

February 1

Scriptures: Read 2 Chronicles 17&18

Key Verse: “And his heart took delight in the ways of the Lord...” (2 Chronicles 17:6)

Overview

Jehoshaphat succeeded his father Asa as king of Judah. The Lord greatly blessed him and the kingdom because Jehoshaphat walked in the godly ways of his forefather David. At the beginning of his reign, there were still tensions between Judah and Israel which led Jehoshaphat to fortify more cities and place garrisons throughout the land. The historical account of Jehoshaphat’s reign in Chronicles is more than twice as long as the account in the book of Kings (1 Kings 22).

Like his father Asa’s earlier days, Jehoshaphat was also a reformer. He not only purged the land of all idolatry but even sent out a group of itinerant Bible teachers. They were made up of non-Levite leaders as well as Levites and priests, who had with them the sacred Book of the Law. Jehoshaphat understood that lay leaders were also responsible to teach others about the Lord (cf. Matthew 28:20), as were the priests and Levites (cf. Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 33:10). Jehoshaphat was aware of the necessity to study and learn the Word of God in order to put His laws into practice. If the people transgressed the Law, it would not be because of ignorance, since they had been taught the Law. Therefore, the people had no excuse, and the penalties for breaking God’s laws would be enforced.

God blessed Jehoshaphat and rewarded him with wealth, military strength, and peace. The other nations feared him and would not come against him, including the Philistines and the Arabians, who paid him tribute so they could be on friendly terms (17:11). Even Ahab, the most wicked king of the Northern Kingdom, thought it expedient to be friendly with Jehoshaphat. They formed an alliance which was sealed through the marriage of Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram to Athalia, the daughter of Ahab and wicked Jezebel (18:1; 21:6). This alliance of the godly with the ungodly (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14) brought a divine rebuke and later led to many problems in Judah (18:22; 22:10).

As an ally, Jehoshaphat joined Ahab in his attempt to retake Ramoth Gilead from the Syrians. Ahab’s prophets prophesied victory, but Jehoshaphat did not believe their words to be trustworthy, since they would have been involved in the idolatry of the Northern Kingdom. He insisted upon hearing from “a prophet of the Lord” (18:6). Reluctantly, Ahab called upon Micaiah, whom he admittedly hated for only prophesying bad things about him. The true prophet, however, is one who boldly confronts and warns people of the disastrous effects of their sin (cf. Jeremiah 23:22). Ahab was living in sin, so what else could be expected?

Micaiah’s first words to Ahab, saying the same as the lying prophets, must have been spoken with obvious mockery and sarcasm, for immediately Ahab knew they were not sincere (18:14-15). Then, true to his word (18:13), Micaiah spoke the words the Lord gave him; only Ahab would die, and his people would return home in peace. Micaiah explained how Ahab’s prophets had been deceived by the spirit (18:20; in the Hebrew), namely Satan, the lying spirit

(cf. John 8:44). God can even use Satan to aid in the accomplishment of His will (cf. Job 1:6, 12). Ahab's judgment for his terrible sins was forthcoming.

By imprisoning Micaiah and ordering that he have short rations, Ahab added to his sins. Did he actually think he could fool God by going in disguise to the battle? Nothing happens by chance with the Lord (cf. Proverbs 16:33), for when the Syrian arrow was shot at random, it was in the providence of God that it hit the disguised Ahab. This caused his death, thus fulfilling Elijah's prophecy of doom (cf. I Kings 21:19-22; 22:37-38).

No doubt Ahab knew that it would be the enemies' desire to kill or capture only him, so by allowing Jehoshaphat to go into the battle with royal attire, it would endanger his life. Ahab was not a true friend to Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat's mistake of making an alliance with him almost cost him his life. But God graciously spared Jehoshaphat when he cried out to Him (18:29-32). The Lord is certainly a very present help in times of trouble, when his faithful children call out to Him (Psalm 46:1).

Prayer

Lord make us like Jehoshaphat with hearts that delight in You. Keep us and our family from coming under the influence and treachery of the Devil. We call upon You for help in time of trouble.