

## **JULY 26**

### **2 Chronicles 17-18**

Unlike the writer of 1 & 2 Kings, Ezra is only interested in the kings of the Davidic line. Today we get far more information on Jehoshaphat than we did in 1 Kings. Again, he was an amazing man of faith, yet one who destroyed everything good that he had done. Actually, we will be reading about the fallout of one amazingly blind decision for the next few days. As you read these two chapters, learn from the good things he did, and then try to understand what it was that motivated him to make such grave mistakes.

#### **2 Chronicles 17**

Vs. 1-6 Notice that the kings are "graded" in terms of David, that is, of following Yahweh only. Jehoshaphat sought the Lord and he was courageous in following the Lord. I'm certain that one of the reasons many of the commands of the Lord were not followed is that it was hard, even for a king, to make the people obey and then to put up with all the resistance. Joe must have had a good way with people. He would have been reigning with his father Asa during the final years of Asa's bitterness, and therefore the people would have been looking more and more to Joe. The fact that everyone brought him gifts and wealth shows they thought he was a great administrator. One other note is that because Asa sent so much of his wealth north to bribe the Syrians, it might have been felt that Jehoshaphat needed it. It was the Lord who made Joe rich, not his own efforts. Keep this in mind.

Vs. 7-9 This was a very wise thing that Jehoshaphat did. You don't read about any other king doing this.

Vs. 10-17 Notice that the result of Jehoshaphat's godliness was that God brought this fear and respect. Notice again that God was making Joe secure and bringing him wealth. You wonder then why Jehoshaphat spent so much time building up the "might" of Judah. Ironically, it wasn't the southern kingdom's might that put them in this position. God honored Jehoshaphat for honoring Him. I wonder why this was so important to Joe. This pride and his military might well lead to the next event. Almost all of the godly kings did something silly when they became strong.

#### **2 Chronicles 18**

Vs. 1-3 Now that Jehoshaphat was strong and honored, he did something that was totally wrong. Without seeking the Lord, he made a marriage alliance with Ahab. I think he knew God would have said no. I think God is trying to tell us something. My only conclusion is that Joe thought he should work to unite the northern and southern kingdoms. This might have been motivated out of a good heart, seeing how God had blessed him, but we know for sure that he never asked God about this. Look ahead at 2 Chronicles 19:1-3. How sad and ironic. Notice that in 2 Chronicles 15:9 it was God's blessing that brought people to King Asa and began to unite the country.

Ironically, Ahab probably wanted Joe's help because of Joe's nice shiny army. This is just speculation, but since Ramoth-gilead had been a Levitical city of refuge, I wonder if Ahab used that to give the "righteous" Jehoshaphat a religious reason to join together with him.

Vs. 4-11 This is a sad portion. It appears that Jehoshaphat was being wise and godly, but Joe had already committed himself to helping Ahab. These words are condescendingly foolish at best. If Joe had asked God if he should even be there, God would have said, "No." Unknown to Joe, he was under the satanic influence that was bearing down on Ahab. We see this influence in the form of this false prophet Zedekiah. We find out in the next section what made Zedekiah so believable and persuasive.

Vs. 12-27 This story is rich with lessons. These kings had hardened their hearts to the Lord's will and so God was giving them up to the lies they wanted to hear. I think this principle is still one God uses today for those who seriously don't want to listen to Him.

V. 15 How funny. Apparently Micaiah had parroted or imitated the false prophets and Ahab saw the ridicule. Ahab actually tried to make it look like he was the spiritual man always having to deal with this foolish prophet.

V. 16 Just the change of tone should have given people goose bumps. This is an incredible portion of the Word.

Vs. 20-22 When we set our hearts to join those who are rebelling against God, we put ourselves under the same satanic influence that is working on them. In this case, Jehoshaphat was also falling under the judgment of God on Ahab. Even before they sought the advice of God, they had already made up their minds. You and I can do this too. You have to wonder what was going through Joe's mind when he heard this from Micaiah. He must have known he was wrong, but hardened his heart and still didn't back down.

Vs. 23-27 It is hard to imagine a godly man like Joe allowing this to happen. I'll bet he knew in his heart of hearts that this was a true prophet of God. And he just sat there and watched the abuse of Micaiah.

Vs. 28-34 What a bummer. Micaiah was right even though they tried to "trick" God.

V. 31 We see this formula all the time. We cry out and He hears us. Notice that Ahab didn't cry out. He is the perfect heroic unbeliever, dying in stubbornness for nothing.

We still have two chapters about Jehoshaphat, but he has shown here the mind and heart attitudes that will bring about tremendous ruin in his family and in Israel. I'm sure Ezra was hoping the returnees would take to heart how serious it was to mix in with the ungodly. As disciples we have this tremendous faith in us to follow Christ; yet, as Paul says in Romans, we have this deep sin within us that pushes us to ignore God at crucial points in our lives. We all have personal issues within us that are a challenge to our obedience and faith. When some idea or project tempts us to go forward and not seek God or hear Him, we need to stop. These details from the lives of such great men of faith are recorded here for no other reason than to warn us to be careful, as we walk before our Lord in His work in the harvest.

### **Romans 9:22-10:13**

The editors who put in the chapter and verse breaks generally did a great job. Because of the tight logic of Romans, the editors did an exact job here. The chapters in Romans comprise complete thoughts, so, in the way we're reading it in The One Year Bible, it is a bit disjointed. I would recommend paging back or ahead and read the complete chapters.

Romans 9:22-33

Vs. 22-24 Read this as the conclusion of Paul's thinking from yesterday.

Paul is slanting the argument toward those who object to God's "use" of the disobedient. If God knows before a person is born that they will rebel against Him, why even let them live? Yet, God allows these people to live and enjoy life and raise heck and do all sorts of stuff that, if you think about it, is hard for God to watch. This is that perfect love of the Father who sends His rain on the just and unjust. Yet, in His divine wisdom and power, He also uses them for His glory and for the purpose of redemption. When it is all said and done, the lost will be lost because of their choices and their free will to reject God. God gives the rebellious chances, shows them love and grace, allows them to live and enjoy life; but in His wisdom He uses them for His purpose.

What we don't see yet is that Paul will say that God is using the disobedience of Israel so that the Gentiles can be saved. This is just "step one" of Paul's argument. In chapter 11 he brings it all together and gets the future nation of Israel saved too!

Vs. 25-29 Saul of Tarsus (Paul) was an intense student of Scripture. At his conversion, his world was shaken. Not only had he been wrong, but he had opposed God, cheered for those who killed the Messiah and had persecuted, beaten, and had part in the murder of many believers in Christ. After his conversion, Paul disappeared for about three years during his Damascus adventure. And after he visited Jerusalem, Paul disappeared again for 10+ years until Barnabas found him up in Turkey. During those years of silence, Paul must have reexamined the Word, trying to understand how he and the Jews missed it, and why salvation was now going to the Gentiles. This passage is evidence (actually all of Romans is evidence) of how thoroughly Paul searched the Scriptures.

Summing up these passages, Paul is showing that the Gentiles are now the focus of God's plan of redemption and that a remnant of Israel has been saved. The fact that Jews could be saved at all signifies that they are a remnant saved by grace; but the time is coming when the nation will turn to God.

Vs. 30-33 This is Paul's conclusion to this part of his argument. You say, "What argument? What's his point?" What is written here is Paul's point. As Isaiah and Jesus predicted, the Jews stumbled over God's plan and particularly over Jesus. The next chapter will support this point. Then chapter 11 will go further and show that in God's plan of redemption, the complete fulfillment of the promise of Abraham and the establishment of the believing nation of Israel is still future. The fulfillment of the promise to Abe is intertwined with the redemption of the Gentiles. Through Abe's offspring (Jesus) all nations (Gentiles) would be blessed. (Galatians 3:8)

Notice in this that the cornerstone was a person and that those who were to believe in that person would not be put to shame. The promises to Adam and Eve, Abe, and David all had to do with a Son, a Person who would win the redemption of man. This reminds me too of Isaiah's description of the Christ, a root out of dry ground. Not pretty or physically appealing, but He was the Messiah all the same and He is mighty to save.

Romans 10:1-13

This is a famous portion of the NT because of vs. 9-13. This entire chapter will show that Israel can only be saved through faith.

Vs. 1-4 The basis of righteousness was always going to be that promised child. The Jews in Jesus' day became lost in following the law and becoming righteous in their own estimation. That's interesting when you think of the Old Testament, since the major problem in most of Israel's history was idolatry and living as if Yahweh was just one of many gods. The Judaism of Jesus' day was a zeal for God, but without truly knowing or loving God.

Vs. 5-8 This is very interesting. It would mean that Moses' words in Deuteronomy were really describing following God in faith in the promise to Abraham. This is one of those portions that show how Paul worked through the OT, looking for salvation by faith. This is from Moses' final words to Israel in Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Look at these OT verses and imagine that the Spirit was really telling the people that rather than religious routine, from the very beginning the law could only be followed through faith.

Vs. 9-11 These are very famous and important verses. Notice, it all has to do with a confession, and the heart and a Person. It isn't just faith. It is becoming absorbed in a Person. In the OT, it was faith in the promise to Adam and Eve regarding her child. It was faith in the seed or offspring of Abraham. It was faith in the eternal heir of David. And all of this "faith" wasn't "faith" until it became confession and following.

Vs. 12-13 Think of all the crying out we have read from David. Think of all the mentions of kings who sought God. This is all the Lord has ever wanted and it is the only way that a person can be saved. Notice this isn't belief in a god or a supreme being. It is calling upon the God of Abraham. It is calling upon the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The message in the harvest is very simple. God does the rest.

### **Psalm 20**

You wonder if David wrote this in his early years as the king of Israel. There were still battles to be fought, but David was in Zion (v. 2) and he had the assurance that God had helped him (v. 6).

David might have written this before a battle with the Philistines or one of the armies hired from the north. But because of the years he had depended on the Lord during hard and uncertain times, you know that he was assured now that trusting in the name of the Lord, not armies (think of Jehoshaphat above), was his strength and salvation.

Vs. 1-5 David understood that victory had to do with personal integrity and devotion to the Lord. Notice the blessing that David invokes on those who follow the Lord.

Vs. 6-8 After all of David's years of running and waiting, he knew he could trust the Lord,

V. 9 Now David was calling for help for the immediate challenge before him.

### **Proverbs 20:2-3**

We don't really worry about "kings," unless we mean bosses, police or teachers. Maybe, it would be good to think of the Lord here. There is a very healthy fear of the Lord that keeps us safe, just like being afraid to put your hand on the stove or to speed past a cop. Sin needs to be kept in check, and fear sometimes does the trick.

V. 3 Along with this, I think of what Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:23-26, *Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.*<sup>24</sup> *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,*<sup>25</sup> *correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,*<sup>26</sup> *and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.*

It is good to fear and respect the Lord, and just to obey. It might feel like fun to be right and win an argument, but Paul tells Timothy what is really at stake. And above all, as disciples, we are the Lord's servants. We are not here in this harvest to serve ourselves.