



Second Chronicles - Chapter Twenty

III 2 Chronicles 10:1-36:23 - The Kingdom of Judah Down to the Exile (continues)

III.d 2 Chronicles 17:1-20:37 - Jehoshaphat (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Twenty

This is the Chronicler's own material, describing a victory over Judah's enemies in which the sovereign God alone acts for his people. In contrast to earlier battles in Chapters 13 and 14, Judah's part is simply to pray for God's help, trust in his word, worship him, and then watch thankfully while the Divine Warrior destroys the enemy.

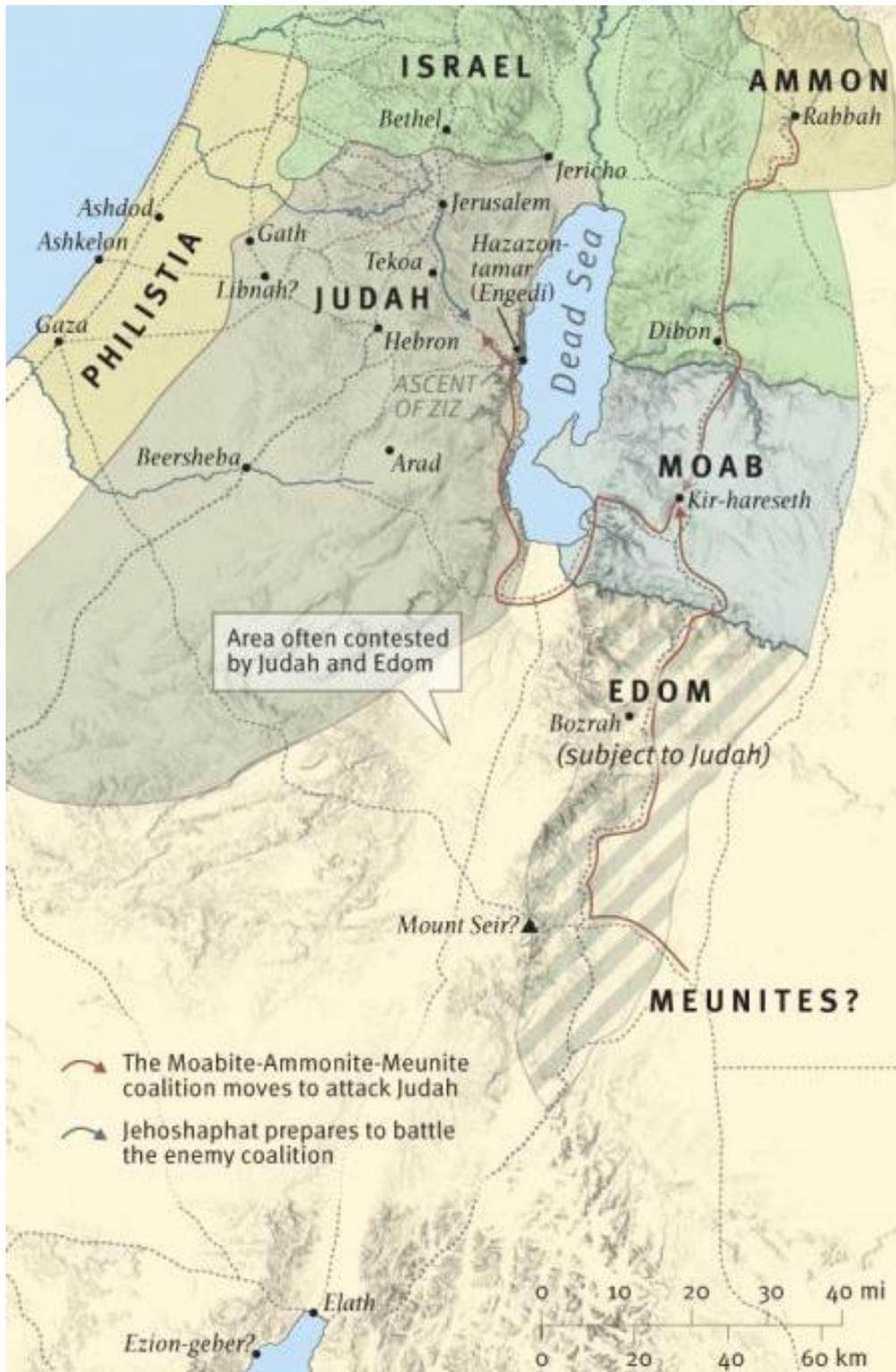
The narrative draws together a wide range of religious themes and practices, especially those centred on the temple, and also alludes to many earlier scriptural texts and themes. Jehoshaphat's faith is presented here in the most positive light, although the Chronicler will go on to show a further lapse in vv.35-37, and the rest of the nation, conceived here as a sacred assembly, similarly acts in an exemplary way.

The significance of the narrative for the Chronicler's own postexilic community seems clear: although Judah was a small and oppressed outpost of the Persian Empire, recourse to the temple in prayer and trust in the prophetic word was its sure defence in the most testing circumstances, including the dangers posed by its hostile neighbours. This is confirmed in Ezra Chapter 4 and also in Nehemiah Chapter 4.

III.d.v 2 Chronicles 20:1-4 - Invasion from the East

Early in Jehoshaphat's reign over Judah, the Moabites rebelled and gained independence from Israel. Soon after this they formed a coalition with the Ammonites and the Meunites to attack Judah. When they had crossed the Dead Sea

and were making their way up the ascent of Ziz at Hazazon-tamar (Engedi), Jehoshaphat's army prepared to meet them in battle. Before the battle could begin, however, the Lord caused the Moabites and the Ammonites to turn and attack the Meunites, and the coalition was routed without Judah having to engage in the fighting at all.



The Moabite Alliance Attacks Judah

¹ After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. ² Messengers came and told Jehoshaphat, ‘A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; already they are at Hazazon-tamar’ (that is, En-gedi).

2 Chronicles 20:1-2

After this. The invasion followed Jehoshaphat’s religious and judicial reforms of Chapter 19, and so was not an instance of divine punishment: <<*In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the Lord, King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem*>> (2 Chronicles 12:2) but rather an opportunity to exercise faith: <<*And the Lord sent an angel who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned in disgrace to his own land. When he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword*>> (2 Chronicles 32:21).

The Moabites and Ammonites lived east of the Dead Sea.

The Meunites are equated with the people of Mount Seir (v.10), on the southern border of Judah: <<*we journeyed back into the wilderness, in the direction of the Red Sea, as the Lord had told me, and skirted Mount Seir for many days*>> (Deuteronomy 2:1), and: <<*God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabs who lived in Gur-baal, and against the Meunites*>> (2 Chronicles 26:7).

A great multitude. Judah was apparently outnumbered by the coalition of enemy nations. This great multitude was a significant threat against Jehoshaphat, whose last experience on the field of battle was a narrow escape from death. Refer also to 2 Chronicles 13:8, 14:9 and 32:7 for instances of great multitudes coming.

En-gedi lies on the midpoint of the Dead Sea’s western shore.

³ Jehoshaphat was afraid; he set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the towns of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

2 Chronicles 20:3-4

Jehoshaphat was afraid. There was certainly a sense in which Jehoshaphat feared the great multitude coming against him. Yet the sense here is that he feared the Lord, and was more awed at the power and majesty of God than at the destructive force of his enemies.

To seek the Lord. David had given this as an instruction to Solomon and by implication to all the kings that should succeed him: <<*Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God. Go and build the sanctuary of the Lord God so that the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy vessels of God may be brought into a house built for the name of the Lord*>> (1 Chronicles 22:19). Seeking the Lord was characteristic of Jehoshaphat at his best; refer to 2 Chronicles 17:4, 18:4 and 19:3. Jehoshaphat set the example by his own personal devotion. He would not call upon the people of Judah to seek the Lord in a way that he did not.

Seeking the Lord is a recurring theme in Second Chronicles: the leaders who seek the Lord. God can be expected to do great things when his people, and especially the leaders of his people, seek him. Others who sought the Lord in Second Chronicles include:

- The faithful remnant of Israel (2 Chronicles 11:16).
- The people of Judah under King Asa (2 Chronicles 14:4 and 15:12-13).
- Jehoshaphat in the early part of his reign (2 Chronicles 19:3).
- King Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 31:21).
- King Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:3).

It is, therefore, unsurprising that Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah are the only Judæan kings described as being good leaders by doing what was right in the sight of the Lord.

Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. Jehoshaphat called the nation to express their humility and total dependence upon God through a public fast - that is, abstaining from all food for a period of time, typically a day or more, and drinking only water. The fast was an expression of the special intensity of the people's prayer: <<*Then all the Israelites, the whole army, went back to Bethel and wept, sitting there before the Lord; they fasted that day until evening. Then they offered burnt-offerings and sacrifices of well-being before the Lord*>> (Judges 20:26), and: <<*Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might deny ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and cavalry to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king that the hand of our God is gracious to all who seek him, but his power and his wrath are against all who forsake him. So we fasted and petitioned our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty*>> (Ezra 8:21-23).

In Mark 9:28-29, Jesus explained that prayer and fasting together were a source of significant spiritual power. It is not as if prayer and fasting makes anyone more worthy to be blessed or do God's work; it is that prayer and

fasting draw them closer to the heart of God, and they come more into line with his power. Fasting is a powerful expression of total dependence on God.

Fasting for the Israelites was only required once per year at *Yom Kippur* or the **Day of Atonement**: <<*This shall be a statute to you for ever: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall deny yourselves, and shall do no work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you. For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord*>> (Leviticus 16:29-30).

Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord. This showed the Spirit of God at work among his people, prompting them to respond to the call issued from their king, Jehoshaphat.

III.d.vi 2 Chronicles 20:5-30 - Jehoshaphat's Prayer and Victory

Jehoshaphat knew that the alliance of armies against Judah was far too great for them and so he came before the Lord in prayer, reminding the Lord that he had spared these people when Israel had come into the Promised Land and now they wanted to come against Judah in this way. The Lord heard the prayer of Jehoshaphat and answered through a prophet saying they should not fear this enemy but should go out the following day, not to fight but to witness the Lord's victory over their enemies. So they went out praising God, who had set an ambush for these invading armies, causing one group to attack the other leading to the decimation of the opposing forces. All Israel had to do was to collect the vast quantity of spoils that were left by the dead in the opposing armies and then return home to give more praise to God.

⁵ Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, ⁶ and said, 'O Lord, God of our ancestors, are you not God in heaven? Do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In your hand are power and might, so that no one is able to withstand you. ⁷ Did you not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it for ever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? ⁸ They have lived in it, and in it have built you a sanctuary for your name, saying, ⁹ "If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgement, 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 save."
¹⁰ See now, the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy — ¹¹ they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession that you have given us to

inherit. ¹² O our God, will you not execute judgement upon them? For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.'

2 Chronicles 20:5-12

Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem. This large assembly representing the gathered kingdom needed a leader, and the godly Jehoshaphat was the logical one to unite the assembly together in prayer. Jehoshaphat's prayer in the house of the Lord begins by calling to mind God's universal sovereignty (v.6), his gift of the land to Abraham's descendants (v.7), and the sanctuary that testifies to God's promise to hear his people's prayers and save them (v.9), a clear allusion to the circumstances envisioned in Solomon's dedicatory prayer in 2 Chronicles 6:14-42.

Are you not God in heaven? Do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? Jehoshaphat began his great prayer by recognising the power of the Lord over heaven and all kingdoms of the nations. Other peoples believed in localised deities - as if the Moabites had their god, the Philistines their god, the Ammonites their god, and so on. Jehoshaphat recognised that the God of Israel was in fact the God of all kingdoms, of all nations, of all the earth and indeed of heaven itself.

Did you not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it for ever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? Jehoshaphat also prayed recognising God's great works in the past on behalf of his people. The logic is clear: If God had done great things for his people in the past, he can be prevailed upon to do great things for his people at their moment of great need.

We will stand before this house, and before you. Jehoshaphat stood on the ground of previous prayer and prior answers to prayer. This is a reminder of the prayer Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple, and calls upon God to answer not only Jehoshaphat's prayer, but Solomon's also (2 Chronicles 6:20-25).

See now, the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt. Jehoshaphat prayed with both knowledge and understanding of God's Word. He remembered that God did not allow Israel to invade these peoples when they came from Egypt to the Promised Land; refer to Deuteronomy 2:8-9 and Deuteronomy 2:19. Since God did not allow Israel to destroy those peoples then, it would be unjust if he allowed them to destroy Judah now. He implicitly prayed that God would not allow his people to suffer for their prior obedience.

In the juridical style of the so-called psalms of lament, such as Psalm 44 and 74, Jehoshaphat then complains to God against the injustice of the invaders,

acknowledging that Judah is powerless against this great multitude, but steadfastly trusting God to execute judgement upon them. Here Jehoshaphat - a king standing before his people - openly confessed that he did not have the answer. Their only answer was to trust in God, that his power and goodness would protect Judah when nothing else could.

The final phrase, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you," is one of the most touching expressions of trust in God to be found anywhere in the Bible.

Charles Spurgeon comments, "They said, 'Our eyes are upon thee.' What did they mean by that? They meant, 'Lord, if help does come, it must come from thee. We are looking to thee for it. It cannot come from anywhere else, so we look to thee. But we believe it will come, men will not look for that which they know will not come. We feel sure it will come, but we do not know how, so we are looking; we do not know when, but we are looking. We do not know what thou wouldest have us to do, but as the servant looks to her mistress, so are we looking to thee, Lord. Lord, we are looking.'"

¹³ Meanwhile all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. ¹⁴ Then the spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the middle of the assembly. ¹⁵ He said, 'Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the Lord to you: "Do not fear or be dismayed at this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's. ¹⁶ Tomorrow go down against them; they will come up by the ascent of Ziz; you will find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem." Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, and the Lord will be with you.'

2 Chronicles 20:13-17

All Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. The sense is that after Jehoshaphat's great prayer, the people stood silently before the Lord, waiting upon him for some sense of direction or encouragement. As the psalmist puts it from the Lord's perspective: <<**Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth**>> (Psalm 46:10).

Out of this huge group gathered together, the Spirit of the Lord came upon one man to speak to the entire assembly. This was a spontaneous word of prophecy

that came as God's people waited before him and sought him. The prophecy of Jahaziel, given by the Spirit of the Lord in answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer, exhorts the people not to be afraid and informs them that God and not Judah will do the fighting, i.e. for the battle is not yours but God's. The people must confront the enemy, but as prayerful spectators, not combatants. Verse 17 is based very closely on: *<<But Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still'>>* (Exodus 14:13-14), pointing to a fundamental similarity between these two miraculous deliverances. Judah's response must not be mere passivity; tomorrow go out against them is 'fighting talk,' but Judah's part in this instance is not to take up arms but to exercise faith and to offer prayer and praise; refer to Ephesians 6:10-18. The Levites' ministry of leading praise appropriately concludes the great gathering for prayer.

Tomorrow go out against them. This was an important command, because one might think that because of the promise of v.15, Judah would not even have to show up at the battle and perhaps God wanted them to stay in Jerusalem and pray. Yet God wanted them to go out to battle against the enemy and he would use their participation in the battle. There were any number of ways that God could have defeated these armies assembled against Judah, but he appointed a way that demanded the participation of faith on behalf of Judah. They had to work on a faith-partnership with God.

They will come up by the ascent of Ziz. God knew the plans of the attacking armies precisely and he relayed this information to the king and people of Judah.

This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the Lord on your behalf. Judah did not need to fight in this battle, yet it did not mean there was nothing for them to do. It was a significant step of faith to position themselves, to stand still, and to believe that they would see the salvation of the Lord in the face of a large attacking army.

¹⁸ Then Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshipping the Lord. ¹⁹ And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

2 Chronicles 20:18-19

All Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshipping the Lord. Both king and people knew that the prophetic word through Jahaziel was truly from God. Receiving it as a word from God, they worshipped

the Lord who promised to save his people against this terrible threat. It was a logical yet trusting response.

Spurgeon comments, “They worshipped, but why did they do it? They were not delivered. No, but they were sure they were going to be delivered. Their enemies were not dead. No, they were all alive, but they were sure they would be dead, so they had to worship, and their devotion rose from trustful and grateful hearts.”

And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. First they worshipped with the posture of their bodies and hearts; then with song led by the chorus of the Levitical worship leaders.

²⁰ They rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, ‘Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God and you will be established; believe his prophets.’ ²¹ When he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy splendour, as they went before the army, saying,

‘Give thanks to the Lord,
for his steadfast love endures for ever.’

2 Chronicles 20:20-21

They rose early in the morning and went out. This showed that they really did believe the prophecy from Jahaziel. It was one thing to profess faith among an excited assembly; it was another thing to actually walk out to meet the enemy armies face to face.

The wilderness of Tekoa lies about 12 miles or 19 km south of Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat’s call to faith is based on Isaiah 7:9b: <<***If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all***>>.

Believe in the Lord your God and you will be established; believe his prophets. With this exhortation Jehoshaphat considered believing the prophets of God to be equal to believing the Lord your God himself. This remains true; to believe God’s Word is to believe God himself. Believe here means the active and obedient trust that God rewards: <<***And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him***>> (Hebrews 11:6), acting on the revealed word of his prophets, including Jahaziel.

When he had taken counsel with the people. Jehoshaphat was wise and good enough to know that since this crisis put the people at risk, then the people should be consulted regarding some of the details, including those who should sing to the Lord. The reader should not think that at this moment the monarchy of Israel became a democracy. Instead, it fulfilled what it should have always been: a monarchy that was in touch with and responsive to the people and to their needs and opinions.

The singers whom Jehoshaphat appointed to go out before the army were evidently Levites in holy splendour or holy attire: <<*Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come before him. Worship the Lord in holy splendour*>> (1 Chronicles 16:29), declaring words from Psalm 136 as their battle song; refer also to 1 Chronicles 16:34 and 2 Chronicles 5:13. Their song of praise invokes God to move against their enemies (v.22); this was in much the same way as David had encouraged them to praise the Lord: <<*Say also: 'Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather and rescue us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.'*>> (1 Chronicles 16:35-36).

The singers and worshippers led the army into this battle. It was clear that Judah expected a battle, because they brought the army. Yet it was also clear that they expected a supernatural battle because they let the singers and worshippers go before the army. These worshippers obviously took a dangerous step of faith. If the unthinkable happened and God did not intervene they would be the first ones slaughtered by a merciless enemy. No wonder King Jehoshaphat consulted with the people about who these singers and worshippers should be.

Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures for ever. This was the refrain of their song. They did not rest on their own merits or even the merits of Abraham, Moses, or David. They trusted and rested on the enduring mercy of God.

²² As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the Ammonites, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. ²³ For the Ammonites and Moab attacked the inhabitants of Mount Seir, destroying them utterly; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.

2 Chronicles 20:22-23

The Lord set an ambush against the Ammonites, Moab, and Mount Seir. Ambush is literally ambushers and therefore may denote either angelic agents: <<*And the*

Lord sent an angel who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria>> (2 Chronicles 32:21a) or men as used by the lords of Shechem in Judges 9:25, in which case there were mutual suspicions among the coalition forces, leading to panic and their own destruction (v.23); refer also to Judges 7:22 and 1 Samuel 14:20 for similar confusion.

For the Ammonites and Moab attacked the inhabitants of Mount Seir, destroying them utterly. This describes how God set ambushes against the enemies of Judah. He prompted them to fight amongst themselves so that they defeated one another, and all Judah had to do was to collect the spoil.

Just as God promised, the battle belonged to him and he won the victory on behalf of Judah. It might be said that it was not their praise that won the battle, rather it was their faith; yet their praise was sure evidence of their faith. When one really believes the words and promises of God, they cannot but help to praise him.

²⁴ When Judah came to the watch-tower of the wilderness, they looked towards the multitude; they were corpses lying on the ground; no one had escaped. ²⁵ When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take the booty from them, they found livestock in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They spent three days taking the booty, because of its abundance. ²⁶ On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the Lord; therefore that place has been called the Valley of Beracah to this day. ²⁷ Then all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat at their head, returned to Jerusalem with joy, for the Lord had enabled them to rejoice over their enemies. ²⁸ They came to Jerusalem, with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the Lord. ²⁹ The fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. ³⁰ And the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

2 Chronicles 20:24-30

When Judah came to the watch-tower of the wilderness, they looked towards the multitude. It seems that the army of Judah, led by the singing worshippers, never actually engaged the enemy armies. Perhaps God spared them that particular test of faith and by the time they had actually met the enemy armies, they were already dead for no one had escaped. Verse 24 calls to mind Israel's sight of the dead Egyptians in Exodus 14:30; refer to the comment on vv.14-19.

The fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the Lord. They had assembled together to cry out to God for his deliverance; it was appropriate that they also assemble together to thank God and to bless his name, for the Lord had enabled them to rejoice over their enemies. Beracah means blessing. There may be a recollection of this event in the prophecy in Joel 3:2 and 3:12 with references to ‘the valley of Jehoshaphat.’ The return to Jerusalem takes the form of a triumphal procession, which ends appropriately in the temple, where the people had first sought God’s deliverance in v.5.

They came to Jerusalem, with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the Lord. The people were not carried away with this triumph. They knew that the victory and the spoils they gained through the victory belonged to God and their first thought was to show their joyful thanksgiving to the Lord.

The fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. The victory itself was a warning against the neighbouring nations. This gave King Jehoshaphat and his kingdom rest all around.

The fear of God does not mean fear of final judgment but is a common theme in Scripture referring either to fear as godly awe, reverential fear, and devotion; or the fear of God’s displeasure and fatherly discipline. The writer to the Hebrews states: *<<Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness>>* (Hebrews 12:7-10).

God gave him rest all around. Because of Jehoshaphat’s faithfulness and that of the people he led, the Lord held back other nations from attacking Judah at this time. This was a promise that God had given to David for his son Solomon: *<<See, a son shall be born to you; he shall be a man of peace. I will give him peace from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days>>* (1 Chronicles 22:9), and a reality given to Jehoshaphat’s pious father Asa: *<<He built fortified cities in Judah while the land had rest. He had no war in those years, for the Lord gave him peace>>* (2 Chronicles 14:6).

This did not become a pattern for warfare in Judah or an invitation to conquest, led by the ‘invincible army of praise.’ This was in direct response to a specific word from God; to disobey would have been a sin, but it would have also been a sin to make it a standing pattern for all future warfare in Judah.

The principle of God fighting on behalf of his people and the glory of trusting praise before the battle remained; how God wanted his people to participate in the battle would differ from circumstance to circumstance according to the leading of the Holy Spirit in their situation. Most importantly, people can praise God that Jesus Christ has fought the battle for their salvation and to rescue them from the judgement of God that everyone so rightly deserved. This makes Christians more than conquerors in Jesus Christ, because he fights the battle and defeats the enemy, and it is Christians who share in the spoil according to the apostle Paul in Romans 8:37.

III.d.vii 2 Chronicles 20:31-37 - The End of Jehoshaphat's Reign

This final summary statement of Jehoshaphat's reign is generally positive but it does again draw the reader's attention to a further alliance he had with an apostate northern king. Once again his attempts at political union ended in failure, this time with the collapse of a commercial enterprise with King Ahaziah.

³¹ So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. ³² He walked in the way of his father Asa and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord. ³³ Yet the high places were not removed; the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their ancestors.

2 Chronicles 20:31-33

He walked in the way of his father Asa. Asa was a good king and Jehoshaphat his son followed in his footsteps, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord.

Yet the high places were not removed. This section is adapted from 1 Kings 22:41-45; refer especially to the comments made on 1 Kings 22:43-46. Some have claimed that v.33 is inconsistent with 2 Chronicles 17:6, which says that Jehoshaphat removed the high places from Judah, but both statements can be true if 2 Chronicles 17:6 refers to Jehoshaphat's official actions and v.33 indicates that the people's commitment to Jehoshaphat's reforms was not wholehearted in every place: <<*He walked in all the way of his father Asa; he did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord; yet the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and offered incense on the high places*>> (1 Kings 22:43). The Chronicler explains why: the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their ancestors.

The reader must also bear in mind that two types of high place existed: those set up to worship pagan gods, which were evil; and those set up to worship the Lord, which were tolerated before the temple but should then have been

removed. Some of the people had become so used to worshipping the Lord at such shrines that they seemed to find it hard to stop doing so.

³⁴ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from first to last, are written in the Annals of Jehu son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

2 Chronicles 20:34

The Book of the Kings of Israel and the Annals of Jehu were separate records from Kings and Chronicles to which the authors had access which recorded everything of significance that occurred during the reign of the kings.

³⁵ After this King Jehoshaphat of Judah joined with King Ahaziah of Israel, who did wickedly. ³⁶ He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish; they built the ships in Ezion-geber. ³⁷ Then Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, 'Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you have made.' And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.

2 Chronicles 20:35-37

These verses are adapted and expanded from 1 Kings 22:48-49. Jehoshaphat repeats his error of making an alliance, this time, a commercial one, with the northern king, Ahab's son Ahaziah. The Chronicler has added the prophetic denunciation by Eliezer.

He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish. First Kings 22:48-49 states that this initial partnership with King Ahaziah of Israel ended in disaster, when the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber. The author of Kings also states that after the rebuke from Eliezer son of Dodavahu, King Jehoshaphat refused another offer of alliance with Ahaziah. He had learned his lesson and did not add error upon error.

The Hebrew term ships to go to Tarshish appears to be a description of a type of long haul trading vessel that could make such a journey rather than intending to imply that Tarshish was the intended destination. It has been generally accepted that Tarshish lay to the west, probably part of modern day Spain. Since Ezion-geber is in the Gulf of Aqaba, it is clear that the intended destination would have been the Horn of Africa, Arabia, India or even further east.

The Lord will destroy what you have made. This might seem cruel of God, but it was actually mercy. It prevented Jehoshaphat from another ungodly alliance, and yielding to this temptation had hurt him before.