

B. A. Ramsbottom



The king who  
would not listen  
and other kings

# THE KING WHO WOULD NOT LISTEN

AND OTHER KINGS

By B. A. Ramsbottom

2003

Gospel Standard Trust Publications  
12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden,  
Hertfordshire AL5 3DD

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ISBN 1 897837 21 6

Reprinted 2003

Printed by  
*OlivePress*, Stotfold

## Note by the author

This book originated as a series of talks to my Bible class (young people in their teens and early twenties). Hence the style in which the book is written, and its purpose - to be of spiritual help to young people. Writing the book has brought back happy memories of our meetings.

I would emphasise that, though primarily intended for young people, I trust the book will be profitable to older ones also.

B.A.Ramsbottom  
November 1999

## CONTENTS

A LOOK AT THE KINGS .....	5
TABLE OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH .....	6
THE KING WHO WOULD NOT LISTEN Rehoboam .....	7
THE KING WHO PRAYED Asa .....	12
THE KING WHO COULD NOT SAY NO Jehoshaphat .....	17
THE KING WHO WAS INFLUENCED BY OTHERS Joash .....	26
THE KING WHO PROVED A DISAPPOINTMENT Amaziah .....	31
THE KING WHO BECAME PROUD Uzziah .....	36
THE KING WHO WALKED HUMBLY BEFORE HIS GOD Jotham .....	42
THE KING WHO TRUSTED GOD Hezekiah .....	46
THE MOST WICKED KING Manasseh .....	55
THE KING WHO OBEYED GOD'S WORD Josiah .....	60

## A LOOK AT THE KINGS

The question is sure to be asked: what have all these Old Testament kings to do with us? Amaziah? Joash? Jotham? Who were they? Can there be any profit for young people today in considering the lives of these men who lived nearly three thousand years ago? Surely, we live in a different world, with different ideas, different thoughts, different problems.

There are two answers to this:

1. God has said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable" - ALL Scripture, and that includes the lives of these ancient kings.

It is a sad fact that many people (old and young) know only parts of the Bible; there are many parts to which they are strangers. There are more characters in the Old Testament than Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, etc.!

Incidentally, the lives of some of the lesser known kings are extremely interesting - in some places even exciting.

2. There are so many profitable lessons to be learned - by young people. So many of the problems these kings had are the very problems that face our young people today. You may say, "But there is no comparison between days when the fastest way to travel was by horse and now when Concorde can be the other side of the world in a few hours." Yes, but people travelled then (though much more slowly) for the same reason they travel now: for food; for love; to make war; to visit, etc.

Above all man is the same and God is the same; man in his great need as a sinner, and God in His holiness and majesty, and also in His love and mercy.

So we shall find many things that come very close to us today, that speak to our hearts, and many things that will be a real help in our problems and perplexities. Because it has never been easy for girls and boys to live the Christian life, and it is certainly not easy today.

## KINGS OF JUDAH

Before Christ

Rehoboam	975 - 958
<i>Abijam</i>	958 - 955
Asa	955 - 914
Jehoshaphat	914 - 889
<i>Jehoram</i>	889 - 884
<i>Ahaziah</i>	884 - 883
( <i>Athaliah</i> )	883 - 877
Joash (or Jehoash)	877 - 838
Amaziah	838 - 810
Uzziah (or Azariah)	810 - 758
Jotham	758 - 742
<i>Ahaz</i>	742 - 727
Hezekiah	727 - 698
Manasseh	698 - 643
<i>Amon</i>	643 - 641
Josiah	641 - 610
<i>Jehoahaz or Shallum</i>	610
<i>Jehoiakim or Eliakim</i>	610 - 599
<i>Jehoiachin or Coniah</i>	599
<i>Zedekiah or Mattaniah</i>	599 - 588

The kings whose names are in *italics* are not dealt with in the following chapters largely because we are told little about them. After Josiah we have the captivity - when Jerusalem was captured and the two southern tribes taken captive to Babylon for seventy years.

There is a slight variation in the dates as given by different authorities. This follows Edersheim, *Bible History of the Old Testament*, the Oxford and Cambridge text book on 1 and 2 Kings, and the Authorized Version.

# THE KING WHO WOULD NOT LISTEN

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REHOBOAM 975 - 958

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*You can read about Rehoboam in 1 Kings chapters 12 and 14, verses 21 to 31, and 2 Chronicles chapters 10, 11 and 12.*

Who was Rehoboam? He was the son of Solomon. Up till Rehoboam's reign there had been three kings of Israel - Saul, David and Solomon. But in the reign of Rehoboam the kingdom split into two: the ten tribes in the north (now known as Israel) and the two tribes in the south, Judah and Benjamin (known as Judah).

The kings we are looking at were all kings of Judah - some good, some bad. Sadly, there was not one good king of Israel. Rehoboam was the first king of Judah.

Solomon had had his faults. He enjoyed great prosperity but his rule was too heavy and taxation too severe. No one likes high taxes!

*But what old Solomon could do, young Rehoboam could not do. What wise Solomon could get away with, unwise Rehoboam could not get away with.*

THERE IS AN IMPORTANT LESSON HERE.

For instance, an old pastor well-established, dearly loved, can do things that would not be tolerated in a new, young pastor. He needs to walk carefully.

A church some years ago had a most gracious and most capable deacon (he was a solicitor) - so much so that they were happy to leave everything in his hands. But when he died, his successor, a much less able and gracious man, found that the church in no way would allow him the same freedom.



## THE KING WHO WOULD NOT LISTEN

When Rehoboam became king he received a very courteous and sensible request - to lessen the burdens. *He would not listen.* He acted unwisely - proudly - harshly.

*Always listen to a sober, sensible request.* Perhaps you young people will one day be pastors, ministers, deacons, church members, parents, holding important positions in business, etc. Be prepared to listen.

Rehoboam answered in very intemperate language - very, very clever language. He said his little finger would be thicker than his father's loins! He said his father had punished them with whips; *he would punish them with scorpions!*

*Avoid "clever" words. Avoid intemperate language. It does no good.* It was Rehoboam's own father who had written, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Proverbs 15. 1).

As a result the terrible split took place - the ten tribes breaking away and making Jeroboam king.

### GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS A GREAT MYSTERY.

We read (2 Chronicles 10. 15): "the cause was of God" - why the ten tribes revolted. We have the great mystery of divine sovereignty and human accountability.

The Word of God looks beyond second causes. But this does not lessen man's sin. *Rehoboam was at fault.*

Of course, the greatest instance of this is the cross of Christ. It was God's everlasting purpose that His dear Son should die on the cross for the salvation of His people. But those who crucified Him were dreadfully guilty. Peter on the Day of Pentecost said: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2. 23). God's purpose ... man's wicked hands.

Recently a young girl asked me this question. "Why did God place the tree of life in the Garden of Eden if He knew Adam would sin?" The problem of the existence and origin of evil has harassed the minds of philosophers and theologians down the ages. But one thing is clear: God will be glorified even through the entrance of sin into the world.

## REHOBOAM

### ONE MISTAKE CAN HAVE LASTING EFFECTS

2 Chronicles 10. 19: “to this day.” The division that took place, the result of Rehoboam’s sin, continued for centuries, right up to the captivity.

We do need to be very careful how we behave because one slip, one mistake, can have such far-reaching effects. In Jeremiah 15. 4 God threatens great judgments on Jerusalem because of what Manasseh, King of Judah, had done many years before - and even though he repented of it!

There has been a little village chapel where for years a loving, quiet, gracious witness has been maintained to the gospel. Then there is some scandal. And perhaps a hundred years faithful witness is spoiled.

We need to pray the Lord to keep us. We need to walk carefully. Do you know the little verse?:

“With caution we should tread,  
For as we sow we reap,  
And oft bring mischief on our head,  
By some unwary step.”

The New Testament says, “Walk circumspectly.” An old preacher illustrated this by the way a cat, walking along a wall with many pieces of broken glass on it, carefully puts its feet down.

Rehoboam (wisely?) decided to bring back the ten tribes to submission. But God sent a prophet, Shemaiah, to tell him not to do so. (A brave man - the army was assembled ready for battle!)

*And Rehoboam obeyed* (2 Chronicles 11. 4). Was he a good man after all? It is not easy to admit we are wrong, not easy to submit when God says, No.

We then read of a very wise policy (verse 5 and the following verses), Rehoboam building and strengthening cities throughout Judah, making them “exceeding strong.”

We also find an exodus of priests and Levites from Israel (verses 16 and 17), coming to Jerusalem because they could not worship God freely and according to His revealed order in the northern tribes. *This strengthened Rehoboam and Judah.*

We are reminded of the Huguenots (French Protestants). In 1685,

## THE KING WHO WOULD NOT LISTEN

following the revocation of their right to worship freely in France, thousands fled to England. Many of them were very godly, gracious people, and many of them were very skilful craftsmen. This greatly strengthened England.

We read that Rehoboam (and Judah) walked in the ways of the Lord *for three years* (verse 17). The next chapter begins with a most sad statement: “When Rehoboam had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord.”

It seems that when Rehoboam was weak or in trouble, he sought after God for His help; but when he was strong and things went well, he forgot God. *How like us!* Beware of a fair-weather religion! When you are in trouble you pray, but when things go well, prayer is neglected and God forgotten.

There was an old proverb (seemingly written by a Welsh epigrammatist):

“God and the doctor we alike adore,  
But only when in danger, not before;  
The danger o’er, both are alike requited,  
God is forgotten, and the doctor slighted.”

## SIN ALWAYS LEADS TO SORROW

Chapter 12, verse 1, tells us that Rehoboam forsook God. Verse 2 tells us that Shishak, King of Egypt, came against Rehoboam with a vast army - and the Word of God gives the reason: “because they had transgressed against the Lord.” Again the same prophet was sent from God (verse 5): “Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken Me, and therefore have I also left you ....” (The same point as before: God looks beyond second causes.)

Remarkably (verse 6) the king and the princes “humbled themselves; and they said, The Lord is righteous.”

WHEREVER THERE IS REPENTANCE, GOD IS MERCIFUL.

When the Lord saw that they humbled themselves (verse 7), He said, “Therefore I will not destroy them.” *The Lord is very merciful and gracious.*

Remember in the life of Ahab, the apostate King of Israel, even

## REHOBOAM

when he made some weak, empty profession of repentance (1 Kings 21. 25-29), God honoured it and Israel did not suffer in his lifetime. How much more so the humble repentance of a true believer - forgiveness, salvation, heaven!

“Come then, repenting sinner, come;  
Approach with humble faith;  
Owe what thou wilt, the total sum  
Is cancelled by His death.”

### WAS REHOBOAM A CHILD OF GOD?

In chapter 12, verse 11, we find that Rehoboam is still religious. He still “enters into the house of the Lord.” He still worships the true God.

Only God knows whether our religion is real or not. A young lady whose funeral I was to take, not long before she died said to me, “It is not what you will say about me that matters. It is what the Lord thinks about me.”

We need to be right in God’s sight, born again of the Holy Spirit, prepared for heaven, blessed with repentance and faith, washed in the Redeemer’s blood. *Rehoboam was not right.*

God will always have the last word, and God’s last word about Rehoboam is (verse 14) “He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.” *He was never right at heart.*

This is the thing that really matters. This is the vital point. May we not be like Rehoboam, “the man who would not listen.” Yet he *did* listen - sometimes. But he never listened to God on the vital point of his soul’s salvation.

“Am I made a *real* christian  
Washed in the Redeemer’s blood?”

# THE KING WHO PRAYED

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ASA 955 - 914

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*You can read about Asa in 1 Kings chapter 15, and 2 Chronicles chapters 14, 15 and 16.*

Asa is a most interesting king. He was Rehoboam's grandson. Not least he is remembered for his prayer. He is one of the good kings. He was probably only about eleven when he became king.

Though he was only young, he began to reform Judah. He put things right that were wrong.

None are too young to know and fear the Lord; none are too young for what they know to be right.

It is not easy to stand. It was not easy for Asa. It is not easy now. Young people find so many problems - at school, at work, at college. If you try to stand - not doing things on Sundays, not going to the pub, not going to nightclubs - sometimes people today will not even understand what the point is. You may be persecuted. Or people may smile at you - and it is hard to stand a smile. Many people who can stand persecution, even to blows, cannot stand being laughed at.

Your first day (at school, college, work) will not be easy. But God is able to make you stand. That is a good word: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

But Asa *was* king - which helped. He was in a position of authority. He had the opportunity, and he took it. If you are in a position of influence - teacher, parent, "boss" - take the opportunity to use the

## ASA

influence for good. It is always easy to say, "Don't bother. Leave things as they are."

### HOMOSEXUALITY

1 Kings 15. 12: "He took away the sodomites out of the land." "Sodomites" is the old name for homosexuals.

The Bible is always up to date. Homosexuality is one of the issues of the present day. Years ago it was never mentioned. If heard of, it was abhorred. But now not only do we constantly hear and read of it, but we have homosexuals in prominent positions: in Parliament, in the Government, ministers in the Church of England, etc.

There is this terrible lowering of standards. Not long ago Sir Rhodes Boyson said he had never heard of such a thing till he was in the navy - and then he thought the people who were telling him about it were just joking. He could not credit that there was such a thing.

*The Bible speaks most solemnly against homosexuality as sin in the sight of God.*

See especially the closing verses of Romans chapter one, which speaks very solemnly of this sin of homosexuality. It is an interesting fact that two or three of the kings of Judah put down this sin, and they are specially commended for it.

### IDOLATRY

Asa forbade idolatry.

1 Kings 15. 13 he removed Maachah his mother from being Queen because she was an idolater. (It would appear from careful reading of Scripture that she was the Queen Mother.)

*There is an important principle here.* What do you do? It is a friend, or a close relative, who has acted wrongly. Do you excuse them? Or do you have to disagree, even if it is someone you love?

Partiality has worked havoc in our churches (as has prejudice also). "Yes, but he is a nice man ...." If a thing is wrong, it is wrong; if it is right, it is right - no matter who has done it. We need to remember that it is before the Lord.

However - do not fall into the sin of disloyalty, or deserting a friend if he has acted wrongly!

## THE KING WHO PRAYED

Things went well with Asa. There was great prosperity. Then trouble. Often just like that with us! A vast army of a million Ethiopians, led by Zerah, with 300 chariots was coming against Asa. This was a great trial. It seemed like certain death, and destruction, and defeat.

What did Asa do?

He looked not at the things that were seen, but the things that were unseen (2 Corinthians 4. 18). He did not look at Zerah, and the million soldiers, and the chariots. He looked to his God, whom he knew was almighty.

His prayer is recorded, and it is one of the beautiful prayers of Scripture. He cast himself on his God.

ASA'S PRAYER (2 Chronicles 14. 11)

1. "Asa cried." Not just prayer - a cry. There is something very real, very urgent about a cry. "He will be very gracious to thee at the voice of thy cry."

2. He saw that God is omnipotent. The most impossible thing with Him is easy. "Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power." The One to whom we pray is almighty.

"With heaven and earth at His command,  
He waits to answer prayer."

3. He cried for help. "Help us, O Lord." His prayer was very simple.

We think of the little prayer, "Lord, help me." It is our daily, hourly prayer. We can never wear it out. Have you had to pray it today?

4. He was completely dependent. He realised how weak and helpless he was, and depended completely on the Lord: "*We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.*"

"We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender;  
We go not forth alone against the foe;  
Strong in Thy strength, and in Thy keeping tender,  
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go."

## ASA

This is the right attitude for a girl or boy facing problems, facing dangers, facing the unknown way. Some young people have chosen this hymn for their wedding.

5. The Lord did everything. Prayer was answered. There was a complete deliverance. Do we know the value of prayer?

The best of men are only men at best. In 2 Chronicles 16, many years later, we find Asa faced with a similar difficulty. The King of Israel was coming now to fight against him. (How sad that Judah and Israel should be at war!)

*This time Asa acted as badly as he had acted well before.* He went as far as to take the treasure from the house of God and send it to the King of Israel. He trusted in “an arm of flesh” instead of trusting in God.

It seems very, very strange. He fell in the place where he was strong. A man of prayer - the same circumstance - but no prayer this time! We need to be very careful *where we are strong*. Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived - but no one acted more foolishly; Samson the strongest - but no man more weak; Job the most patient - but what impatience! “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

God sent a faithful prophet, Hanani, to rebuke King Asa. He was a faithful man. But his rebuke contains a “hidden gem”:

“The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong” on our behalf.

### LAST DAYS - NOT BEST DAYS!

Asa’s last days were not his best. Sadly, this is often true today; many of our godly old people prove that their last days are *not* their best days. (This has become a well-known prayer among us: “Let their last days be their best days.”)

We do need upholding and keeping to the end. “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

Verse 10. Asa was in a rage because he was rebuked. How do we go on when someone tells us our faults? Our best friends are those that do, kindly and lovingly. Some of our best times at chapel will be when the preaching finds us out and shows us where we are wrong.



## THE KING WHO PRAYED

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”

Verse 10. He oppressed the people. It almost seems like a character change. Can this be the same Asa who prayed that beautiful prayer?

Verse 12. He was diseased in his feet (was it gout?): “Yet he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.”

This is not a condemnation of doctors or medicine. God uses both. But we are to look to the Lord, not to the doctor. Use the means, but do not rely on them. The best means, without the Lord, will not avail; the weakest means, with the Lord, will. (We should not speak like this: “I’ll take you to the doctor to make you better.”)

*What then was Asa’s fault?*

1. He was swallowed up by his infirmity. Beware of being completely swallowed up with your illness or your trouble. In the parable of the sower, when the Lord Jesus spoke of the thorns that strangle the growth, He spoke of “the cares of this life” - not just pleasures and riches. We cannot escape the cares of this life, but we should seek not to be swallowed up by them. God has prescribed a remedy: “Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.”

2. There wasn’t much prayer. “He sought not to the Lord.” Watch your spirit when in trouble and there is not much prayer.

You may say, “But this is about old people!” Young people need grace to continue, grace to endure to the end. A warning!

“SOVEREIGN GRACE O’ER SIN ABOUNDING”

Was Asa a child of God? He certainly acted badly in his last days. But God has made it abundantly clear in a wonderful word of love and mercy: “Nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.”

It is the heart that matters. Am I right at heart? And God, who knows all things, knew that Asa was. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

# THE KING WHO COULD NOT SAY NO

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JEHOSHAPHAT 914 - 889

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*You can read about Jehoshaphat in 2 Kings chapter 3, and 2 Chronicles chapters 17 to 21.*

There is no doubt that Jehoshaphat was a good man - but he was unable to say NO. Right through his life we find him compromising. One of the hardest things for a girl or a boy is to say, No; to be different. But, through grace, it is a lesson to be learned. We must not be like the chameleon which changes its colour according to its surroundings. There are too many “spiritual chameleons” about. Do not be a chameleon.

So there are two things we trace right through Jehoshaphat’s life:

1. He compromised. Though a good man he acted wrongly by not saying, No, when he should have said, No.

2. Despite all this, God was very gracious, and whenever Jehoshaphat was in trouble and prayed, God always answered him. How wonderful is the grace and mercy of God!

2 Chronicles chapter 17 gives us a remarkable picture of King Jehoshaphat’s godliness and prosperity:

“The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in His commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. Therefore the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand ... and he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord” (verses 3-6). What a wonderful picture! Then we come to chapter 18.

## THE KING WHO COULD NOT SAY NO

### I. THE BATTLE AGAINST SYRIA

#### *Jehoshaphat's compromise*

“Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab” (verse 1). The first downward step! Ahab, King of Israel, was a dreadfully wicked monarch. Jehoshaphat even married his son Jehoram to the equally wicked daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, named Athaliah. Later we shall see the havoc this woman Athaliah caused.

Though this friendship with Ahab was bad, Jehoshaphat's language was disgraceful: “I am as thou art, and my people as thy people” (verse 3). So the two decided to go together in battle against the Syrians to recover Ramoth-gilead.

However (verse 4), it seems clear that Jehoshaphat's conscience began to prick him. He requested “enquiring at the word of the Lord” (verse 4). The present day equivalent is: “Let's have a word of prayer first.” Beware of this! A word of prayer will not make wrong things right, neither can we ask God's blessing on what is contrary to His Word.

When the four hundred prophets came and said, “Go!” and, “all will be well!” Jehoshaphat knew the difference from a prophet of the Lord, and so he asked for “a prophet of the Lord.” Reluctantly a most godly man, Micaiah, was sent for, and Ahab could say nothing good about him. The false prophets with exaggerated language and dramatic symbolism assured the two kings that all would be well, and Micaiah was advised to use his common sense and talk as they talked. His godly answer still rings down the ages, the standard for every true servant of the Lord:

*“As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.”*

Micaiah is one of the long cloud of faithful witnesses. Despite threats and scorn he faithfully predicted what would be the outcome - the nations scattered, and Israel bereaved of its king.

One of the false prophets, Zedekiah, smote Micaiah upon the cheek (verse 23), and so he walked in fellowship with his Lord and Master. But O Jehoshaphat! Can you really be a child of God? To remain silent when one of the Lord's servants is persecuted for the Lord's sake? “And the King of Israel and Jehoshaphat King of Judah sat either of them on his throne, clothed in their robes.” All this from

## JEHOSHAPHAT

Jehoshaphat not saying, No, at the beginning. The little children's hymn says:

“The way to ruin thus begins,  
Down, down like easy stairs.”

So the battle began. A treacherous friend Ahab proved to be - *he* went in disguise, but Jehoshaphat in his royal robes, so that the enemy would ignore Ahab and seek to slay Jehoshaphat. A real friend is of great value, but there is nothing worse than an unfaithful friend. Do be careful who your friends are.

*God's mercy*

Now see a child of God in trouble - trouble which he had completely brought upon himself and fully deserved. And Jehoshaphat knew it.

The enemy thought Jehoshaphat was Ahab. They gave commandment not to fight with any, small or great, only the king - that is, to join all their forces to slay the king (i.e. Jehoshaphat whom *they* thought was Ahab). In other words, Jehoshaphat was facing certain death, a whole army trying to kill one man. See a child of God in trouble.

“And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the King of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight” (verse 31). No way of escape! The end!

Now see the wonderful mercy of God:

“BUT JEHOSEPHATH CRIED OUT, AND THE LORD HELPED HIM; AND GOD MOVED THEM TO DEPART FROM HIM.”

But how great is the mystery of divine sovereignty! When God has a purpose to fulfil, it must be fulfilled, both in judgment and mercy. No one knew which one *was* Ahab; he was disguised to appear like any other soldier. But one of the enemy “drew a bow at a venture”; in other words what we would call “a chance aim” or “just a random shot.” And God directed the arrow so that King Ahab was killed. So Micaiah, the prophet of the Lord, was right after all. The majority are not always in the right. God's Word will stand even if there are 400

## THE KING WHO COULD NOT SAY NO

false prophets who deny it. A very important principle as week by week we read of the onslaughts of religious leaders against the truth.

*“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee.”*

Jehoshaphat proved this beautiful verse to be true. We wonder if it was a verse he knew? But it is still true today. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble” - even trouble you have brought upon yourself, even trouble you know you deserve.

“But Jehoshaphat cried out” - that wonderful *but*; and how much real prayer there is in a cry. “He will be very gracious to thee at the voice of thy cry.”

God is a great Deliverer, and Jehoshaphat proved it. He was to prove it again.

### THE SEQUEL

In chapter 19 we have the sequel to this. “Jehoshaphat the King of Judah returned to his house in peace” (verse 1). Ahab did not. But Jehoshaphat had sinned, and though the Lord had shown so much mercy, it was time for a reproof.

“And Jehu the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord” (verse 2). And Jehoshaphat fell under it, and amidst it all he still had the assurance of God’s favour and love (verse 3).

We are constantly failing and sinning, and it is a wonderful mercy when God corrects us. Some of our most profitable times at chapel are when the Word finds us out and shows us where we are wrong. It is exceedingly solemn if we are acting wrongly and God does *not* reprove us. “He is turned to his idols, let him alone.”

After that, we find the fear of God prevailing in Judah, judges being appointed, and the witness that they acted faithfully. Jehoshaphat’s counsel to the judges is needed just as much by us today:

“Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart” (verse 9).

## II. THE BATTLE AGAINST MOAB

In 2 Kings chapter 3 (strangely the only mention of Jehoshaphat in

## JEHOSHAPHAT

the Book of Kings) we have Jehoshaphat going into battle again, and in trouble again. And again - because he would not say, No.

This time it was Ahab's son, Jehoram, another wicked king. The King of Moab, who each year paid rich tribute to the King of Israel, had rebelled. Naturally Jehoram wanted to win back his allegiance, and so prepared to go to war with him. To make sure of victory, he asked Jehoshaphat to help though there was no reason at all why he should. It seems almost incredible: Jehoshaphat acted just as he had done before. Another evil alliance! Another failure to say, No! And unbelievably the very same words: "I am as thou art, my people as thy people," and this time, even "my horses as thy horses."

We wonder, will Jehoshaphat never learn? Has he a short memory? One thing is clear: *he is bound for more trouble*. (There is even a brief mention of another evil alliance right at the end of his reign - 2 Chronicles 20. 35).

### *The trouble*

Quick plans were made - no mention of God - to go through the wilderness of Edom. And surely all is well, for the King of Edom joins them, making victory sure.

"And they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host." After seven days' march, the three kings and their armies were about to die of thirst. God will always have the last word, and if His children sin, He will always chastise. God's children cannot sin cheaply.

The poor King of Israel could only speak the language of despair (verse 10) but Jehoshaphat remembered "the sinner's sure retreat," his God. He asked if there were some prophet of the Lord to counsel them and help them, and unbelievably there was Elisha! We wonder whatever the prophet Elisha was doing going to battle with them. From his point of view we can only think that it was with a desire still to be a witness to God's people, even when they were acting wrongly. From Jehoshaphat's point of view, surely it was the kind providence of God.

Now see the three kings "going down" to Elisha - not summoning him to them. There are many cases in Scripture where God's servants

## THE KING WHO COULD NOT SAY NO

have been honoured in the midst of trouble - for instance, witness Paul in Acts chapter 27 (the shipwreck) taking charge of the situation. But it was a withering word for wicked Jehoram: "What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy fathers .... Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the King of Judah, I would not look toward thee" (verse 13 and 14).

Then we find a most strange thing happening. Elisha said, "Bring me a minstrel." Whatever are we to make of this? A terrible crisis, three armies about to perish, and the prophet is asking for someone to come and play a tune to him! I believe the explanation is simple. The Old Testament was a dark dispensation. There was not the same liberty and access in prayer. The equivalent under the gospel would be to sit down quietly with the Word of God in prayer, seeking God's help, not rushing into things. No doubt it would be a Psalm the minstrel would play and sing. But the message is very plain to us. In any sudden crisis, do not wildly rush to do what you think best. Call on the Lord for help, and ask Him to show you what to do. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

### *The deliverance*

Then Elisha gave a gracious answer from the Lord. In every case, Jehoshaphat received divine help, despite his sin, when he called on the Lord. The answer was a strange one: "Dig ditches all over the valley." How often God's way is a mysterious way; but it is the right way, and the only way, and it avails.

Next morning all the ditches were full of water, sufficient for the three armies to drink, and live. God's wonderful fulfilment of His promise to supply His people's need - despite their sin. "Jehovah-jireh: the Lord will provide."

But God's wonderful answer worked two ways. The Moabites, seeing the early morning sun shining on the water in the ditches, thought it was blood. They surmised that the three armies had destroyed one another. Really, without preparation, they rushed headlong into battle: "Moab to the spoil!", only to be repulsed and defeated, even being smitten when they had retreated back into their own country.

## JEHOSHAPHAT

All we can say is: what wonders God can do! Another wonderful deliverance.

### III. THE BATTLE AGAINST AMMON, MOAB AND MOUNT SEIR

In 2 Chronicles chapter 20 *again* we find Jehoshaphat in trouble, and again the Lord miraculously delivered him. And this time we have given to us the beautiful prayer that he prayed.

This time it does not seem that trouble came through any particular fault of Jehoshaphat. When we see God's people in trouble, we must never assume it is because of backsliding or unconfessed sin. (If trouble comes to us personally, we should enquire of God if it is because of backsliding or unconfessed sin.) Many times God's people are walking tenderly in His fear when trouble comes.

The trouble this time was that a great army was coming to fight against Judah, "a great multitude from beyond the sea" (verse 2). There were the Ammonites and the Moabites, and they were joined by the people of Mount Seir. "Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat ...." We never know what we may hear, suddenly, unexpectedly. Not one of us know what we may hear even today, or tomorrow, that will throw us into turmoil. To Jehoshaphat it seemed certain death and destruction for him and for his people. So what did he do? He cast himself on the Lord in prayer. The whole of Judah gathered together "to ask help of the Lord" (verse 4). It is accounts in Scripture like this which are such a help and encouragement to us today, for God is the same.

### JEHOSHAPHAT'S PRAYER

We have this beautiful prayer recorded, a "pattern prayer." Perhaps the question may be asked: in such an extremity, is it not best just to cry out? to say something like, "Lord, save us"? Is there any need for such arguments? One of the Puritans has answered that question like this: if a tiny child cries, his father is pleased to listen and help; but if one of his grown-up children comes seeking help, he likes to hear a few reasons why.

1. Jehoshaphat viewed God's omnipotence, that He is almighty,



## THE KING WHO COULD NOT SAY NO

that He can do all things. “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” (verse 6). It is a wonderful help to prayer when by faith we can view who God is, and that He is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

2. He remembered what God had done for His people in past days (verse 7). He had driven out the heathen; He had given the land to His people. It is a great encouragement when we can remember how the Lord has helped us in the past in our extremities, and because He is eternally the same, to believe He will not fail to help us now.

“He who has helped me hitherto

Will help me all my journey through.”

3. He remembered the temple (verse 8). Perhaps this seems strange to us, but the temple meant so much to the Old Testament saints. For instance, Daniel and Jonah both looked to the temple in their time of need. Why? Because in the temple was a high priest, a sacrifice, a mercy seat sprinkled with blood - all pointing to Christ. So in our prayers, as sinners to look to Christ and see the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, the encouragement for a sinner to venture despite all his guilt.

But more: he remembered Solomon’s prayer of intercession (verse 9) for the people of God when in such a dangerous condition. “Behold, a greater than Solomon is here.” In our time of need we look up to an exalted King and Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, ever interceding for His people.

And Jehoshaphat did not forget “Thy name” (verse 8), nor do we - the name of Jesus, the sinner’s all-prevailing plea.

4. He put *everything* into the Lord’s hands (verse 12), confessing his utter helplessness and weakness, his complete lack of wisdom, but looking only to the Lord. None ever perished there. What a help this beautiful verse has been made to the people of God in their time of need: “We have no might ... neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee”! In New Testament language, “Looking unto Jesus.”

## JEHOSHAPHAT

### GOD'S ANSWER

First, God sent a prophet to encourage Jehoshaphat: "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's" (verse 15). Sometimes God speaks a word of comfort while we are still in the middle of trouble.

Directions what to do followed: "Tomorrow go ye down against them" (verse 16), and promise of sure success: "Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you ... fear not, nor be dismayed ... for the Lord will be with you" (verse 17).

So in verses 18 and 19 we see Jehoshaphat and all Judah rejoicing. Their circumstances were *exactly* the same; their trouble was *still* as great - but now they had God's word that all would be well.

### *The deliverance*

There was nothing Jehoshaphat and his men needed to do. God did it all. Really, He performed a miracle. As the people sang praises to their God, their enemies began to fight among themselves and destroy one another (verse 23 and 24). There were only two things for Judah to do:

1. Praise and bless God - so that the place was called the Valley of Berachah (the valley of blessing) (verse 26).
2. Gather in the spoil (verse 25), riches and precious jewels, so much that they were three days in gathering it all.

So Jehoshaphat and God's people did not lose through their trouble; they were enriched. Often it is so with God's people: they learn so much in their trials, and come out spiritually enriched. So it was with the Lord's disciples on both occasions when it seemed certain their boat would be wrecked on the Sea of Galilee. "What manner of Man is this?" "This is the Son of God." Bitter trials, but they learned more about the Lord Jesus than ever they had known before.

"For the wonders He has wrought,  
Let us now our praises give;  
And, by sweet experience taught,  
Call upon Him while we live."