

THE CHOIR THAT WON A BATTLE

BIBLE TEXT : II Chronicles 19:1-11; 20:1-30

LESSON 306 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Chronicles 19:1-11

¹ And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

² And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore *is* wrath upon thee from before the LORD.

³ Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

⁴ And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beersheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

⁵ And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,

⁶ And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who *is* with you in the judgment.

⁷ Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do *it*: for *there is* no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

⁸ Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.

⁹ And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.

¹⁰ And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and *so* wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass.

¹¹ And, behold, Amariah the chief priest *is* over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites *shall be* officers

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

God's Mercy

Jehoshaphat returned to his home after the battle against the Syrians. According to the words of prophecy, Ahab, the King of Israel, was slain in that battle. The Lord had spared Jehoshaphat's life when he was surrounded by the enemy. God had shown mercy to Jehoshaphat by permitting him to return home in safety.

Appearance of Evil

The armies of the Children of Israel and Judah were scattered. They were not victorious in their battle. Jehu, the son of a prophet, told Jehoshaphat why they had failed, and that wrath was upon him from the Lord. Jehoshaphat had joined forces with Ahab, a man who hated Micaiah, a Prophet of the Lord, and who called Elijah, another Prophet, his enemy (**2 Chronicles 18:7** ⁷ *And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. 1 Kings 21:20* ²⁰ *And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.*). By making an alliance with Ahab, it appeared that Jehoshaphat was helping Ahab in his sin and that Jehoshaphat was loving this man who hated God. Before this time, Jehoshaphat had shown that he wanted to do what was right. He had prepared his heart to seek God. He had reformed Judah by taking away the groves of idolatrous worship. But now he made a mistake in agreeing with Ahab and in going to battle with him.

The Psalmist David said that he hated those who hated God, that he considered the enemies of God to be his enemies, and that he had no fellowship with the wicked (**Psalms 139:21-22** ²¹ *Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? 22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Psalm 26:5* ⁵ *I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked*). From the writings of the Apostle Paul we read: "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good"; and, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (Romans 12:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:22). Jehoshaphat failed to do that, and made a great mistake.

Back to God

Jehoshaphat returned to his duty of ruling in Judah. He went through the land "and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers." Perhaps his alliance with idolatrous Ahab had given the impression that he approved of idols. Lest his association with Ahab have the wrong influence, Jehoshaphat went through the land to reform the people. If there had been any damage done to his people by his joining forces with Ahab, he went about to repair and to restore Judah to worship the Lord.

Judges

Jehoshaphat established courts of justice throughout the land. To the judges who were appointed to rule the courts, he gave specific orders. He reminded them that they were judging for the

before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.

2 Chronicles 20:1-37

¹ It came to pass after this also, *that* the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them *other* beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle.

² Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they *be* in Hazazontamar, which *is* Engedi.

³ And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

⁴ And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask *help* of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

⁵ And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court,

⁶ And said, O LORD God of our fathers, *art* not thou God in heaven? and rulest *not* thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand *is there not* power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

⁷ *Art* not thou our God, *who* didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

⁸ And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying,

⁹ If, *when* evil cometh upon us, *as* the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name *is* in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

¹⁰ And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not;

¹¹ Behold, *I say*, *how* they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.

¹² O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes *are* upon thee.

¹³ And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

Lord, and that they were accountable to Him. He warned them to give righteous judgment over the people — there was to be no partiality shown and there were to be no bribes accepted. Jehoshaphat said to the judges, "Let the fear of the LORD be upon you."

For the Lord

God's people today are not set up as judges one over the other but they are given privileges to work for the Lord. What they do they do for the honour and glory of God. Their works are not done especially to please men but to please God. Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31). When children are given the privilege of singing in the Sunday School chorus, they sing heartily unto the Lord. Christian children know that God is watching, and if they are faithful the Lord may give them other privileges to work for Him. When Christian children are given opportunities to help at church — like handing out the books and papers, straightening the chairs, running errands, and even caring for smaller children — they act obediently and quietly as if the Lord Himself had asked them to do it for Him.

The Law of God

In Jerusalem, too, Jehoshaphat set up judges. These were Levites, priests, and chiefs of the fathers of Israel. Jehoshaphat told them to do everything "in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart." Two men were appointed over all the judges. Amariah, the chief priest, was in charge of the matters of the Lord. Zebadiah, the ruler of the house of Judah, was placed over all the king's matters. These two groups of judges were to handle the judgments that arose among the people, "that they trespass not against the LORD." The one, with Amariah at its head, ruled according to the Church. The other group was to settle matters concerning the law of the land. For example, today in most countries there are laws to govern the speed which automobiles should travel, to specify what things cannot be sent through the mails, and what things may or may not be done. All people do not obey God's law; but Christians should obey not only the law of God, but also the laws of the land, so long as those laws do not conflict with the law of God (**Acts 5:29** ²⁹ **Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.**). A Christian is a good citizen.

Invaders

When Jehoshaphat had provided justice and the worship of the Lord for his people, it might have been expected that they would have peace and prosperity. Instead, word of an invasion came to Jehoshaphat. A mixed group from the children of Moab, Ammon, and others, planned to invade Judah. In times past, Jehoshaphat had had a great army prepared for war (**2 Chronicles 17:13-18** ³ **And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men of war, mighty men of valour, were in Jerusalem.** ¹⁴ **And these are the numbers of them according to the house of their fathers: Of Judah, the captains of thousands; Adnah the chief, and with him mighty men of valour three hundred thousand.** ¹⁵ **And next to him was Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand.** ¹⁶ **And next him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the LORD; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour.** ¹⁷ **And of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him armed men with bow and shield two hundred thousand.** ¹⁸ **And next him was Jehozabad, and with him an hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war.**). At this time, no mention is made about assembling an army and equipment for the battle. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout all the land of Judah. Not only the king and the judges but also all the people were admonished to seek God. A

¹⁴ Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation;

¹⁵ And he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle *is* not yours, but God's.

¹⁶ To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

¹⁷ Ye shall not *need* to fight in this *battle*: set yourselves, stand ye *still*, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD *will be* with you.

¹⁸ And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

¹⁹ And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

²⁰ And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

²¹ And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

²² And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

²³ For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy *them*: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

²⁴ And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they *were* dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

²⁵ And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them,

fast is for the purpose of seeking God in a particular matter. In a fast, the people pray and do not even take time to eat, because they are concerned about seeking God. (See Lesson 267.)

Prayer

Jehoshaphat stood before the people who had gathered at the house of the Lord, the temple which Solomon built (Lesson 257). As Jehoshaphat prayed, he acknowledged that God had all power and might, so that none could withstand Him. He reminded God that the land had been promised to Abraham and his seed. He remembered how Solomon had prayed at the dedication of the very temple in which they were gathered. Solomon had asked God to hear the prayer that was made in that place (**2 Chronicles 6:40** ⁴⁰ *Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.*). He had asked that in time of famine, pestilence, and war, whether the prayer was that of one man or of all His people, God would "maintain their cause" (I Kings 8:37, 44, 45). When Solomon had thus prayed, God answered: fire came down from Heaven, and consumed the sacrifices; and "the glory of the LORD" filled the place (II Chronicles 7:1). The Lord said to Solomon, "Mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this place" (II Chronicles 7:15).

Jehoshaphat recalled that the Children of Israel had been obedient in this matter while travelling through the wilderness. God had commanded them not to distress, meddle with, or fight with the Moabites, Ammonites, or the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir (**Deuteronomy 2:4** ⁴ *And command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore: Deuteronomy 2:9* ⁹ *And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession. Deuteronomy 2:19* ¹⁹ *And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession.*). Now these very armies were trying to drive God's people out of the land. Jehoshaphat asked God to be judge, and said, "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee."

Seeking God First

In the time of trouble, some people try the advice of friends, their own strength, and dependence upon men's ways. Sometimes, after all these things fail, as a last resort they will turn to God for help. How much better to pray and seek God first! The Bible says: "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:8); "O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" (Psalm 84:12); "Whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25). What do you do in the time of trouble — get friends together to help you? form a plan to out trick the others? Talk your way out? Or do you pray and seek God first?

The Answer

The Lord sent an answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer. He spoke through Jahaziel, the Levite of the sons of Asaph, the singer, musician, and writer of some of the Psalms. Jahaziel spoke these words to all Judah: "Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you." Upon hearing the words of encouragement, Jehoshaphat and all the people worshiped the Lord. The Levites

they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much.

²⁶ And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day.

²⁷ Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies.

²⁸ And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD.

²⁹ And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel.

³⁰ So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.

"stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high." These people worshiped and praised the Lord as soon as they had received the promise of help and deliverance. They believed that God was able to accomplish what He had promised.

Faith

Some people are so fearful that they must be completely delivered before they believe and thank God. In the Bible we are told, that, "the just shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38). God is pleased when we believe Him, because "we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). Jesus said to some blind men, "According to your faith be it unto you." And their eyes were opened (Matthew 9:29, 30). Jesus also said, "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23).

Deliverance and Spoils

Jehoshaphat told the people to believe in the Lord, and declared that they would prosper. They prepared to go to battle, with the singers in front of the army. When they began to sing and to praise the Lord, saying, "Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever," the Lord began to work among the enemy. There was an ambush among them. The enemies began to fall on each other; "every one helped to destroy another" until all were killed, and "none escape."

Jehoshaphat and his people had done no fighting, yet they were the victors. How different was this battle from the one in which they trusted in men and were scattered! This time the battle was the Lord's, and in a strange way the armies of the enemies were destroyed. The spoils of the battle were for the children of Judah. There was an abundance of spoil, including precious jewels, which they gathered for themselves. God not only delivered Judah but also enriched them with so much spoil from the battle that it took them three days to gather it.

Jehoshaphat and his people appreciated what God had done for them. Even before they returned home, they gathered to thank God and bless His name. Then they returned with joy because God had "made them to rejoice over their enemies." Whenever God helps us and sends deliverance from pain, trouble, temptation, or danger, we can and should thank Him immediately. We need not wait until the hour of family worship. We need not wait until we can go to church. Wherever we are, we should breathe a prayer of thanks and praise to God. The Lord can hear, whether our praises are spoken aloud or silently in our hearts. Then we, too, will return to our homes with joy.

Word soon was spread throughout the land that God had fought against the enemies of Judah. The people feared the Lord because they knew that He had worked for His people. "So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about."

QUESTIONS

1. Why did it seem that Jehoshaphat loved those who hated God?
2. Why did Jehoshaphat go through the land of Judah?
3. How were the judges to rule?
4. Over what two kinds of affairs were there judges?
5. Why did Jehoshaphat proclaim a fast?
6. What is a fast?
7. Where did they gather to pray?
8. Upon whom were they depending for deliverance?
9. Who fought for Jehoshaphat and his people?
10. Why did the people praise the Lord? When did they praise the Lord?