large supplies in the towns of Judah. He also kept experienced fighting men in Jerusalem.

Like father like son?

When you read this account of King Jehoshaphat were you as impressed as I was? What a “get it done” kind of guy he was. He not only strengthened the national security in his country by fortifying the cities and adding additional troops, but he was also a man of God and did much to lead and instruct his people in the ways of God.

The Scripture mentions that Jehoshaphat “followed the ways of his father David.” David was the ultimate king of Israel. A good man following in the footsteps of a father that led him in the right direction would make perfect sense. That is supposed to be how it works, or so it would seem. David was considered “father” of the kings of Israel and Judah; however, you also see in the Scripture the

reference to Asa. Asa was Jehoshaphat's biological father, and he was a far different man than King David (read chapter 16).

We can come from godly parents who did everything right to lead us to the Lord, or we can come from parents who neither called on the Lord (prayed) or taught us to do so. Neither determines our spiritual future. It comes down to us and how much we are willing to put into it. We have no guarantees of spiritual excellence because our parents were saints, nor are we not destined to be spiritual babes because our parents didn't seek Him. Like Jehoshaphat, we have been adopted by the Ultimate King. Isn't that awesome?

Week 4, Day 2 Read II Chronicles 18

2 Chronicles 18 (NIV)

Micaiah Prophecies Against Ahab

18 Now Jehoshaphat had great wealth and honor, and he allied himself with Ahab by marriage. **2** Some years later he went down to see Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle for him and the people with him and urged him to attack Ramoth Gilead. **3** Ahab king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?"

Jehoshaphat replied, "I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will join you in the war." **4** But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the Lord."

5 So the king of Israel brought together the prophets—four hundred men—and asked them, "Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I not?"

"Go," they answered, "for God will give it into the king's hand."

6 But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no longer a prophet of the Lord here whom we can inquire of?"

7 The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah."

"The king should not say such a thing," Jehoshaphat replied.

8 So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once."

9 Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. **10** Now Zedekiah son of Kenaanah had made iron horns, and he declared, "This is what the Lord says: 'With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.'"

11 All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. "Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious," they said, "for the Lord will give it into the king's hand."

12 The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the other prophets without exception are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably."

13 But Micaiah said, "As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what my God says."

14 When he arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I not?"

"Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for they will be given into your hand."

15 The king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?"

16 Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the Lord said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'"

17 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?"

18 Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing on his right and on his left. **19** And the Lord said, ‘Who will entice Ahab king of Israel into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’

“One suggested this, and another that. **20** Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the Lord and said, ‘I will entice him.’

“‘By what means?’ the Lord asked.

21 “‘I will go and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,’ he said.

“‘You will succeed in enticing him,’ said the Lord. ‘Go and do it.’

22 “So now the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours. The Lord has decreed disaster for you.”

23 Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. “Which way did the spirit from [a] the Lord go when he went from me to speak to you?” he asked.

24 Micaiah replied, “You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room.”

25 The king of Israel then ordered, “Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king’s son, **26** and say, ‘This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.’”

27 Micaiah declared, “If you ever return safely, the Lord has not spoken through me.” Then he added, “Mark my words, all you people!”

Ahab Killed at Ramoth Gilead

28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. **29** The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes.” So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.

30 Now the king of Aram had ordered his chariot commanders, “Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel.” **31** When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, “This is the king of Israel.” So they turned to attack him, but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him. God drew them away from him, **32** for when the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel, they stopped pursuing him.

33 But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the breastplate and the scale armor. The king told the chariot driver, “Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I’ve been wounded.” **34** All day long the battle raged, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans until evening. Then at sunset he died.

Week 4, Day 3

2 Chronicles 20:1-12 New International Version (NIV)

Jehoshaphat Defeats Moab and Ammon

20 *After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.*

2 *Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom,]from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). **3** Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. **4** The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.*

5 *Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard **6** and said:*

*"Lord, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. **7** Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? **8** They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, **9** 'If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.'*

10 *"But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. **11** See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. **12** Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."*

We have been learning a lot from kind King Jehoshaphat. As you read in yesterday's devotional, Jehoshaphat wasn't without mistakes. Though I believe his intentions were good, the consequences of his mistakes were large. In chapter 17 Jehoshaphat enters into a military alliance with the evil King Ahab, going against all the warnings from the Lord. The results are disastrous, and God is not pleased. The threat of approaching armies that are far too powerful for Jehoshaphat to defeat forces him to cry out to God. Read his prayer again in verses 6 – 12. Jehoshaphat did not hold back. He let God know that he knew he and his people would perish if God did not intervene. In the end, his words were, "we do not know what to do but our eyes are on you." What a statement of faith!

When you find yourself in a difficult situation, do you dig your heels in and try harder? Do you throw up your hands in fear or confusion? Or do you cry out to God?

He wants you to know that He is enough even when you are not.

He is waiting to hear you cry out to Him from your heart. He has arms big enough to handle anything you are dealing with. He wants you to know that He is enough, even when you are not. But He won't force you to depend on Him. Like Jehoshaphat, if you are determined to go your own way, He will let you go. But when you cry out to God, letting Him know that you are not able to handle the consequences, He is faithful, even when we are not.

(Tomorrow's reading reveals all that happened as a result of Jehoshaphat's appeal.)

Week 4, Day 4 Read II Chronicles 20:13-21

2 Chronicles 20:13-21 New International Version (NIV)

13 All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord.

14 Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.

15 He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. 16 Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. 17 You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.'"

18 Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord. 19 Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

20 Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful." 21 After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying:

"Give thanks to the Lord,
for his love endures forever."

Week 4, Day 5

II Chronicles 20: 22 – 30

22 As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. **23** The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

24 When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped. **25** So Jehoshaphat and his men went to carry off their plunder, and they found among them a great amount of equipment and clothing[d] and also articles of value—more than they could take away. There was so much plunder that it took three days to collect it. **26** On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berakah, where they praised the Lord. This is why it is called the Valley of Berakah[e] to this day.

27 Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the Lord had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies. **28** They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the Lord with harps and lyres and trumpets.

29 The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. **30** And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.

The scene from today's reading is hard to imagine. First of all, unless you are someone who has served in the military, it's difficult to imagine that kind of violence and bloodshed. All that aside, were you blown away by the way God fought for Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah? They only stood and watched, yet the enemy was completely destroyed before their eyes.

They had seen God's deliverance before. They had heard the stories of deliverance past down through generations, but this time the charge was to them. They were the ones needing deliverance and asking for it.

I came away from these stories of Jehoshaphat's reign asking myself some searching questions. I encourage you to ask them too:

- When faced with a difficult, seemingly impossible situation, would you have the faith to stand and watch for the Lord to fight for you?

- Would you cry out to Him first, and then do what He directed you to do, or would you handle it first, and then ask Him to bless what you have done?
- Can you praise God even in the middle of your struggle? Before the diagnosis? Before the rescue? Before the answer to your prayer? Even when the answer is different than you had hoped?
- Read verses 27 & 28 again. When you receive rescue or deliverance from God, are you filled with joy and thanksgiving, or do you rush on to the next thing, scarcely thinking about where your help came from?

Your “enemy” may not be an approaching army, and God may not deliver you quite the way He delivered Jehoshaphat, but He still wants you to rely on Him, praise Him, be filled with joy when delivered, and thank Him.