

Introduction (19:1-3)

19 Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. ² But 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? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD. ³ Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asheroth out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God.”

As we have seen in the book of Chronicles,
the central thing that matters most to God
is whether we *seek him*.

Where is your heart centered?
What are you seeking?
What are you looking for in life?

We saw last time that the Chronicler wants us to think of Jehoshaphat
like we think of his father, Asa.

Both kings are said to have suppressed the high places –
and are said to have *failed* to suppress the high places.

As we saw last time with Asa,
that is easy to understand,
since worship at the high places had been a practice in Israel and Judah
for generations.

It was unlikely that any king could successfully suppress it for his entire reign
without diligent and constant attention to the subject.

Both Asa and Jehoshaphat enjoyed the rewards of their piety –
and during their reigns the fear of the LORD fell upon the nations around them.

Also, both Asa and Jehoshaphat get in trouble for entangling foreign alliances:

Asa with Syria (against Israel)
and Jehoshaphat with Israel (against Syria).

Asa, the father, is corrected by the prophet Hanani.

Jehoshaphat, his son, is corrected by the prophet Jehu (the son of Hanani!).

1. The Fear of the LORD: Jehoshaphat’s Judicial Reforms (19:4-11)

a. “You Judge Not for Man but for the LORD”: the Foundation of Justice (v4-7)

⁴ Jehoshaphat lived at Jerusalem. And he went out again among the people, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers. ⁵ He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city,

In verse 4 we hear that Jehoshaphat went out *again* to bring back the people to the LORD.

In 17:7, we heard that Jehoshaphat had sent teaching priests throughout the land in order to instruct the people in the Law.

Now, after his foolish alliance with Ahab,

Jehoshaphat demonstrates his repentance by renewing his reform efforts.

The Chronicler tells us about many reforms during the monarchy.

Asa had removed idols and restored the worship at the temple (ch 15).

Jehoshaphat himself had sent teaching priests throughout the land in ch 17, in an effort to make his religious reforms stick.

Chronicles emphasizes the importance of “top-down” reform.

The book of Kings will praise reforming kings –

but there is a note of futility,

as the book of Kings marches relentlessly towards the Exile.

For the book of Kings, there is no hope for Israel and Judah:

not reforming kings, not faithful prophets, not even the temple in Jerusalem – nothing can save Israel and Judah from destruction.

Death and exile are coming,

and Israel’s only hope is that God will raise the dead!

(That’s why the book of Kings has the ascension of Elijah at the very heart of the book – with the raising of the sons from the dead on either side)

The book of Chronicles, on the other hand,

wants to remind us of how important reformation is.

We *need* a king who will bring reformation –

not just in his own personal life,

but to all his people.

After all, a good king with good intentions

is still only as good as the people who put his intentions into practice!

And that is true not only in liturgical matters (chapter 17),

but also in legal matters (here in chapter 19).

Jehoshaphat appointed judges in every fortified city.

This doesn’t mean that there were no judges before –

rather, it suggests that Jehoshaphat was dissatisfied

with the quality of the current judges,

so he is probably replacing them.

The system of tribal justice would have been conducted by village elders.

Jehoshaphat wants to ensure that local justice is in accordance with God’s law,

so he reforms the judiciary.

In verses 6-7 we hear his instructions to the judges:

⁶ and said to the judges, “Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD. He is with you in giving judgment. ⁷ Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes.”

The study of legal history is a delicate matter,
because people often assume that laws reflect what happens in society.

For instance, Moses had said that all Israel should gather three times a year at the sanctuary for the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Booths.

And so many people reconstruct the history of Israel according to the *law*.
But laws do not tell you what *did* happen –
laws only tell you what *should* happen (according to the lawgiver).

In fact, laws are often made because something *isn't* happening!
So, when Jehoshaphat says, “there is no injustice with the LORD our God,
or partiality or taking bribes,”
that may indicate that bribery and partiality
were the chief problems in the city gates.

Certainly the prophets thought so.
Isaiah, in his very chapter, speaks to Jerusalem and says,
“Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves.
Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts.
They do not bring justice to the fatherless,
and the widow’s cause does not come to them.” (1:23)

And in Isaiah 5:23, the prophet declares that the judges acquit the guilty for a bribe.

Bribery is still a serious problem today.
We have all sorts of laws that are designed to reduce corruption,
but there are all sorts of loopholes – and other end-runs around laws.
While some legislation may be useful,
the only real safeguard against corruption
is the one that Jehoshaphat proposes:
Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD.
He is with you in giving judgment.

Think about this.
“He is with you in giving judgment.”
Literally,
“He is with you in the word of judgment.”

When you render judgment, God is with you:
whether as a father or mother with your children,
or as a manager with your team,
or as an elder or deacon in the church.

Because when you render judgment,
you are exercising God's royal authority within your sphere of influence.

Of course, when Jehoshaphat says "God is with you in giving judgment"
you need to realize that God is present even when the judge takes a bribe!
But when human judges misuse their God-given authority,
they call down upon themselves the judgment of God!

⁷ *Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you.
Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God,
or partiality or taking bribes."*

In other words, the one who sits in judgment must fear the LORD more than he fears man.
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.
If you are more concerned with what your friends or colleagues think of you,
than what *God* thinks of you,
then you will render injustice in your judgments.

You will show partiality!

And so long as you fear man more than you fear God,
there is no way to avoid this!

You will find yourself paralyzed – always second-guessing yourself –
because you *know* that you are not supposed to fear man,
so you try to *act* as though you fear God,
but *in fact* you still fear man,
and so even your attempts to fear God are for the sake of what man thinks of you!

(Yes, I'm speaking from first-hand experience!)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.
Until you genuinely fear him more than you fear others,
you *will not make righteous judgments!*

Too often, we develop a "statute-based" approach to justice.
"Is it legal?"
A Christian (whether in law or in business or in medicine)
must not simply look at the question "Is it legal" according to US law,
but "Is it just and fair?"
There are lots of countries that have "legalized bribery"
(and in the US there are legal ways to bribe someone!)
but the one who fears the LORD *will not* accept a bribe –
even a legal one!

You will ask me, however, what do you do with Proverbs 17:8?

“A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of the one who gives it;
wherever he turns he prospers.”

First, I should point out that proverbs are “wise sayings”
that may comment on the way things *are*,
or they may comment on the way things *should be*,
and you need *wisdom* to know how to apply them.

So let’s say that you are in a third world country,
and the customs official tells you that your belongings are “delayed.”

What do you do?

You know the system.

No amount of waiting – no amount of “appealing” to higher authorities will work.

If you want your belongings, you will have to pay a bribe.

It’s simply the “cost of doing business”!

Scripture never says that it is a sin to *give* a bribe.

If the only way to obtain justice is to bribe a corrupt official,
then you may do so.

I think of the parallel case of Paul in Acts 16.

It’s not quite bribery, but it’s definitely a case of manipulating the system!

When the crowd attacks Paul in verse 22,

the magistrates join in by ordering that Paul and Silas be beaten with rods.

Now, Paul is a Roman citizen.

All he has to do is say, “I’m a Roman citizen,”
and the beating stops.

But he doesn’t.

Why not?

Because he fears God more than he fears man.

He could use his Roman citizenship to escape a beating,

but then the magistrates would simply order him to leave the city –
and that would be of no use to the church,

so he endures the beating for the sake of Christ.

Then, after the earthquake vindicates them,

after the Philippian jailer (and the Philippian prisoners) convert,
when the magistrates try to send them away quietly,

only then does Paul say, “Oh, by the way, I’m a Roman citizen.”

Why?

Because he fears God more than he fears man.

Paul uses the threat of public humiliation for the good of the church,

so that the people of God can see that God *does* vindicate his own!

(It may be through their suffering!
It may even be through their death!
But God vindicates his own!)

Do you fear God more than you fear man?

b. “Thus Shall You Do...”: the Practice of Justice (v8-11)

⁸ Moreover, in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem. ⁹ And he charged them: “Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart: ¹⁰ whenever a case comes to you from your brothers who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or rules, then you shall warn them, that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come upon you and your brothers. Thus you shall do, and you will not incur guilt. ¹¹ And behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the governor of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters, and the Levites will serve you as officers. Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the upright!”^[a]

In verses 8-11, then, we hear about the practice of justice,
as Jehoshaphat establishes a court of appeals in Jerusalem,
consisting of certain Levites, priests, and heads of families.

We know from Exodus and Deuteronomy that Moses had established a similar system
while Israel was wandering in the wilderness,
but once Israel settled in the land,
it appears that justice was administered almost entirely on a local basis.

That would make sense from what we hear in the book of Judges,
that everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

And in the book of Samuel we hear that people would bring their complaints to the king –
but Absalom comments on how his father, David,
did not have a thorough system of justice.

So Jehoshaphat’s legal reforms may well have been the first time that Moses’ principles
had been applied in Israel’s history.

Some have used this to argue that the Pentateuch must have been written later,
since it reflects a more “advanced” system of justice
than Israel would have had in the days of Moses.

But, of course, that’s exactly what Moses himself says!
Certainly Egypt and Babylon (Israel’s neighbors)
had advanced legal systems before Moses.
And if Moses had been trained at Pharaoh’s court,
then it would make sense

that he would try to provide a more advanced legal system for Israel.
And it makes sense that when Israel settled in the land,
they wouldn't yet be used to the Mosaic system,
and so they would revert to tribal justice (like Judges suggests).

Jehoshaphat had already sent priests and Levites around to teach the Law of the LORD.
Now he attempts to implement some of the judicial principles in that Law.
Amariah the chief priest was the chief judge in "all matters of the LORD"
(matters of ceremonial law),
and Zebadiah the governor of Judah, was chief judge "in all the king's matters"
(matters of civil law).

This distinction (which you see all over the scriptures)
is the root of the distinction between church and state.
Certainly in the Old Testament, they are wedded more closely together,
but there is a clear distinction made between religious matters,
under the judgment of the priests,
and civil matters,
under the judgment of the king.

If you think back to the beginning of the chapter,
Jehoshaphat has just acted foolishly in forming a marriage alliance with Ahab –
"wrath has gone out against you from the LORD" (v2).

Now Jehoshaphat charges his judges with judging justly in the fear of the LORD.
And he warns them that their justice – or lack thereof –
will be the instrument either for bringing wrath on Israel,
or delivering Israel from wrath.

Chapter 20 then shows us what happens when the Son of David sets his heart to seek the LORD.

2. The Assault of the Sons of Lot (20:1-30)

a. Seeking the LORD with Fasting (v1-19)

20 After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites,^[b] came against Jehoshaphat for battle. ² Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom,^[c] from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi).

Here is the wrath that Jehu the son of Hanani had warned about.

The sons of Lot – Moab and Ammon – unite with the Edomites and Meunites
and gather against Jehoshaphat.

In the book of Kings we hear about the time that Moab rebelled against *Israel*,
and Jehoshaphat went with Jehoram, Ahab's son, to fight against Moab.

That was in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat.

In Kings, you hear about Jehoram asking his sister's father-in-law to come help. And they go together with the King of Edom to squelch a Moabite uprising ending up in Kir-hareseth, a Moabite city on the east side of the Dead Sea (Elisha also shows up on the trip to prophesy the LORD's victory).

In Chronicles the men of Moab, Ammon, and Mount Seir (the Edomites) all join to attack Judah – and the battle takes place in the territory of Judah (Engedi) on the *west side* of the Dead Sea.

You might wonder, why didn't the book of Kings tell this story?

Well, in the central section of the book of Kings, the focus is on the house of Ahab.

In fact, everything we know about Jehoshaphat from the book of Kings is oriented around his relationship to Ahab and his house.

And the story that we hear in Chronicles, hear in chapter 20, has no relevance for the house of Ahab.

Jehoshaphat reigned for 25 years.

In the 18th year of his reign, he went with Jehoram (Ahab's son) to suppress the Moabite rebellion.

2 Kings 3 makes it clear that while Israel "won" the battle, Moab did not return to obedience to Israel.

2 Kings 8 also makes it clear that just after the death of Jehoshaphat, Edom rebelled.

It appears from the end of our chapter today that Edom (in some sense) was still loyal to Judah (or at least was perceived by the Moabites and Ammonites as loyal), because the story ends with Moab and Ammon turning against Mount Seir, and then destroying each other in the process!

³ Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

But, when Jehoshaphat hears that the Moabites and Ammonites, and Meunites are coming, he was afraid.

Notice how the fear of the LORD works.

When you hear news that makes you afraid, what is your first response?

For many kings in Jerusalem, their first response was to try to find some ally who could help protect them from their enemies.

But Jehoshaphat "set his face to seek the LORD"

and, what is more, he called all Judah to seek the LORD in fasting.

Notice the point of the fast:

fasting is not designed to “manipulate” God;
when you fast, you are saying, “I am helpless.”

A corporate fast – where the whole community fasts together –
is designed to say, “We are helpless.”

You might say, “well, why not just pray?”

The reason is because while *words* are at the center of our worship,
we cannot ignore our bodies!

In the same way that God included feasts in the regular pattern of worship,
so that *eating* has always been a part of worship –
feasting as an expression of our rejoicing before God –
even so, fasting expresses our *mourning* before God,
when something either has gone dreadfully wrong
(in the case of fasting over our sins),
or when something *could go* dreadfully wrong
(in the case of impending calamity).

You might wonder, then, why the apostles set apart elders with prayer and fasting?

Wouldn't they be rejoicing and feasting about this?

The ordination of pastors, elders and deacons is a fearful moment.

After all, these men are called to exercise Christ's authority in the church.

They have great power to do good – or to destroy –

remember Jehoshaphat's warning to the judges of Judah:

“you shall warn them, that they may not incur guilt before the LORD
and wrath may not come upon you and your brothers.” (19:10)

So Jehoshaphat calls a fast and gathers the assembly in Jerusalem at the house of the LORD.

And he does precisely what Solomon had said a Son of David should do –

he calls upon the LORD,

and asks God to do what he has promised!

(read verses 6-9)

i. The Prayer of Jehoshaphat: ‘Our Eyes Are on You’ (v5-12)

⁵ And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD,
before the new court, ⁶ and said,

“O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven?

You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations.

In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.

⁷ Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel,
and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?

⁸ And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying,

⁹ ‘If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, ^[d] or pestilence, or famine,
we will stand before this house and before you—

for your name is in this house—

and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.’

In verses 6-9 Jehoshaphat lays out the historical situation.

He reminds God of his mighty deeds in history –
his rule over all nations (v6)
his promises to Abraham fulfilled through Joshua in the Conquest, (v7)
and the building of the temple by Solomon (v8-9).

When you pray, remember to recount the mighty deeds of the LORD!
Why?

Because your tendency is to fear man more than you fear God.
But if you recite the mighty deeds of God,
then you are driving yourself back to the fear of the LORD.
Sometimes you may not have time – but don't let that be an excuse!
If you always start with “me and my situation” –
then you will gradually forget who God is and what he has done.

But that doesn't mean that you never get around to the “but now” of verse 10!

*¹⁰ And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy—
¹¹ behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit. ¹² O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”*

Jehoshaphat reminds God that the reason why these nations still exist
is because God did not permit Israel to attack them!

He remembers the story of the wilderness wanderings,
and now he accuses Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir of rewarding good with evil.

(Some might note that since the time of David,
Ammon, Moab and Edom have been under the rule of the kings of Israel and Judah,
so they might argue that they just want their freedom!
But the hope of the nations is the universal rule of the Son of David –
so their quest for freedom is ultimately an act of rebellion against the LORD.)

As we look around us today,
we must also confess that “we are powerless
against this great horde that is coming against us.”
In our day, the “great horde” of unbelief is attacking.

“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you”!

If only more of our leaders had the attitude of Jehoshaphat!
The one who fears the LORD will look to *the LORD* to lead us.

ii. The Word of the LORD: ‘Do Not Be Afraid’ (v13-17)

¹³ Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their

children. ¹⁴ And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. ¹⁵ And he said, “Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s.’ ¹⁶ Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.”

And the Spirit of the LORD then came upon Jahaziel – a Levite of the sons of Asaph.

In Deuteronomy 20, Moses had said that when Israel prepared for battle, the priest should come forward and say,
“Hear O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies:
let not your heart faint.
Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them,
for the LORD your God is he who goes with you
to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.” (20:3-4)

You can see the parallels with what Jahaziel says here.

Jahaziel includes a lot more geographical detail –
including the battle strategy:

“stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD
on your behalf.”

The battle is the Lord’s!

iii. Jerusalem’s Response: Worship and Praise (v18-19)

¹⁸ Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. ¹⁹ And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

And notice the response of Jehoshaphat and all Judah:

they “fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD”
while the Levites “stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel,
with a very loud voice.”

When God declares the coming victory,

we should fall down before the LORD in worship,
and we should lift up our voices to praise the Lord for his steadfast love.

b. Jehoshaphat’s Military Strategy: Believe in the LORD and His Prophets, and Sing Praise (v20-21)

²⁰ And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in

the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed.”

²¹ *And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say,*

*“Give thanks to the LORD,
for his steadfast love endures forever.”*

The next day, Jehoshaphat led his army out into the wilderness of Tekoa.

His military strategy is to listen to the voice of the prophets
and appoint Levites to sing praise (they are wearing “holy attire”
so they are almost certainly Levites).

Ray Dillard points out that the Chronicler closely associates the prophets and the Levites.
After all, the Sons of Asaph, the Sons of Korah, and other Levitical singers
wrote Psalms for the temple liturgy,
which are included in the scriptures together with “the Law and the Prophets”

By the time of the Chronicler – in the 3rd/4th centuries B.C. –
there were few (if any) prophets,
putting a heavier emphasis on the teaching role of the Levites,
so we should expect the Chronicler to emphasize this
as he relates the story of Jehoshaphat to his own day.

c. The Destruction of Ammon, Moab and Seir (v22-23)

²² *And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed.* ²³ *For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.*

But notice the role of the singing in the battle in verses 22-23!

When the people of God start singing –
even when they are outnumbered and overmatched –
that is precisely what God uses as the signal for sending forth his mighty arm!
(Think of Paul and Silas in the jail at Philippi –
singing the war songs of the Prince of Peace)

We are not told exactly how God did this.

Did he sow discord among the Sons of Lot, so that they no longer trusted the Edomites?

Did the Edomites have a change of heart at the last minute,
and (hearing the songs of praise coming down out of the hills)
turn against Moab and Ammon?

One could propose innumerable alternatives –

but the result is clear enough:

the Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites devoted each other to destruction!

“To devote to destruction” – *herem* – is the language of holy war.

And so, while Judah is singing in the hills,
their enemies are helping to destroy each other!

d. The Blessing: “the Fear of God Came on All the Kingdoms” (v24-30)

²⁴ When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the horde, and behold, there^[e] were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped. ²⁵ When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them, in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much. ²⁶ On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah,^[f] for there they blessed the LORD. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Beracah to this day. ²⁷ Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. ²⁸ They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD.

And so Jehoshaphat and his people spent three days collecting the spoil of the armies.

I couldn't help but notice the time sequences here.

There was the first day – the day of fasting.

Then on the “next day” (day 2) – they went out to battle.

Then three days (days 3-5) are spent collecting loot.

Day 6 (the “fourth day” of v26) they blessed the LORD in the Valley of Beracah (the Valley of Blessing).

And on the seventh day they returned to Jerusalem with joy,

and rejoiced over the victory of God with harps and lyres and trumpets.

Now, we're not told which day of that week was the actual Sabbath day.

But the whole story is told in the framework of a single week in the life of Jehoshaphat.

And the result, found in verses 29-30 is that:

²⁹ And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. ³⁰ So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

The LORD won the victory – his people collect the loot –
and then they gather to bless the LORD,
and praise him in the house of the LORD.

It's a good illustration of how salvation works!

Our enemies are too powerful for us.

We cannot defeat them with our own strength!

But we still must march out in faith – singing the praises of God!

Paul and Silas will not win the victory in Philippi if they stay in Antioch!

For that matter, they will not win the victory in Philippi

if they use their Roman citizenship to escape a beating!

Our salvation is entirely a work of God's grace –

but if you do not believe the word of the Lord,

then you will not be saved.

The fear of God will only come upon the nations

when the people of God fear the LORD more than we fear the nations.

3. Evaluation: the Mixed Reign of Jehoshaphat (v31-37)

³¹ Thus Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. ³² He walked in the way of Asa his father and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. ³³ The high places, however, were not taken away; the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their fathers.

And that's where Jehoshaphat receives mixed reviews from the Chronicler.

Yes, Jehoshaphat was a good king who did "what was right in the sight of the LORD."

But there is a problem.

"The high places were not taken away."

Now, we heard in 17:6 that "he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah."

Yes, but that was around the third year of his reign!

This is now twenty years later.

And while he sent teaching priests around to instruct the people
(once – twenty years ago),
and more recently he has established judges to judge justly
(he hopes),
"the high places were not taken away."

From the way this is stated, we may assume that Jehoshaphat wanted them to be removed
but there is a problem:

the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their fathers.

Yes, we need a good king –

a king like Jehoshaphat, who will do what is right in the sight of the LORD.

But we need something more.

We need a king who will change our hearts!

Jehoshaphat does well in seeking to teach the minds of the people.

That's good – because the people of God *need to know* the Word of the Lord!

Education is a good thing.

But education isn't enough.

We need the power and strength to *do* the Word of the Lord –

and that can only come when God writes his word upon our hearts
by his Holy Spirit.

³⁴ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Jehu the son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel. ³⁵ After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly. ³⁶ He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber. ³⁷ Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have

joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made.” And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.

Verses 34-37 then recounts another of Jehoshaphat’s foolish decisions

(most of his folly seems to have been oriented towards alliances with the house of Ahab!)

Here it is Ahab’s son, Ahaziah.

But everything that touches the house of Ahab is cursed!

And so Jehoshaphat’s fleet is wrecked.

Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David...

We give you eternal thanks and praise, our Heavenly Father,

for your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,

who humbled himself and joined himself to our flesh,

that we might be joined to you forever.

Grant us, we pray, by the power of your Holy Spirit,

that we might set our hearts on things above,

where Christ is, seated at your right hand.

Give us eyes to see Jesus,

ears to hear what he is saying,

and hearts that love you and seek first your glorious kingdom,

for we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.