

Research: Jehoshaphat

II Chronicles 20:5–9 *Jehoshaphat*, 30

An account of how a host of Moabites and others invaded Judah; how Jehoshaphat prayed to the Lord, and was directed by Jahaziel not to fear; and how the enemy was overthrown by God.

Jehoshaphat, fourth king of Judah, ruled for 25 years. Considered a wise and pious monarch, he initiated a program of instruction in the law throughout his realm and worked to cleanse the kingdom of idolatry (see 17:6–9).

At this point, the nation is under threat by invading armies gathered at En-gedi (the area where King Saul had pursued David; see I Samuel 24:1). Like Solomon and Asa before him (see II Chronicles 6; 14:9–12), Jehoshaphat appeals to God for help. After he calls for collective fasting and prayer (see 20:3, 4) and offers his heartfelt petition, the enemy is vanquished. The rest of his reign is peaceful (see vv. 22, 30).

“The reign of Jehoshaphat (17:1-20:37)

Jehoshaphat carried on the reform that Asa began, by destroying all the Baal shrines that remained in Judah (17:1-6; cf. 15:17). Positively, he educated the people in the law of God by forming an official group of instructors whom he sent around Judah’s towns and villages. The group consisted of civil leaders, priests and Levites (7-9). He also fortified Judah’s defences and enlarged its army, so that neighbouring countries feared to attack it (10-19).

Judah’s army was so strong that Ahab of Israel sought and obtained Jehoshaphat’s help in a war against Syria (Aram) (18:1-34; see notes on 1 Kings 22:1-40). A prophet rebuked Jehoshaphat for this, as Ahab was a worshipper of Baal and therefore an enemy of God (19:1-3).

Jehoshaphat reformed and reorganized Judah's judicial system to eliminate injustice, guarantee fair treatment for all, and ensure that standard procedures were followed throughout the land.

Some time later, a combined army of various nations from the south and east set out to attack Judah (20:1-2). The Chronicler notes that Jehoshaphat and his people not only cried to God for help, but they did so by gathering at the temple in Jerusalem. That was the place of prayer for God's people in times of crisis (3-12; cf. 6:24-25). As a result God answered their prayer. He assured them through a prophet (who was also a Levite) that the enemy would be defeated without Judah's army having to do anything (13-17).

So Jehoshaphat, when he heard that these three nations were gathered together to invade the land, called the men of Judah together and he proclaimed a fast throughout all of Judah. And he set himself to seek the Lord. The people gathered together.

And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah there at the house of the Lord, in the new court, And he said, O LORD God of our fathers, you are the God of heaven or the God of the universe and the ruler over the earth (2 Chronicles 20:5-6).

5Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court,

. **Before the new court**] probably 'the court of the priests' of 2 Chronicles 4:9, which was distinct from the one in which Solomon prayed:

"The new court - In Solomon's Temple there were two courts. One of these had probably been renovated by Jehoshaphat or by his father, Asa 2 Chronicles 15:8, and was known as "the new court.'" (Barnes' Notes)

6And said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

"Jehoshaphat's appeal is threefold:

(1) to God omnipotent 2 Chronicles 20:6;

(2) to "our God;"

(3) the **God especially "of this house" the temple.**" (Barnes' Notes)

"And said, O Lord God of our fathers,.... Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose covenant God he was:

art not thou God in heaven? that dwellest and rulest there, and dost whatever thou pleasest in the armies of it:

and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the Heathens? being King of kings, and Lord of lords, all the world over:

and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? his power being infinite, unlimited, and uncontrollable, and so not resistible by finite creatures, at least not so as to be stopped and overcome." (Gill's Exposition)

7Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever

"And said, O Lord God of our fathers—This earnest and impressive prayer embraces every topic and argument which, as king and representative of the chosen people, he could urge. Then it concludes with an earnest appeal to the justice of God to protect those who, without provocation, were attacked and who were unable to defend themselves against overwhelming numbers." (Jamieson-Fausset- Brown Commentary)

8And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying,

"And they dwelt therein,.... From ages past, hitherto, since it was first given them, and they were put into the possession of it:

and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name; a temple for his worship, honour, and glory, and for him to dwell in; and is a reason why it might be hoped he would protect them, especially when they prayed to him:

“saying; and he promised to hear and help them, as follows.”
(Gill’s Exposition)

9 If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

“If when evil cometh upon us,.... Any calamity:
as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, God's four sore judgments, if by "judgment" is meant wild beasts:

we stand before this house; in the court before the holy place, and holy of holies:

and in thy presence, for thy name is in this house; called upon in it, and it was called by his name, and in which he dwelt:

and cry unto thee in our affliction; as Solomon prayed at the dedication of it:

then thou wilt hear and help; as the Lord promised”. (Gill’s Exposition)

30 So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.

“20:20-30 Jehoshaphat exhorted his troops to firm faith in God. Faith inspires a man with true courage; nor will any thing help more to the

establishing of the heart in shaking times, than a firm belief of the power, and mercy, and promise of God. In all our trust in the Lord, and our praises of him, let us especially look at his everlasting mercy to sinners through Jesus Christ. Never was an army so destroyed as that of the enemy. Thus God often makes wicked people destroy one another. And never was a victory celebrated with more solemn thanksgivings." (Matthew Henry)