

The Faith Rest of Jehoshaphat

Outline of 2 Chronicles 20:1-30

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Background

Jehoshaphat was a king of Judah [870-848 B.C.]. He reigned almost 100 years after David and almost 150 years before the Northern Kingdom is taken out. [see Herman Mattox Kings & Prophets chart]

The Duty of the King is to govern upon the basis of the Torah.

Deuteronomy 17:18 Now it shall come about when he [the king] sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.

Deuteronomy 17:19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes.

Proverbs 8:15 (Wisdom is speaking) “By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice.

Proverbs 8:16 “By me princes rule, and nobles, All who judge rightly.

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Jehoshaphat was a good King:

2 Chronicles 17:3 And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father David's earlier days and did not seek the Baals,

2 Chronicles 17:4 But sought the God of his father, followed His commandments, and did not act as Israel did.

In 2 Chronicles 18, Jehoshaphat formed an alliance with King Ahab, a very bad king, of the Northern Kingdom. That alliance resulted in the death of king Ahab and Jehoshaphat's defeat in battle. God chastised Jehoshaphat. Just because Ahab was "kin" didn't mean he was a good guy. So, in 2 Chronicles 20, he learned to seek the Lord.

I. Problem Identified (1-2)

2 Chronicles 20:1 Now it came about after this that the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat.

2 Chronicles 20:2 Then some came and reported to Jehoshaphat, saying, “A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, out of Aram and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is Engedi).”

Verse 1 is a statement of fact with the backing of biblical inerrancy.

Verse 2 is what someone said to Jehoshaphat. What was said to Jehoshaphat is quoted accurately. But, the truth of what was said is not guaranteed. However, it is borne out in the text.

Amon and Moab are Sons of Lot, Abraham’s Nephew.

“Meunites” is not in the Masoretic text. “From the Ammonites” is in the text. This makes no sense. “Meunites” is in the LXX. Later there are three forces: Ammon, Moab, Mt. Seir. There is a “mysterious” people called Meunites that inhabited the region near Mt. Seir (Edom). Textual critics go with the LXX on this.

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A great multitude means you are badly outnumbered, which based upon the narrative is true.

“The sea” is not specified. Logic says it must be the Dead Sea, called in the Old Testament, “Salt Sea.” But it is not so identified here.

En Gedi is on the west side of the Dead Sea (see map).

Logic would suggest that the hostile forces started in Ammon, joined with Moabite forces and then swung around the southern tip of the Dead Sea into Edom and from there into Judah. [see following figure]

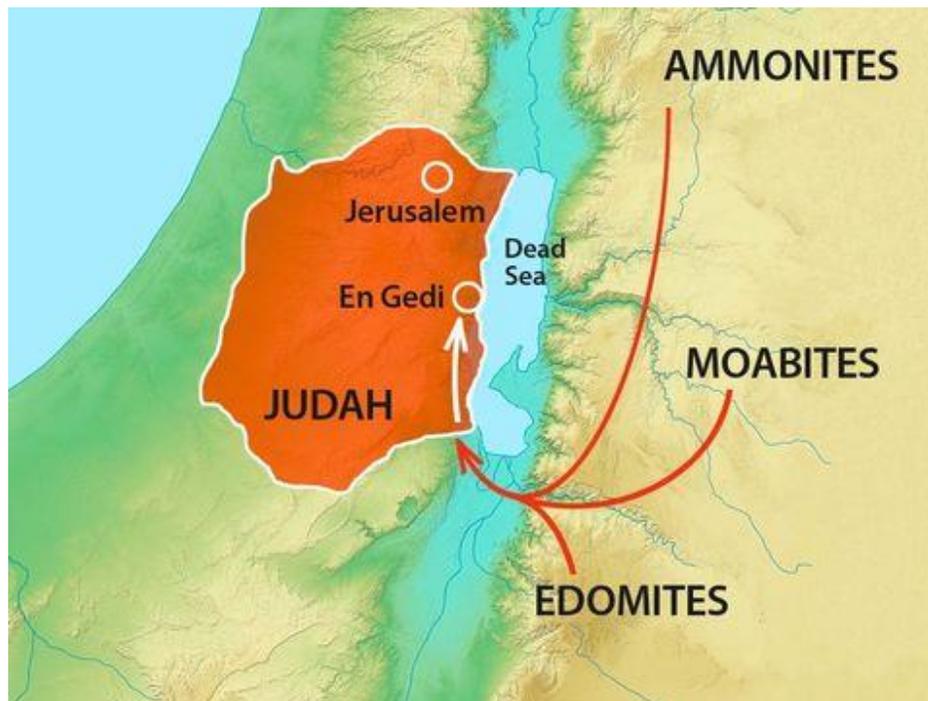


Figure: Map of 2 Chronicles 20 attack

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II. Jehoshaphat Responds (3-4)

2 Chronicles 20:3 Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

2 Chronicles 20:4 So Judah gathered together to seek help from the Lord; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the Lord.

Jehoshaphat was “afraid.” In this context, perhaps a better word is “alarmed.” He did not run in fear or cower in a corner. He acted decisively in faith.

Jehoshaphat “proclaimed a fast.” In this context, it is similar to declaring a national emergency.

There are two different words for “seek.” One is used in verse 3. The other is used twice in verse 4. The one in verse 4 is a “Piel” or intensive verb.

III. Jehoshaphat Prays (5-13)

- Jehoshaphat Stands in the Temple (verse 5)
- God’s Identity and Essence (verse 6)
- God’s Relationship to Israel (verse 7)
- Temple Meeting Place with God (verse 8)
- Protocol Identified (verse 9)

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- Protocol Applied (verses 10 - 11)
- Request for Judgment (verse 12)

2 Chronicles 20:5 Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord before the new court,

Jehoshaphat, as king, takes the lead.

He is the King. War is his purview not the priest. Judah was a theocracy. Politically, Jehoshaphat calls the nation together (national emergency) to fast (verse 3) and pray. It is interesting to note that he does not go to the prophet or the priest to ask what he should do. Instead, he goes directly to God. He understands his relationship with God and the relationship of the nation with God. Contrast this with the actions of king Hezekiah (Isaiah 36) and king Josiah (2 Chronicles 34).

Stood: this often-used word in the Old Testament has diverse meanings. In this context it means to stand up. In this context, he is not just standing up, but taking a stand spiritually. Remember, he is in the house (temple) of the covenant God. It reminds me of what Joshua said in Joshua 24:15 **“...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”**

The verb “stood” in Hebrew is used seven times in this passage (2 Chronicles 20:1-30). Keep in mind as we visit this verb throughout this passage of the Christian duty to stand firm in the Angelic Conflict, Ephesians 6:10-17 (read).

“Assembly” is translated in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) as the Greek word eklessia. Some have tried to point to the use of this word in the Old

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Testament as an early indication of “church.” The Hebrew word means just “assembly, the congregation of all the Jews that met there at the temple.” The Church did not come about until after Jesus death, burial and resurrection. The Church was the mystery doctrine, not taught in the Old Testament. Israel was Israel. The Church is the Church.

House – This is a more personal term than “temple” or “holy” area. Jehoshaphat is addressing the God of the covenant in His “house.” They came to visit with God, their personal God. Today, your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (Lord). How often do you visit with God?

The “New Court” is not well understood by present-day commentators, but it is some part of the temple, God’s house.

2 Chronicles 20:6 and he said, “O Lord, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And 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.

Jehoshaphat addresses God identifying divine essence. In this case, power and might.

In prayer, it is helpful to recognize who it is that we are praying to. Jehoshaphat addresses:

- Relationship: A continuing relationship between God and Israel/Judah/Jerusalem
- Rulership: God and ruler in heaven and on earth

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- Reality: The manifest essence of God
- Resistance: Resistance against God is futile

God of our fathers (This shows that Jehoshaphat understands the longstanding covenant between God and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.)

God in the heavens (Jehoshaphat understands that God is not just superior to man but that he rules in heaven over all creation everywhere)

Ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations (in other words, not just Israel/Judah but all the Gentile nations as well, meaning the whole world.) Satan may be the “ruler” of this world (John 12:31), but God rules as Jehoshaphat recognizes. Satan has to get permission from God for some things he does (Job chapters 1 & 2).

Power and Might – Essence of God

No one can stand against You: None against You standing (infinitive); standing, here, is a different word than the word used of Jehoshaphat standing up in the assembly.

**2 Chronicles 20:7 Did You not, O our God,
drive out the inhabitants of this land before
Your people Israel and give it to the
descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?**

Jehoshaphat understands history, in particular, the history of the relationship between God and Israel.

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It is interesting to note that this is the first of two references in the Old Testament to Abraham being a friend of God. The other is in Isaiah (Isaiah 41:8)

2 Chronicles 20:8 They have lived in it, and have built You a sanctuary there for Your name, saying,

Sanctuary is literally a “holy place.” It is a place set apart for the worship of God.

2 Chronicles 20:9 ‘Should evil come upon us, the sword, or judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before You (for Your name is in this house) and cry to You in our distress, and You will hear and deliver us.’

There is a protocol. Jehoshaphat did not come up with this on his own. Again, he was knowledgeable of the Scriptures and history. Solomon, when he dedicated the temple in which Jehoshaphat stands, said:

2 Chronicles 6:12 Then he (Solomon) stood (same word used of Jehoshaphat when he stands in the temple in verse 5) before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands.

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The similarities between what Jehoshaphat does in our study and what Solomon did during the dedication of the temple are striking.

2 Chronicles 6:21 Listen to the supplications of Your servant and of Your people Israel when they pray toward this place; hear from Your dwelling place, from heaven; hear and forgive.

2 Chronicles 6:28“If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight or mildew, if there is locust or grasshopper, if their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities, whatever plague or whatever sickness there is,

2 Chronicles 6:29 whatever prayer or supplication is made by any man or by all Your people Israel, each knowing his own affliction and his own pain, and spreading his hands toward this house,

2 Chronicles 6:30 then hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart You know for You alone know the hearts of the sons of men,

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2 Chronicles 6:31 that they may fear You, to walk in Your ways as long as they live in the land which You have given to our fathers.

You are encouraged to read the entire chapter of 2 Chronicles 6.

Note the second use of the word “stand.”

2 Chronicles 20:10 Now behold, the sons of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You did not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt (they turned aside from them and did not destroy them),

2 Chronicles 20:11 see how they are rewarding us by coming to drive us out from Your possession which You have given us as an inheritance.

Here, Jehoshaphat is comparing history with current events. He is invoking the protocol set down by God to just trust Him, the same thing we must do. This “trust” and “faith” in God is our protocol too.

2 Chronicles 20:12 O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You.”

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Be careful when you ask God to judge someone. In this case, Jehoshaphat laid out his case. He understood that previously God had instructed Moses and Israel to not attack certain peoples (Deuteronomy 2). Jehoshaphat took that to heart. He also realized that he may have been outnumbered in troops. And he was wise to go to God in a situation in which “nor do we know what to do.” “Our eyes are on You.” How appropriate even today. Don’t we sing to “Turn your eyes on Jesus?”

2 Chronicles 20:13 All Judah was standing before the Lord, with their infants, their wives and their children.

All Judah. That is what the Hebrew text says. I hope God has a video of this scene. I would like to see it. I get goose bumps just thinking about what happened at this point in history. But remember, you have the same faith they had. When you face problems, as the song says, “Take it to the Lord in prayer.” That is faith-rest.

Note the third use of the word “stand.” In this case it is a participle, standing.

IV. God Answers (14-19)

2 Chronicles 20:14 Then in the midst of the assembly the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, the Levite of the sons of Asaph;

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God answered immediately. Sometimes God answers prayer immediately. Sometimes the answer is not evident immediately.

Why the extensive genealogy? Perhaps this genealogy points back to the days of David. Asaph, according to Unger's Bible Dictionary, "A Levite, son of Berachiah, of the family of Gershon (I Chron 6:39; 15:17) eminent as a musician, and appointed by David to preside over the sacred choral services (I Chron. 16:5), B. C. after 1000." (sic).

2 Chronicles 20:15 and he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the Lord to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's.

The battle is not yours but God's. That was true then. It is true now. We walk by faith. Put your cares in God's hands.

It is attention getting, the words God uses. They remind us of David's use of this term. So here it is used for the nation. But David used it on a personal basis. Many people use this as part of their faith-rest. It recognizes that God has the

2 Chronicles 20:16 Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the valley in front of the wilderness of Jeruel.

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2 Chronicles 20:17 You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to face them, for the Lord is with you.”

Wow! God tells them where to sit for a front row seat for their deliverance. He again tells them in different words that the battle belongs to God. He says, not only am I going to deliver you, I want you to see it.

Note the fourth use of the word stand. How often have you trusted God and stood and waited for His answer? God is working in your life everyday. Are you looking? Do you see it?

2 Chronicles 20:18 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.

Wow. Amen!

2 Chronicles 20:19 The Levites, from the sons of the Kohathites and of the sons of the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

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This is before the battle takes place. This is in anticipation of coming events. This is called “confident expectation.” In the Bible, the term is hope.

V. Judah Responds (20-21)

2 Chronicles 20:20 They rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the Lord your God and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed.”

Trust in the Hebrew is from the word “Amen.” Today, we are to walk by faith. As I like to say, faith-dependence on the Holy Spirit. Faith, and then rest.

Note the fifth use of the word “stand.” Again, Jehoshaphat stood up.

2 Chronicles 20:21 When he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the Lord and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, “Give thanks to the Lord, for His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

In everything, give thanks. Note the sixth use of “stood.”

VI. God Acts (22-23)

2 Chronicles 20:22 When they began singing and praising, the Lord set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed.

2 Chronicles 20:23 For the sons of Ammon and Moab rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir destroying them completely; and when they had finished with the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

Wow! Again. This dynamic illustration of God's power on behalf of His people is not unique.

In verse 23, "rose up" is the seventh and final use of the word "stood."

In Hezekiah's day God demonstrated His action on behalf of His people in front of Jerusalem when:

Isaiah 37:36 Then the angel of the Lord went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning behold, all of these were dead.

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In the days of Elisha God caused an attacking army to flee an imaginary army.

2 Kings 7:6 For the Lord had caused the army of the Arameans to hear a sound of chariots and a sound of horses, even the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, “Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.”

2 Kings 7:6 Therefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents and their horses and their donkeys, even the camp just as it was, and fled for their life.

VII. Judah’s Booty (24-25)

2 Chronicles 20:24 When Judah came to the lookout of the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude, and behold, they were corpses lying on the ground, and no one had escaped.

2 Chronicles 20:25 When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found much among them, including goods, garments and valuable things which they took for themselves, more than they could carry. And

they were three days taking the spoil because there was so much.

Remember when the sons of Israel left Egypt. In Exodus 12:36, "...they plundered the Egyptians." God fought the battle, people believed, and they are blessed.

VIII. Judah's Thanksgiving (26-29)

2 Chronicles 20:26 Then on the fourth day they assembled in the valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the Lord. Therefore they have named that place "The Valley of Beracah" until today.

God can leave reminders in your life. Reminders of his work on your behalf. It might be a new house or car. It might be a child. Something to remind you. You believed, God did the work and you were blessed. There are reminders throughout my house, reminders of what God has done for me. I hope you have many in your house, in your life. When you see them, you say, "I remember what God has done for me."

2 Chronicles 20:27 Every man of Judah and Jerusalem returned with Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies.

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2 Chronicles 20:28 They came to Jerusalem with harps, lyres and trumpets to the house of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 20:29 And the dread of God was on all the kingdoms of the lands when they heard that the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel.

IX. Lasting Peace/Rest (30)

2 Chronicles 20:30 So the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God gave him rest on all sides.

The result of Faith-Rest is having peace – fruit of the Spirit in the Christian dispensation.

May God add his blessing to the reading of His Word.