

RETURN TO JUSTICE / Sunday School- July 29, 2012

Unifying Topic: JEHOSHAPHAT MAKES JUDICIAL REFORMS

Lesson Text

I. The People Return To God (2 Chronicles 19:4)

II. The Appointment Of Judges In The Cities (2 Chronicles 19:5-7)

III. The Appointment Of Judges In Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 19:8-11)

The Main Thought: And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. (1 I Chronicles 19:6, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People want to be judged fairly. How can we expect to receive justice? When human judges adhere to God's standards and fearlessly apply to God's laws, there is no perversion of justice.

Lesson Aim: To understand that Jehoshaphat's reformation would prevent more injustices from occurring and would ultimately bring about a spiritual transformation.

Life Aim: To teach Christians that to act justly is to act in a manner consistent with God's intent for His creation.

- 19:4 And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beersheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers.
- 19:5 And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,
- 19:6 And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment.
- 19:7 Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.
- 19:8 Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.
- 19:9 And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.
- 19:10 And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in your cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass.
- 19:11 And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good.

HISTORY:

¹2 Chronicles continues the history of the kings of Judah from the priestly and God-ward focus. Though covering some of the same accounts recorded in the Kings, this record gives insights and details which are not found in the earlier books. The kings were evaluated based on their relationship with the Lord or lack thereof. The influence of godly kings is given special prominence (McGee). It is accepted that the books of the Chronicles were written after the Babylonian Captivity and were meant to show that God has a continuing plan for the temple and His people (i.e. an encouragement that He is not through with them).

Synopsis of 2Chronicles 18—THE DEFEAT AND DEATH OF AHAB (also taken from 1Kings 22)

Jehoshaphat's (king of Judah) troubles began when he joined forces with evil King Ahab (king of Israel). ²Ahab and Jehoshaphat were together at Samaria [they were one in nationality and one through marriage in that Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram married Ahab's daughter] and all the prophets are encouraging Ahab and Jehoshaphat to go to war, including Zedekiah. They were trying to influence Micaiah to say the same thing. But Micaiah is influenced by the Lord and not by the other prophets. Ahab asks Micaiah for the Lord's counsel and interestingly it comes back the same as all the other prophets. Ahab doesn't believe him and asks for further detail [see the Chronicles account]. Micaiah reveals the true prophecy: Israel will be scattered...let every man return to their homes in peace. God has numbered Ahab's days by using the war with Aram to accomplish His will. Micaiah says again: "*Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?*" In fact, God has put a lying spirit in the other 400 prophet's mouths and sealed the lie. Ahab orders Micaiah escorted and put in prison until Ahab returns safely in victory. Micaiah prophesies that if Ahab returns in peace, he has spoken falsely.

¹ <http://www.pleasantviewcma.org/blogs/notes-on-the-bible/2-chronicles---introduction.aspx>

² <http://greenleycommentary.wordpress.com/2010/10/12/11-king-ahabs-exploits-part-3/>

<http://pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Jehoshaphat somehow is convinced to help Ahab and they take their armies to Ramoth-gilead to fight. The Syrians captured it during the reign of Ben-hadad. Ahab has concern for Micaiah's prophecy (vv.12-24) and tells Jehoshaphat to go into battle in disguise wearing his royal robe. The king of Aram tells his soldiers not to fight the soldiers but to focus their attack on the king of Israel. This leaves Jehoshaphat vulnerable because he wearing the king's robe. In fact Aram's soldiers see Jehoshaphat and think he is Ahab the king of Israel. But Jehoshaphat cries out and God protects him. They evidently knew that was not Ahab's voice. The soldiers begin searching for Ahab and one of Aram's archers randomly selects a soldier, fires his arrow, and hits Ahab. Ahab continues to fight but he bleeds to death by day's end and Israel returns home defeated.

In the end Micaiah's prophecy came true. ³The battle of Ramoth-Gilead was the end of the war. Ahab was dead. The attack by the two kings had failed, and their armies had gone home. The people from Aram did not continue the fight into Israel and Judah. The Lord saved Jehoshaphat from the possible results of his bad decision to go with Ahab. The prophet Micaiah knew King Ahab would not return in peace. As you know Micaiah had already prophesied that King Ahab would be slain and the king had already put Micaiah into prison.

Synopsis of Chapter 19:1-3—Jehu Rebukes Jehoshaphat

Because of God's goodness Jehoshaphat was allowed to go home safely and in peace after his involvement with Ahab against Ramoth-gilead. The Lord was angry with Jehoshaphat because he had gone to help Ahab for Ahab hated the Lord and he did not worship Him. It was a serious error to make an agreement with Ahab. Jehoshaphat should not have made such an agreement. The wrath of the Lord was upon him. Now the Lord sent Jehu to Jehoshaphat. Jehu is the son of Hanani. Hanani is the same prophet who had earlier given Jehoshaphat's father, Asa, a similar warning (2Chron.16:7-9). Jehoshaphat now knows: *"Know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" James 4:4.* Afterwards, he didn't have anything bad to say to Jehu, because he knew it all was true. On the other hand, Jehoshaphat still pleased the Lord for the good things that were found in him; things he had already done. He had removed the Asherah poles. And he had tried to obey God. Jehoshaphat desired to be loyal to the God of his ancestors (vv.2-3).

LESSON:

2 Chronicles 19:4 The People Return To God

19:4 And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beersheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers. He took the rebuke of the Lord from Jehu. He knew what he had to do. ⁴It appears that Jehoshaphat saw the error in what he had done. He went back out into his land from city to city (from Beersheba to mount Ephraim describes the limits of Judah from south to north) urging the people back into fellowship with God. He was doing everything he could to cause his people to conform to the ways of the God of their ancestors. He took the advice of the seer and began his change immediately.

2 Chronicles 19:5-7 The Appointment Of Judges In The Cities

19:5 And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,— Jehoshaphat put God's kingdom in greater spiritual order than at any time since Solomon. To insure this order, he set judges in place and gave them principles to rule by. Each of the fortress cities had its judge.

19:6 And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. As he instructs the judges: they were to judge in justice for God, and not for man. These were God's judgments that they would be passing on.

19:7 Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. They were to live in the fear of the Lord. There would be no respect of persons such as impartiality, nor taking gifts, such as bribery for a favorable court decision.

2 Chronicles 19:8-11 The Appointment Of Judges In Jerusalem

³ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/2chronicles-10-36-lbw.htm>

⁴ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/2chronicles/19.html>

<http://pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

19:8 Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat appointed Levites, priests, and family heads to decide on matters that had to do with worship and mediating local differences. Jerusalem served as the site of the final court of appeals for the judgment of the Lord, such as religious cases and for controversies (civil cases).

19:9 And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. There were three charges given and now it was up to them to do them justly: fear God, be faithful to Him, and have a perfect heart in their duties to God. It will always glorify God!

19:10 And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in your cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass. When a case comes before the judges involving any of their fellow citizens, whether it seems larger like murder; bloodshed or small matters of interpretation of the law, they were responsible for warning them that they are dealing with God. They then would be dealing with God's wrath. If they would execute justice correctly they would not sin.

19:11 And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good. ⁵In religious causes, Amariah, the high priest, was to preside over the court; in civil or criminal causes, Zebadiah, the governor was to preside. The Levites were to keep order in the courts. They all were to deal courageously; being bold and diligent. God would certainly be with them when they did such.

SUMMARY:

Jehu rebukes Jehoshaphat for helping King Ahab. Jehoshaphat brings the people close to God and they began to return back to the God of their ancestors (v.4).

He began to put things in order by the appointment of judges in every town. He exhorts them to judge righteously. It is God who is administering through them. He would be with them in judgment. Therefore, they were to let the fear of the Lord be upon them; not having respecter of persons; don't take bribes when judging any case (v.5-7).

Jehoshaphat centrally set the Levites, priests, and family heads for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat began to charge the judges. Three things to be mindful of: do their work in the fear of God; be faithful; and have a perfect heart. Then he talked about the kinds of problems that they must deal with. In the matters of bloodshed, law or commandment, statues or rules then they are warned not to sin against the Lord so as not to incur the wrath of the Lord. Now Amariah the chief priest and Zebadiah the governor are responsible for the interests of the temple and the king's matters. The judicial system has a vital role in ensuring that the nation's life is righteous and just, so that the people do not incur guilt and wrath. The Lord will only be with the good.

APPLICATION:

Fair Justice only comes through God. In our legal system we may get it every now and then. But acting justly before God, won't lead to consequences. God gives second and third chances to return to Him. Our hope is always in Him.

⁵ http://bible.cc/2_chronicles/19-11.htm

<http://pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>