

JEHOVAH IN THE LIFE AND REIGN OF JEHOShAPHAT.

"By me kings reign and princes decree justice." Proverbs 8:15.

In Proverbs chapter 8 wisdom is personified, apparently foreshadowing Christ, the Infinite Power of God and the Wisdom of God. In this chapter this Wisdom of God is represented as saying, "By me kings reign and princes decree justice." The story of Jehoshaphat is an excellent commentary on these words in Proverbs. Read the story for yourself as it is found especially in 2 Chron. chapters 17-20, and find there Jehovah in the life and reign of Jehoshaphat.

I. Jehoshaphat's Personal Religion.

Jehoshaphat evidently put God first in his personal life. "And he walked in all the way of ^{as} his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah." 1 Kings 22:43a. In the first paragraph about him in 2 Chronicles, the fullest account, are these words, "And Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto the Baalim, but sought to the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. Therefore Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand." At the very front door of his life's story we have this key hanging on the outside. It is a wonderful national blessing when a Jehoshaphat gets into the White House.

II. Jehoshaphat's Righteous Leadership.

With a few notable exceptions the leadership of Jehoshaphat was righteous in character. His was a reign outstanding for the place Jehovah had in it, as will be seen in a quick review of twelve features or events of his reign of 25 years in Jerusalem.

1. He built military defenses. In this connection we are told that Jehovah was with him, and that Jehovah established his kingdom. Defense against aggression is recorded and not disapproved.

2. He crusaded against idolatry.

a. "And the remnant of the sodomites he put away out of the land." 1 Kings 22:46

b. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast put away the Asheroth out of the land, and hast set thy heart to seek God." 2 Chron. 19:3

His crusade against idolatry which was so strongly entrenched in the land was not entirely successful, for near the end of the record are these words: "Nevertheless howbeit the high places were not taken away; neither as yet had the people set their hearts unto the God of their fathers." He did not lead them as far as he went himself. There are outstanding sins in our country today that should be given a frontal attack—Sabbath desecration, intoxicating drink, shameful immorality.

3. He sponsored Bible conferences. He sent princes and priests and Levites thru the country to do the teaching. "And they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of Jehovah with them; and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people." Surely such work as this is sorely needed in our country today.

4. He had influence with the foreign powers. Following the record of this teaching of the law is this interesting statement: "And the fear of Jehovah fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war upon Jehoshaphat." Following his victory over Moab and Ammon this fear of Jehovah on the part of his enemies is again evident. "And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of the countries, when they heard that Jehovah fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about." He experienced the truth expressed by the proverb which says, "When a man's ways please the Lord He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

She was *Attaliah* - *that wicked* 2
woman -

5. His alliance with Ahab. Here is the most notable exception to his righteous reign. "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and he joined affinity with Ahab." He even gave his daughter in marriage to the son of Ahab. This unholy alliance was more of a curse than a blessing, as is always the case of such entangling alliances- a lesson that our country needs sorely to learn and follow today. At the same time Jehovah did not forsake Jehoshaphat even in the midst of this entanglement, and Jehoshaphat did not forget God. In regard to the proposition of Ahab that Ramoth-gilead be attacked Jehoshaphat sought the word of Jehovah thru the prophet of Jehovah. Although Ahab was killed in the expedition, the life of Jehoshaphat was spared. "And Jehovah helped him; and God moved them to depart from him." However, his whole affinity with wicked king Ahab was the occasion for his receiving a severe rebuke after his return to Jerusalem. The record continues as follows: "And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in peace to Jerusalem. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldst thou help the wicked, and love them that hate Jehovah? for this thing wrath is upon thee from before Jehovah. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast put away the Asheroth out of the land, and hast set thy heart to seek God."

6. His personal evangelism. Over against this affinity with Ahab there comes a marked advance in his righteous leadership. "And he went out again among the people from Beer-sheba to the hill-country of Ephraim, and brought them back unto Jehovah, the God of their fathers." Here was a most important home mission enterprise led by the king himself.

7. His righteous administration of justice. He set judges in the land, and his charge to them indicated his desire for the exercise of righteous judgment. He said to those appointed to judge: "Consider what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for Jehovah; and He is with you in the judgment. Now therefore let the fear of Jehovah be upon you; take heed and do it; for there is no iniquity with Jehovah our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes.— Thus shall ye do in the fear of Jehovah, faithfully, and with a perfect heart." "Deal courageously, and Jehovah be with the good." Here are most practical words for Washington, D.C. and every state capital, and every court of justice in the land. In the spirit of these words the prophet Amos would say, "But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

8. Victory over Moab and Ammon. Here is perhaps the spiritual high water mark in the reign of Jehoshaphat, where victory over the enemy comes thru prayer and singing praise unto Jehovah. A great multitude of the enemy came up from beyond the sea, and had arrived at Engedi. The king and the people of Judah immediately set themselves to seek Jehovah. The king's public prayer in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem at this time is one of the great prayers of the Old Testament. It will repay our careful reading and study. It concludes with these words: "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." The spirit of this prayer was not limited to just the king. Following his prayer we are told that "all Judah stood before Jehovah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children." Please note especially that their little ones and their children were at this prayer-meeting. I am thankful I was taken to prayer-meeting from my childhood. One reason so few young people of high school age are in our church services today is because they were not taken to church in their childhood. With united prayer the final preparation to meet the enemy continued as the prophet, Jahaziel, upon the Spirit of Jehovah came in the midst of the assembly. Some of the prophet's words of encouragement and inspiration were: "Thus saith Jehovah unto you, Fear not ye, neither be dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.—stand still ye, and see the salvation of Jehovah with you— for Jehovah is with you." This was attended by the worship of Jehovah on the part of the people. The king then added his exhortation to the people: "Believe in Jehovah your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."

"And when he (the king) had taken counsel with the people, he appointed them that should sing unto Jehovah, and give praise in holy array, as they went out before the army, and say, Give thanks unto Jehovah; for his loving-kindness endureth forever. And when they began to sing and praise Jehovah set liers in wait against the children of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir that were come against Judah; and they were smitten." The enemy was routed and despoiled. Compare Koreans singing "A Mighty Fortress."

9. The valley of Blessing. Following the victory Jehovah was not forgotten, but He was the active cause of their thanksgiving and praise. "They assembled in the valley of Beracah; for there they blessed Jehovah; therefore the name of that place was called the valley of Beracah unto this day. Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with great joy; for Jehovah had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of Jehovah." What a wonderful way that was to celebrate victory over an enemy! God gave rest and quiet.

10. Alliance with Ahaziah. Jehoshaphat's weakness shown in his affinity with Ahab comes to light again when he joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel; "the same did very wickedly: and he joined himself with him to make ships for a maritime enterprise together, a leading motive probably being to get gold from Ophir. For this enterprise Jehoshaphat was again rebuked by the prophet who said to him, "Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, Jehovah hath destroyed thy works. And the ships were broken, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish."

11. Alliance with Jehoram. It would be thought that ~~for~~ this time Jehoshaphat would have learned his lesson about the evil of unholy alliances, just as we would have thought America would have learned. However, when Jehoram king of Israel asked him to join him to fight Moab, he assented "in spite of the prophetic censures of his alliance with Ahab and Ahaziah; perhaps because he was anxious to inflict further punishment on the Moabites for their inroad into Judah (2 Chron 20), and to prevent any recurrence of the same." (Kell) Although the king of Moab was defeated "there came great wrath upon Israel; and they departed from him, and returned to their own land." However, even in this experience there were "good things found in Jehoshaphat." While Jehoram despaired of the situation before the enemy Jehoshaphat put his dependence upon God. He sought thru the prophet the guidance of God. Also the very presence of Jehoshaphat had a good influence upon the prophet Elisha. At this time Jehovah miraculously saved Judah and Israel from water shortage.

12. The ministry of the prophets of Jehovah to Jehoshaphat. God blessed Jehoshaphat particularly as He does many a head of a nation thru the ministry of the prophets sent to them. Hazekiah had his Isaiah, and Eisenhower his Louis Brandeis, and ~~Willy Graham~~ ^{Willy Graham}. Jehoshaphat had Micaiah, Jehu, Jahaziel, Eliezer, and Elisha. It is significant to note that the first mentioned prophet was for guidance, the second for rebuke, the third for encouragement and inspiration, the fourth for rebuke, and the fifth for ~~guidance~~ ^{guidance}. All of this is needed for the promotion of a righteous leadership.

To sum up the whole story let us observe finally that Jehovah in the life and reign of Jehoshaphat was evidenced particularly in His Presence, His Power, His Grace, His Wrath, and His Guidance.

- 1) His Presence. "And Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat." The gospel of the King of kings concludes with His words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."
- 2) His power. "Therefore Jehovah established the kingdom in his hands."
"Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth."
- 3) His grace. "Give thanks unto Jehovah; for His lovingkindness endureth forever."
"For the grace of God hath appeared bringing salvation."
- 4) His wrath. "For this thing the wrath of God is upon thee from before Jehovah."
"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness."
- 5) Guidance. "But he sought to the God of his father." "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.— He guideth me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake."