

2 Chronicles 17-18 – Thursday, January 12th, 2017

2 Chronicles 17 -- 1 Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place, and strengthened himself against Israel. 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 of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel.

- The chapter begins by introducing us to another one of the only nine good kings of Israel who did what was right in God's site.
- It's interesting to note that Jehoshaphat was the son of another good king, king Asa, both of whom walked in the ways of David.
- What's interesting about this is David was still considered the greatest king Israel ever had, in spite of his adultery and murder.

Spurgeon - "Have you never noticed the career of David? What a happy life David's was up to one point! ...But that hour when he walked on the roof of his house, and saw Bathsheba, and gave way to his unholy desires, put an end to the happy days of David ... You recognize him as the same man, but his voice is broken; his music is deep bass, he cannot reach one high notes of the scale. From the hour in which he sinned he began to sorrow more and more. So will it be with us if we are not watchful."

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. 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. 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.

- Here we're told God established the kingdom under Jehoshaphat, and blessed his reign with abundant prosperity and peace.
- The question becomes one of what Jehoshaphat did to please the Lord in such a way that this blessing would come as a result.
- I see two things that he did, the first of which was that he delighted himself in the ways of the Lord and removed high places.

Psalms 37:4 (NKJV) — 4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

- The second thing Jehoshaphat did was that he returned Israel to the Word of God, which was taught and declared in the land.
- This alone brought the blessing of God by virtue of how the Word of God can transform the life of an individual and a nation.
- When we get into the Word of God, the Word of God in turn gets into us, and when it does it changes us from the inside out.

G. Campbell Morgan - "No better service can be rendered to the nation than that of proclaiming the Word of Jehovah to the people, in cities, towns, villages, and hamlets. By such proclamation the heart of the people may be turned to Jehovah, and so He be enabled to do for them all that is in His heart."

- There's one more thing that I want to point out and it has to do with what we're told in verse ten about the peace that came.
- Namely, because the fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah so they wouldn't wage war.
- The reason I point this out is because it speaks to a powerful Biblical principle as it relates to pleasing the Lord in all our ways.

Proverbs 16:7 (NKJV) — 7 When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Proverbs 14:34 (NKJV) — 34 Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.

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. 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. 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.

- The chapter ends with the mention of Amasiah who we're told, "willingly offered himself to the Lord," with 200,000 mighty men.
- This is the only thing we know of him, and it seems that God deemed it necessary to include this detail in scripture about him.
- The reason being is that there's something to be said about any man or any woman who willingly offers themselves to God.

Charles Spurgeon - "Amasiah is a man of whom we do not know anything beyond this—he 'willingly offered himself unto the Lord.' There must have been a turning-point in his career, a time when first he knew the grace of God, which wrought such a change in him. There must have been a waking up to the feeling that God deserved his love and his life."

2 Chronicles 18 -- 1 Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab. 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." 4 Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the LORD today."

- As we're about to see, things are about to go very wrong for Jehoshaphat as a result of what he does by visiting evil king Ahab.
- What we know to be true about Ahab is that he was the most evil king in Israel's history and it was due in large part to his wife.
- I suppose in some way it could be argued that Jezebel was even more evil than her husband, which is why such evil ensued.

F.B. Meyer - "He was a weak man, the tool of a crafty, unscrupulous, and cruel woman: and some of the worst crimes that have ever been committed have been wrought by weak men, at the instigation of worse—but stronger—spirits than themselves."

- If you're wondering why Jehoshaphat would visit Ahab in the first place it's because he was actually related by way of marriage.
- This in no way excuses what he did, but may explain why he did it, however, what he does next is inexplicable and inexcusable.
- For Jehoshaphat to agree to this alliance with Ahab will be his downfall, which will come about because of his unwise decisions.

- The first unwise decision he made was paying a visit to Ahab, but his second unwise decision was to be persuaded by Ahab.
- While God's blessing upon our lives can draw the attention of good people, it can also draw the attention of very evil people.
- Not only are they attracted to us, they'll seek to associate with us, and if we are persuaded by them, we do so to our own peril.

- The third unwise decision he made was to say yes to Ahab before first praying and seeking the Lord as to what he should do.
- Notice in verse four where we're told that it's only after Jehoshaphat said yes to Ahab that he then seeks to inquire of the Lord.
- Lest we come down too hard on Jehoshaphat for doing this, we would do well to consider how many times we do not first pray.

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?" 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 Imlah." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!"

- This is a textbook case of someone only wanting to hear what they want to hear and not hear what they actually need to hear.
- Be that as it may, you have to give Jehoshaphat credit for discerning exactly what Ahab was trying to avoid with this Micaiah.
- It seems he knew the reason Micaiah never prophesied good concerning Ahab, is because there's nothing good about Ahab.

8 Then the king of Israel called one of his officers and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imlah 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. 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."

- There's something here that I'd like to point out, however, it's not so easily seen at first read having to do with false prophets.
- More specifically, as it relates to the dramatic use of showmanship and entertainment, which is mesmerizing and hypnotizing.
- The point being is these false teachers are alive and well today leading people astray with a showmanship and entertainment.

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." 13 And Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak."

- To me, this speaks to one of the most difficult temptations all of us face, and it's that of just simply going along with the crowd.
- In other words, don't take a righteous stand and go against the crowd, because if you do, then you will be the only one doing it.
- Micaiah's response in verse fourteen should be indelibly etched on our minds and hearts; whatever God says, that will I speak!

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!" 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?"

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is it seems Micaiah acquiesced under pressure to the king.
- However, nothing could be further from the truth and it's evidenced by what the king says to him, knowing that he's not truthful.
- I would suggest that Micaiah had a very sarcastic tone in his voice and as such got through to them by his mocking of them.

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.'" 17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

- This is one of those places in scripture where you really have to picture the scene in your mind's eye in order to understand it.
- First it's believed that Ahab had Micaiah thrown into prison, which would have meant that he was there in both rags and chains.
- To make matters worse, Micaiah stands alone up against 400 false prophets who despise him and a king who utterly hates him.

G. Campbell Morgan, "Ahab knew in his heart that Micaiah would not fear or flatter him, but only declare the word of Jehovah. This he construed into personal hatred ... Hatred of the messenger of God is clear evidence of willful wickedness."

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."

- This passage is very telling when it comes to undue influence of demonic spirits who are given a voice through false teachers.
- It's important to note the demonic is only allowed to prevail subsequent to one rejecting the love of the truth and believe the lie.
- This is a truth that we talk about often in the context of Bible prophecy after the rapture of the church via the powerful delusion.

2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 - 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, 10 and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

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?" 24 And Micaiah said, "Indeed you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!"

- Notice how that Micaiah, when struck on the cheek for speaking the truth, does not strike back or even argue with them at all.
- The reason is Micaiah knows he doesn't need to because he is on the side of righteousness and he has a sanctified certainty.
- The lesson here becomes quite clear; often times the best argument is to not engage in an argument but turn away the wrath.

Proverbs 15:1 (NKJV) — 1 A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

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."' " 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!"

- I love Micaiah's response here when he basically says that Ahab can send him back to prison but he will soon learn the truth.
- The truth of the matter is, the Lord has spoken to Micaiah, and through Micaiah, and Ahab will meet his appointment with death.
- One has to wonder what's going through Ahab's mind when he says to feed him with just enough bread and water to stay alive.

28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat 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 put on your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle.

- If you're anything like me and I suspect you are you're having considerable difficulty understanding why he still allies with Ahab.
- You would think after this whole episode with the prophet Micaiah, Jehoshaphat would immediately end his alliance with Ahab.
- Actually, the reasons as to why he doesn't are the very lessons that we can learn from the life of this good king, Jehoshaphat.

- The first lesson we learn from his life is don't jump every time the Ahab's of this world snap their fingers for us to join with them.
- It's important to note how that Ahab approached Jehoshaphat; Jehoshaphat did not approach Ahab to join in this evil alliance.
- This is where Jehoshaphat made a terrible mistake by allowing himself to be unduly influenced and even easily manipulated.

- This sort of ties into the second lesson we can learn from him. In addition to being manipulated by Ahab he's attractive to Ahab.
- When we live our lives righteous before the Lord, we become magnets that attract the steel of the wicked Ahab's of this world.
- This is true when it comes to young people who know the Lord, they become very attractive to those who don't know the Lord.

- Another lesson that we can learn from Jehoshaphat is saying no to those Ahab's of this world who are usually very persuasive.
- Were Jehoshaphat to have refused to join with Ahab, his life would have been very different, as we'll see in our study yet future.
- Sadly, this leads an otherwise good king, who did good things down the path to a bad end such that he just doesn't finish well.

- This brings us to the next lesson we can learn from his life and it has to do with the Ahab's of this world taking advantage of us.
- I can't get over how shrewd this whole setup was to, in effect remove Jehoshaphat's ability to be firm and go against the crowd.
- The Ahab's of this world come on strong to take advantage of us, which often times requires us to be firm and blunt with them.

- Another very important lesson to learn from him is to never ever go against the check that God places in your heart to stop you.
- Jehoshaphat even had a word from the Lord that this was wrong on every level, yet he pushes that aside and does it anyway.
- I'm of the belief that deep down in his heart, Jehoshaphat knew this wasn't the Lord's will but that he wanted to be liked by man.

- Another equally important if not more important lesson to learn from Jehoshaphat is to be honest and say that you are wrong.
- What's really striking to me in all of this is that were he to simply admit that he had made a mistake, he could have got out of it.
- Not only doesn't he do this, he doesn't have the backbone to stand up to Ahab and his 400 false prophets concerning their evil.

- This last one is the most interesting to me personally because he allowed his son Jehoram to marry Ahab's daughter Athaliah.
- In other words, at the root of this was an unequal yoke of sorts in the sense that he had already formed an unrighteous alliance.
- It's for this reason that Christians should never yoke ourselves with non-Christians, which is what we're told in 2nd Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 6:14–15 - 14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

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.

- I have to say that I don't quite understand how Ahab was able to convince Jehoshaphat to allow him to disguise himself as king.
- Moreover, I don't really quite understand why Jehoshaphat would agree to not disguise himself and where his robe as the king.
- Truly, he must've known that this was going to happen. Perhaps it's due to the aforementioned principle of wanting to be liked.

One commentator had some additional insight into this, "Going into the battle, Ahab did not want to be identified as a king and therefore be a special target. He thought this would help protect him against Micaiah's prophecy of doom. It is more difficult to explain why Jehoshaphat agreed to go into the battle as the only clearly identified king. Perhaps he was either not very smart or he had very great faith."

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.

- Notice the details we have woven into the fabric of the narrative, first, that it was a "certain man," who "drew a bow at random."
- Clearly this man and his bow have the fingerprints of God's judgment all over them, such that, He metes out Ahab's judgment.
- I find it rather interesting that Ahab thought he could outsmart God by disguising himself in battle to prove Micaiah was wrong.

- The fact of the matter is, not only was Micaiah right, so too was Elijah when he prophesied exactly how Ahab would be killed.
- More specifically, that he would die in battle this way, and that every man would flee to his city and every man to his country.
- Here's the bottom line, no plan will ever prevail against the Lord Who knows the beginning from the end and the end of man.

Adam Clarke - "It appears that the Israelites and Jews maintained the fight the whole of the day; but when at evening the king died, and this was known, there was a proclamation made, probably with the consent of both Syrians and Israelites, that the war was over."