

STUDENTS OF THE SCRIPTURE

Supplemental Studies

Study Outline

A Tale of Two Kings, Part Two (2 Chronicles 17 – 20; Selected Verses)

I. REVIEW / INTRODUCTION

A. The Great Benefits of the Old Testament

1. *Romans 15:4* = It was written for our **instruction**. And believing it can result in hope for our lives, through a combination of two things: its encouragement, and our own perseverance in studying and applying it faithfully.
2. *1 Corinthians 10:11* = Paul says that the things recorded in the Old Testament regarding God's dealing with the nation of Israel, happened as examples for us. They were written down and preserved, in order that God might use them to *instruct* us. Paul recognized that we are living in a different age...but God does not change, and His dealing with His people is faithfully consistent, and consistently faithful.
3. *2 Timothy 3:16* = When Paul told Timothy that **all Scripture** was breathed by God and is profitable, he was referring primarily to the Old Testament. The very words of the Old Testament accounts were breathed into the world by the Spirit of God, and they are profitable, useful and beneficial to help us be all that God would have us to be.

B. A Basic Principle: Do Not Be Bound Together with Unbelievers

1. *Psalms 1:1-6* = Here, the psalmist contrasts two completely different ideologies. One ideology is that of the wicked, sinners, scoffers. Such people have counsel, they have a path, they have a seat. In other words, they have a way that they do things, a certain manner of "wisdom" that guides their behavior. And they counsel others to this same path. They will even counsel *you* to this path. By contrast, the psalmist says that there are also *righteous* people. These people are *blessed*, because they don't accept or act according to the counsel of wicked people. Instead, their *delight* is in God's Word.
2. *Romans 12:1-2* = Here, the great Apostle Paul instructs the church in Rome that we are not to be *conformed* to the world, but *transformed* by the making new of our minds.
3. *2 Corinthians 6:14-18* = The same apostle also warned the church in Corinth about the danger of being "other-yoked." When two oxen are yoked together, and both intend to pull the same direction, things are good. But when the two yoked oxen decide to pull in different directions, the yoke is a source of slavery, forcing one to submit to the will of the other. When I engage in any endeavor, yoking myself to an unbeliever who does not share my agenda of serving Christ, I am now trying to serve two masters: the agenda of my unbelieving partner, and the agenda of my Lord. Someone will have to compromise. Guess who that will be.
4. *Galatians 1:10* = It is for this reason that we must plant our flag on God's agenda. Ultimately, I'm not trying to please men. I'm trying to please God.

II. HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. **Israel's United Kingdom.** From 1051 to 931 BC, the twelve tribes of Israel were united in a single, unified kingdom, collectively called *Israel*. This nation lasted for 120 years, and was ruled over by three consecutive kings, each reigning for 40 years: Saul (the only king of his dynasty, ruling from 1051-1011 BC); followed by David (ruling from 1011-971 BC), followed by David's son, Solomon (ruling from 971-931 BC).
- B. **The Davidic Covenant.** When David was king, he desired to replace the temporary home of God's ark (which was a tent) with a permanent structure (a temple). God would not allow David to build this temple because he was a man of war (cf. *1 Chronicles 22:7-10*), but would give Solomon that privilege. In connection with this revelation of God to David through Nathan the prophet, God made a promise to

David, which we refer to as the Davidic Covenant (see *2 Samuel 7:8-16* and *1 Chronicles 17:4-14*). Among other things, God promised David that one of David's descendants would rule forever on Israel's throne.

- C. **The United Kingdom Divides.** But in 931 BC, following the death of Solomon and the ascension to the throne of his son, Rehoboam, the 12-tribe nation split. Ten tribes in the north broke away, and followed a new king (Jeroboam I, the son of Nebat). This new northern kingdom, called *Israel* or *Ephraim* followed a succession of 19 kings until, in 722 BC, they were conquered and exiled by the Assyrians. The southern two tribes (Judah and Benjamin), called *Judah*, followed David's dynasty, as God had promised David. This southern kingdom lasted until 586 BC, when it was conquered and exiled by the Babylonians. The 19 northern kings were all wicked in God's eyes. Of the 20 in the north, eight of them were righteous in God's eyes, and the remaining twelve were wicked.
- D. **Judah Returns Home from Exile.** After about 70 years in Babylon, the Jews were allowed to return home from captivity. When they arrived, they were devastated by what they saw. Their cities were destroyed, their fields ruined. The capitol, Jerusalem, had been razed, and whatever homes remained were occupied by foreigners and enemies. Not only was there no descendant of David ruling, but the Jews had even lost the sovereignty to anoint their own king (they were now under the rule of Persia). It seemed as though God had forgotten His promises to them, and had forsaken them.
- E. **The Purpose of the Chronicler's Historical Retelling.** An earlier writer had already written most of this history (we have it recorded in *1/2 Samuel* and *1/2 Kings*). So why did the Chronicler (perhaps it was Ezra?) feel the need to repeat it? It was to remind the returned exiles that God never forgets, He never forsakes, and He never breaks a promise once He gives it.
- F. **The Difference Between the Historical Accounts.** It is also worth noting that the earlier recorded history in *Samuel* and *Kings* gives us details of the reigns of the kings of both kingdoms, Israel and Judah. The Chronicler, however, largely ignores the north and focuses instead on the southern kingdom of Judah. This makes sense in light of his goal in writing. But it also means that any time he *does* bring in the northern kings (as he does in the passage before us tonight), it is for a specific purpose to underscore his narrative of the southern kings.
- G. **The Immediate Context.** Last week, we examined the reign of King Asa (911-870 BC). We noted that he and his son, Jehoshaphat, were the only righteous kings in the nation of Israel within a century. Tonight, we are going to look into the account of the reign of Asa's son, Jehoshaphat. Because this account is one of the few where the Chronicler brings into the picture the northern kingdom of Israel, we must look briefly at the northern kings whose reign intersected with Jehoshaphat.
1. **The Reign of Jehoshaphat.** King Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah for 25 years, from 872-848 BC. During that time, Israel in the north was ruled by three kings: Ahab (874-853 BC); Ahaziah (853-852 BC); and Joram (852-841 BC).
 2. *1 Kings 16:28-33* = The writer of *Kings* tells us that Ahab was the worst king Israel had yet experienced. He married a woman named Jezebel, a name synonymous even today with wickedness. It was during the reign of this northern king that Elijah the prophet ministered. The narrative of Ahab's reign and his intersection with Elijah covers a great deal of the history written in *1/2 Kings* (see *1 Kings 16:28 – 22:40*). It is quite interesting that one of Judah's godliest kings allied himself with one of Israel's most wicked! More on that in a moment.

III. THE REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT (*2 CHRONICLES 17-20*)

The Chronicler's account of Jehoshaphat's reign basically consists of five parts: 1. the reforms of his early years (*17:1-19*), 2. his alliance with Ahab (*18:1-34*), 3. Jehu's rebuke and consequent reforms (*19:1-11*), 4. the eastern invasion (*20:1-34*), and 5. his alliance with Ahaziah (*20:35-37*).

A. Jehoshaphat's Early Reforms (*2 Chronicles 17:1-19*)

1. *Military Reforms (17:1-2)*. The beginning of the account tells us that the first significant success of Jehoshaphat was to secure his northern border with Israel (think of Trump promising to build a wall along our southern border). The account gives us four details of this effort:

- a. *He made his position over Israel firm.* Verse 1 tells us he secured his position over Israel. Essentially, we are being told that he did everything necessary to protect himself from Israelite assault. The next two details elaborate on this point.
 - b. *He placed troops in all of Judah's fortified cities.* This means that he put boots on the ground in the key cities of Jerusalem's defense (Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, Beth-zur, Socoh, Adullam, Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, Zorah, Aijalon and Hebron, according to 2 Chronicles 11:5-10). These cities had been built up strong for defense by King Rehoboam. But now, Jehoshaphat placed the necessary manpower in those cities to make them defensible.
 - c. *He set garrisons in Judah and Ephraim.* We understand garrisons in Judah, since that was where Jehoshaphat was reigning. But Ephraim belonged to the north, to Ahab. However, several key Ephraimite cities on the border had been taken by Jehoshaphat's father, King Asa. These cities were now defensible as well.
 - d. *He drafted soldiers.* Verses 12-19 give us the details of the size of Jehoshaphat's army: he had 1,160,000 soldiers, stationed at various places and under various commanders.
 - e. *He had peace.* Verses 10-11 tells us that because of Yahweh's blessing, the surrounding nations were afraid to attack Judah. Not only did they not initiate conflict, but the Philistines (Judah's archenemy) even brought a tribute gift of 15,400 animals.
2. *Spiritual Reforms.* Verses 3-9 tell us of Jehoshaphat's spiritual reforms. Like his father Asa before him, he instituted reforms regarding Israel's worship by removing pagan worship centers. But unlike *any* who came before him, he also sent emissaries out to teach the Scripture to the people of Judah. His envoy consisted of sixteen men: five court officials, nine Levites and two priests (the Chronicler's account is so specific, it even gives us their names!). These sixteen men went to every city of Judah and taught them the Scripture (which at the times would have included only *Torah*, the five books of Moses; i.e., Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

B. Jehoshaphat's Alliance with Ahab (2 Chronicles 18:1-34)

1. *Jehoshaphat's Foolish Marriage.* We are told that Jehoshaphat allowed a marriage alliance with King Ahab. Specifically, Jehoshaphat allowed his own son, Jehoram to marry Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (cf. 2 Chronicles 21:6). This was utterly foolish because when Jehoram and his son died prematurely, Athaliah murdered all the royal sons and placed herself on the throne of Judah. This was the only time in Judah's history that someone *not* of David's line ruled over it...and it was clearly a Satanic attempt to thwart God's covenant by destroying David's line. It didn't work, obviously. One of the boys that Athaliah intended to kill (Joash) was hidden by his aunt, and six years later an insurrection was mounted that resulted in Athaliah's death and Joash's anointing as king.
2. *Jehoshaphat's Alliance with Ahab.* At some point the city of Ramoth-Gilead had been taken from Israel by Aram. Now, King Ahab wanted to get it back under his control. He knew he would not be able to fight against Aram alone, and so he entered into deliberations with Jehoshaphat, who eventually agreed to ally with Ahab against Aram. This ill-fated battle happened in 853 BC. And the account gives us an interesting view of the contrast between Ahab and Jehoshaphat.
 - a. *Jehoshaphat asks for mediation (18:4).* Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to join in him seeking (the word *inquire* here is the Hebrew word for *seek*, used 7 times in the narrative of Jehoshaphat's life in the Chronicles).
 - b. *Ahab brings in 400 prophets (18:5).* Ahab brought in 400 false prophets and they all agreed that Ahab would be successful against Aram.
 - c. *Jehoshaphat presses (18:6).* Jehoshaphat knew that the 400 were false prophets. And so he specified: we don't need 400 false prophets. Just one true prophet of Yahweh.
 - d. *Ahab hesitates (18:7-8).* Ahab said, "I know of one, but I hate him because he's always against me. It's Micaiah. I'll get him."
 - e. *Micaiah Gives the Truth (18:9-27).* The result of the encounter is that Micaiah was imprisoned by Ahab. The kings decided to fight, even knowing that God said they would lose.

- f. *Ahab tried to get Jehoshaphat killed, but was killed himself instead (18:28-34).* Although Ahab tried to trick the Arameans into killing Jehoshaphat instead of himself, through God's sovereignty, a "random" arrow killed him.
- C. Jehu's Rebuke and Consequent Reforms (2 Chronicles 19:1-11)**
1. *Jehu's Rebuke.* In the days of Asa, Hanani the prophet rebuked the king. Now Hanani's son, the prophet Jehu, accosted King Jehoshaphat. It was a simple message consisting of a single question followed by a single statement.
 - a. *Jehu's Question (19:2).* The question is a simple one. Should you yoke yourself with wicked people? Obviously the question is two-pronged: was your alliance with Ahab a good idea? And more to the point, did you learn anything from this foolishness?
 - b. *Jehu's Statement (19:3).* The statement is an encouraging one, though. You may have acted foolishly in this instance. But God knows you are still righteous, and has not forgotten what you've done.
 2. *Jehoshaphat's New Reforms.* The rest of the chapter details basically two reforms of Jehoshaphat.
 - a. *He brought the people back to God (19:4).* From the southern border all the way to the captured cities of Ephraim in the north, Jehoshaphat brought the common people back to Yahweh.
 - b. *He appointed godly judges for the people (19:5-11).* He made sure as he appointed these judges that they were instructed to judge as before Yahweh Himself, and put them under the jurisdiction of Amariah, the chief priest, and Zebadiah, the king's chief of command.
- D. An Invasion at the Eastern Border (2 Chronicles 20:1-34)**
1. *The Gathering Storm (20:1-2).* The Moabites, Ammonites and Meunites allied together to come against Jehoshaphat. They gathered in Hazazon-Tamar, also known as Engedi. We are not told specifically when this battle happened, but the invading army is described as "a great multitude," and amounted to three powerful nations against one.
 2. *Jehoshaphat's Fear and Resolve (20:3).* The text gives us three details of his response:
 - a. *He was afraid.* He felt great fear and anxiety in his heart over what was about to happen.
 - b. *He turned his attention to seek Yahweh.* He intentionally turned his face away from other things, other people, other sources of help; and he resolved to rely on Yahweh alone.
 - c. *He proclaimed a national fast.* He realized that all the people of the land must join with him in seeking God in this matter, so he involved them all in a national act of worship and loyalty to God.
 3. *The People's Response (20:4).* The people gathered to Jerusalem. The text tells us that people from every city came. This was a mass, national pilgrimage to the Solomonic temple to entreat the Lord for His help and wisdom.
 4. *Jehoshaphat's Prayer (20:5-12).* This is such a beautiful prayer that we should take our time to look at it.
 - a. *He recognizes God's relationship with Israel.* "O Yahweh," (Israel's covenant name with God), "the God of our fathers." We have history with You that goes back a long time.
 - b. *He recognizes God's sovereignty.* "Are you not God in the heavens? Are you not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You."
 - c. *He retells history, remembering God's promises.* "You drove out the nations before us to give us this land. We've lived here under Your security, and You promised to protect us when we ask for help."
 - d. *He is specific about the problem.* "Ammon, Moab and Edom are attacking us. You protected them from us when we conquered the land, but now they are attacking us."
 - e. *He asks for divine intervention.* "O our God, will You not judge them?"

- f. *He is vulnerable and honest with God about his fear and weakness.* “We are powerless. We don’t know what to do.”
 - g. *He expresses reliance and dependence.* “Our eyes are on You.”
5. *The People’s Fear and Expectation (20:13).* Verse 13 is beautiful. The entire congregation stood in the temple grounds. They had with them their infants, their wives, their children. All that was most precious to them was before God in this moment, expressing utter helplessness and showing God that they trusted Him even with their precious, tiny and vulnerable children.
 6. *Yahweh’s Response (20:14-17).* In response to their plea, Yahweh poured out His Spirit on one of the Levites standing there, whose name was Jahaziel. This is His message:
 - a. *Don’t be afraid.* First and foremost, shed your fear of the multitude before you.
 - b. *This is God’s battle, not yours.* Pretty straightforward message. God has taken this attack against you personally, and He is up in arms to come to your defense.
 - c. *Go out against them.* You may be afraid, but get out to the battlefield tomorrow. The prophet here is even specific about where and how the enemy will attack. God knows every aspect of the situation here.
 - d. *You will not be fighting.* The command is utterly astonishing. You won’t be fighting, you’ll be watching. All you need to do is *station, stand, and see.*
 7. *The People Worship (20:18-19).* Jehoshaphat bowed down, and the entire crowd dropped to their faces in the dirt, worshipping. Then the temple musicians stood up and got down! They sang and rejoiced with a *very loud voice!* It is obvious that they believed God’s word here, and trusted Him completely.
 8. *The Battle (20:20-25).* When they got up in the morning, after a good night’s sleep, they heard a reaffirmation from King Jehoshaphat. “Listen to me! Trust God and His prophets; and you will be established and succeed.” Then he instructed the singers to make loud music once again.
 - a. *Yahweh Moves (20:22-24).* In response to their trust and praise, Yahweh routed the eastern alliance in a very interesting way! He turned them against themselves! Ammon and Moab destroyed Edom, and then turned and destroyed each other! In the meantime, Judah stood up on the hill and watched, and saw no soldiers remaining...only corpses! Not a single enemy soldier survived this battle. Does God know how to take care of business, or doesn’t He?
 - b. *Judah Enriched (20:25).* All that was left for Judah to do was clean up the spoil; goods, garments and valuables. And there was so much of it, it took them three days to do it! That must have been an enormous enemy army!
 9. *God Gives Jehoshaphat Peace (20:26-30).* The immediate result was that the entire nation praised God for His deliverance. They even named the valley where they were praising, “The Valley of Praise!” They were joyful people! But the longer term result was peace in Jehoshaphat’s kingdom.
 10. *The People Revert (20:31-34).* And yet, in spite of Jehoshaphat’s loyalty to Yahweh, the people still proved wayward, and their own hearts were not completely God’s, even though Jehoshaphat’s was.

E. Another Alliance with the North (2 Chronicles 20:35-37)

1. *Naval Alliance with Ahaziah.* The Chronicler’s account of Jehoshaphat’s life ends on a strange note. We are told that he once more formed an alliance with the king of Israel in the north, at the time Ahaziah. This was a naval alliance, but God did not condone it, and so the ships were built and destroyed by God before they could be used. Apparently Jehoshaphat had not learned from his earlier lesson.

IV. THE LESSONS OF JEHOShAPHAT’S LIFE

- A. **Avoid Ungodly Alliances.** In other words, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. If you do, you are setting yourself up for danger and instability. Had Jehoshaphat not married his son to Ahab’s daughter, it is likely that the foolish alliance between himself and Ahab against Aram would never have happened,

since he would have had no reason to even converse with Ahab about it. Don't let sin get its foot in the door, or you may not like where it goes from there!

- B. **If You Are Entangled, Heed God's Warnings.** By the time Micaiah spoke to Jehoshaphat regarding the danger, it was too late for Jehoshaphat to avoid the alliance. But it was *not too late* to change his mind regarding the coming battle. *And he knew that!* Otherwise, why would he have asked for a prophetic word from God? And more to the point, why ask God's opinion if you are not going to obey it? Better ignorant than rebellious; better ignorant than stupid!
- C. **If You Get Spanked, Learn the Lesson.** God's discipline is never pleasant. But we all partake of it, and it is intended to teach us. If you learn the lesson, you will be better for it (cf. *Hebrews 12:4-13*). If not, you might end up, like Jehoshaphat, making the same mistake again, and being disciplined a second time!
- D. **If You Are Overwhelmed, Turn Back to God.** During the eastern invasion, Jehoshaphat didn't let his earlier foolishness discourage him, or cause him to doubt God's faithfulness and goodness. He turned right back to God (cf. *Philippians 3:12-16*).
- E. **Be Vulnerable and Honest with God at All Times.** When Jehoshaphat was facing overwhelming anxiety, he was vulnerable and honest with his God. I'm helpless, I don't know what to do. Help me! There is no point in putting on a front for God. Just be open with Him and see what He does!
- F. **Trust God with Everything.** The people of Judah came to worship God, and they came with their infants, their wives and their children. They trusted God even with the most precious part of their lives. God has demonstrated His trustworthiness repeatedly, both in human history, and in your own life. Trust Him with everything, even that which is most precious to you!

V. PRAYER