

2 Chron 17-20.12

Good evening and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles 17?

Last week we saw the sad ending of the rule of king Asa. Recall Asa started out well, but finished terribly.

Tonight we get introduced to a new king of Judah named Jehoshaphat. And like his dad Asa, he too was a godly king. But as we continue to see in our study's, even though a person or leader may be godly, it doesn't mean they are perfect. But when we blow it, we can come back to our Lord

The title of tonight's message is Eyes Up!
Let's pray

If you were to tell a person who is struggling of an encouraging book in the Bible, where would you send them? Perhaps philippians, the prison epistle. Or the psalms, overflowing with encouraging words for those who are struggling.

But 2 Chronicles is also a super encouraging book, for in it we see time and time again of God's faithfulness, especially to those who turn their hearts to God in times of difficulty.

1-5

1 Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place, and strengthened himself against Israel. Remember the divided nation...

2 And he placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken.

3 Now the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals, 4 but sought the God^[fn] of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel. 5

Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah gave presents to Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and honor in abundance. Because Jehoshaphat trusted God, God lifted him up and exalted him as a king. **Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.**

6-9

6 And his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.

7 Also in the third year of his reign he sent his leaders, Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. 8 And with them he sent Levites: Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah—the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. 9 So they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the LORD with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people. These are important verses. These men each had the important role of bringing the word of God to the people, especially those who lived outside of Jerusalem.

Today there is a famine in the land, because there is a lack of the teaching of the word of God.

10-11

10 And the fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat. 11 Also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver as tribute; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred male goats.

So here we're seeing the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28, where God promised to exalt the nation of Hebrews as long as they sought the Lord and put Him first

12-16

12 So Jehoshaphat became increasingly powerful, and he built fortresses and storage cities in Judah. 13 He had much property in the cities of Judah; and the men of war, mighty men of valor, were in Jerusalem.

14 These are their numbers, according to their fathers' houses. Of Judah, the captains of thousands: Adnah the captain, and with him three hundred thousand mighty men of valor; 15 and next to him was Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and eighty thousand; 16 and next to him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to the LORD, and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor. Amasiah is a man of whom we don't know much about other than this description- he 'willingly offered himself unto the Lord.' What a wonderful epitaph!

17-19

17 Of Benjamin: Eliada a mighty man of valor, and with him two hundred thousand men armed with bow and shield; 18 and next

to him was Jehozabad, and with him one hundred and eighty thousand prepared for war. 19 These served the king, besides those the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

Jehoshaphat has a mighty kingdom and a formidable army. And now the northern kingdom of Israel takes notice.

Chapter 18 (1 Kin. 22:1–28)

1 Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab. Here's a name you recall from the northern kingdom of Israel. Remember King Ahab, and his wicked wife Jezebel?

Jehoshaphat was a godly king, but here he makes a terrible mistake. He makes an ally with the wicked, idolatrous king of Israel.

Now in those days the linking of nations by the bond of marriage was common-it helped strengthen kingdoms and made allies, and reduced friction with potential enemies.

But just because a practice is common and socially accepted it doesn't mean a child of God should do it! The wisest strategy for the protection of Jehoshaphat's kingdom was trusting in God.

2-3

2 After some years he went down to visit Ahab in Samaria; and Ahab killed sheep and oxen in abundance for him and the people who were with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth Gilead. 3 So Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?"

And he answered him, "I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will be with you in the war." King Ahab of Israel asked King Jehoshaphat of Judah to help him in Israel's dispute against Syria. This made some sense because Ramoth Gilead was only 40 miles from Jerusalem. But again, just because it's accepted, even logical, doesn't mean it's of the Lord.

But remember, Jehosphaht, even though he's making a terrible mistake, still loves God.

4-6

4 Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the LORD today."

5 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?"

So they said, "Go up, for God will deliver it into the king's hand."

6 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?"^[fn] Jehoshaphat is no dummy.

He quickly recognizes that the 400 prophets Ahab gathered together were 'yes' men who would simply tell Ahab what he wanted to hear. But Jehoshaphat doesn't want yes men, he wants the real deal, so he asks is there no true prophet of the Lord?

7 So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil. He is Micaiah the son of Imla."

And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!" Ahab hated this prophet because he always spoke the truth.

8-9

8 Then the king of Israel called one of his officers and said, “Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly!”

9 The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, clothed in their robes, sat each on his throne; and they sat at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. These are the false prophets.

10-11

10 Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.’”

11 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, “Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king’s hand.” It was common for Old Testament prophets to use props or visual aids in their prophecies. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were both known for these living parables. But obviously even false prophets employed these tactics.

Zedekiah comes into the palace prancing in with iron horns, telling the king to gore the Syrians. The other prophets chime in with the same message.

Just because a speaker is entertaining and declares ‘thus says the Lord’ doesn’t really mean that’s from the Lord.

12 Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, “Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Therefore please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.”The king’s

messenger tries to prep Micaiah - “for once don’t be controversial. Blend in with the other voices. Go along with the majority. We need a unanimous verdict.”

But listen to the prophet’s reply to this ‘coaching’.

13 And Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak.” There are a lot of pastors and churches today that’ll tell you what you want to hear. But a true man of God will speak only what the Lord speaks.

14 Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?” And he said, “Go and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand!”To Ahab’s shock, Micaiah agrees with the false prophets. And this raises some suspicion in Ahab’s mind. It’s quite likely that Micaiah said this in a sarcastic way because look at Ahab’s response...

15 So the king said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”King Ahab demanded that Micaiah tell nothing but the truth — which Ahab believed and hoped was the message of the 400 other prophets.

16 Then 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 house in peace.’”The vision implies that King Ahab will die in battle

17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?”Ahab says, “There he goes again!”

18-22

18 Then 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 His left. 19 And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. 20 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' 21 So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him and also prevail; go out and do so.' 22 Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you." Since the right hand was the place of favor, this may indicate that God spoke to both faithful and fallen angels.

I've heard it said, and I'm sure you have too, how Christians will say that God can't allow evil in His presence. That sounds nice, but it's not biblically accurate

Some people forget that Satan and his fellow fallen angels have access to heaven **Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan^[fn] also came among them.**

and

Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our

brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

These passages show that God can allow evil in His presence, but of course God has no fellowship with evil and one day all evil will be removed from His presence **Revelation 20:14-15** **14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.[fn]** **15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.**

So here in these verses God wanted to bring judgment against Ahab, so the Lord asked this group of the host of heaven for a volunteer to lead Ahab into battle.

Apparently, one of the fallen angels volunteered for this task. Since Ahab wanted to be deceived, God would give him what He wanted, using a willing fallen angel who worked through willing unfaithful prophets.

23 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?"in a dramatic moment, this false prophet Zedekiah smacks Micaiah and says hey-which way did the spirit go now?

24 And Micaiah said, "Indeed you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!"Again speaking of the defeat in battle.

25 Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and return him 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 bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I return in peace."' ' Notice how Micaiah's faithfulness to God rewarded? Sent to prison, given very meager rations.

27 But Micaiah said, "If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Take heed, all you people!" Micaiah makes one final and ultimate appeal. He was willing to be judged by whether his prophecy came to pass or not. Talk about faith!!!

And remember-Godly king Jehoshaphat is watching all of this unfold. So how does he respond?

28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. Why Jehoshaphat goes with Ahab we don't know. He should've turned back. He knows he's going out to fight a battle, knowing he's on the losing side. But it gets worse!

29 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle. Ahab decides to wear the infantryman's fatigues so he won't be an easy target. But he tells Jehoshaphat to dress up in his royal robes. And Jehosophat does!

30-32

30 Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots who were with him, saying, "Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel."

31 So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, "It is the king of Israel!" Therefore they surrounded

him to attack; but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God diverted them from him. 32 For so it was, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. As the only identifiable king in the battle, Jehoshaphat found himself quickly in danger. He cried out unto the LORD and was rescued when they turned back from pursuing him.

Even in our foolishness we can still cry out to the Lord!!!
Lets finish the chapter

33 Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded." 34 The battle increased that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Syrians until evening; and about the time of sunset he died. Ahab, mortally wounded by this arrow, is propped up in his chariot, motivating the troops. But as the minutes turned to hours, wicked king Ahab dies.

Chapter 19

1 Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem. This was the mercy of God. Jehoshaphat, clothed in the robes of the king and targeted for death by the army of Syria, should have been killed in battle. Yet he cried out to the LORD and was preserved, returning safely to his house in Jerusalem.

And now God rebukes Jehoshaphat through Jehu the prophet.

2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD is upon you. Jehu exposed the sin in Jehoshaphat. He professed to love God, but he also demonstrated love to those who hate the LORD. He should never have entered his personal and military alliances with Ahab and the kingdom of Israel.

Jehoshaphat should have read and considered **Psalm 97:10: You who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.**

3 Nevertheless good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God.” Look at the mercy of God. God knew that Jehoshaphat didn’t approve of all evil.

How does Jehoshaphat respond?

4 So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem; and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD God of their fathers.

Jehoshaphat’s focus is now solely on bringing the citizens back to worshipping God.

5-7

5 Then he set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, 6 and said to the judges, “Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. 7 Now therefore, let the

fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes.” There is no partiality with God. He’s not impressed with our titles, or how many letters we have after our name. And we can’t bribe God either. His judgments are true, and perfect.

Jehoshoat’s instructions for these judges are to judge in the same manner that God judges. Let’s finish the chapter 8-11

8 Moreover in Jerusalem, for the judgment of the LORD and for controversies, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests, and some of the chief fathers of Israel, when they returned to Jerusalem.^[fn] 9 And he commanded them, saying, “Thus you shall act in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and with a loyal heart: 10 Whatever case comes to you from your brethren who dwell in their cities, whether of bloodshed or offenses against law or commandment, against statutes or ordinances, you shall warn them, lest they trespass against the LORD and wrath come upon you and your brethren. Do this, and you will not be guilty. 11 And take notice: 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 will be officials before you. Behave courageously, and the LORD will be with the good.” Jehoshaphat has apparently learned his lesson, and instructs the judges to rule as God would rule.

Chapter 20 we’re only gonna go through verse 12

1 It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites,[fn] came to battle against Jehoshaphat. Have you noticed after great victories and seeking God that the enemy rises up and threatens us?
2-3

2 Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, “A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria;[fn] and they are in Hazazon Tamar” (which is En Gedi). 3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. Jehoshaphat called the nation to express their humility and total dependence upon God through a public fast — that is, abstaining from all food for a period of time (typically a day or more) and drinking only water.

In Mark 9:28-29, Jesus explained that prayer and fasting together were a source of significant spiritual power. It isn't as if prayer and fasting make us more worthy to be blessed or do God's work. Fasting focuses our priorities on God—it's a period of undivided and intensive devotion to the Lord and to the concerns of spiritual life. It's to enjoy a time of uninterrupted communion with our Father. Fasting is a powerful expression of our total dependence on Him.

Could you imagine what our nation would be like if our leaders sought the Lord and proclaimed a fast??

4 So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. This is a recurring theme in 2 Chronicles: Leaders who seek the LORD.

We can expect God to do great things when His people, and especially the leaders of His people, seek Him.

5 Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, Imagine the scene-it seems hopeless. But what we're about to read is one of the most incredible and inspiring prayers in all the OT.

6 and said: "O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? Jehoshaphat began his great prayer by recognizing the power of Yahweh over heaven and all kingdoms of the nations

7 Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? Jehoshaphat also prayed recognizing God's great works in the past on behalf of His people. The logic is clear: If God had done great things for His people in the past, He can be trusted to do great things for His people at their moment of great need. The prayer continues...

8-11

8 And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying, 9 'If disaster comes upon us—sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine—we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.' 10 And now, here are the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir—whom

You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and did not destroy them— 11 here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. Jehoshaphat prayed with both knowledge and understanding of God’s word. He remembered that God didn’t allow Israel to invade these people when they came from Egypt to the Promised Land **Deuteronomy 2:8 8 “And when we passed beyond our brethren, the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir, away from the road of the plain, away from Elath and Ezion Geber, we turned and passed by way of the Wilderness of Moab. 9 Then the LORD said to me, ‘Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.’ ”**

So Jehoshaphat is crying out to God—because God didn’t allow Israel to destroy those peoples then, it would be unjust if He allowed them to destroy Judah now.

Jehoshaphat prayed that God would not allow His people to suffer as a consequence of their prior obedience. We’ll stop our study in verse 12 tonight as we look at one of the most touching expressions of trust in God found anywhere in the Bible.

12 O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.”Here Jehoshaphat — a king standing before his people — openly confessed that he did not have the answer to the problem at their doorstep. The only

answer was to trust in God, that His power and goodness would protect Judah when nothing else could.

Jehoshaphat said, “We don’t know what to do, Lord. Our eyes are upon You.”

Where are your eyes?

If your eyes are on people, you’ll be disappointed.

If your eyes are on circumstances, like Peter when his eyes were on the waves, you’ll go down.

But if your eyes are on the Lord, you’ll be stable and He’ll see you through. Whatever the battle you face, don’t read books or get counsel before you seek the Lord. Keep your eyes on Him.