

JEHOSHAPHAT

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” ([Revelation 5:9, 10](#)).

THE thought that we are called to be kings and priests in God’s kingdom is a bit too much for us really, isn’t it? Yet the promise is there and it is a promise to us: “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). So that we may look with confidence to this high calling to which we have been called, we will look at some aspects of the life of Jehoshaphat.

For twenty-five years he was king of Judah. Look at the testimonial he has: “And 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” ([2 Chronicles 17:3, 4](#)). How did he gain such approval? Again we are told, “His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord . . . and hast prepared thine heart to seek God” ([17:6; 19:3](#)). The practicalities are spelled out for us: “In the third year of his reign he sent to his princes . . . to teach in the cities of Judah. And with them he sent Levites . . . and with them . . . priests. And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people” ([17:6–9](#)). This king really did put into practice the instruction of Moses from the book of Deuteronomy: “Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgement” ([Deuteronomy 16:18](#)).

The first lesson then is clear. He was ever listening to the word of God and, having listened, put what he heard into effect. He was a faithful man. He read in the book of the law and it became his life. He learnt to fear the Lord. He knew of the greatness and the majesty of God. He was a man given to worship, not only in the temple but as he and God’s people went into battle! “He appointed singers unto the Lord that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever” ([2 Chronicles 20:21](#)). What a captain over God’s people! He saw it too as his royal duty to ensure that his people also knew the book of the law. The princes were the civil servants who organised the Ministry of Education and the priests were charged with the responsibility of the actual teaching. This is the second lesson for us to learn.

Walking in the Ways of the Lord

We regularly do our readings, feeding on the word daily—each of us separately and individually; that is our own responsibility. We absorb into our hearts and minds the spirit of God and of His Son from the word—we too have prepared our hearts to seek God. We too fear (i.e. reverence) the God of heaven whom we are privileged to call Father. We worship Him in the beauty of holiness. This is an act not engaged in lightly or in an offhand manner. We lift up our hearts in thankfulness. Yet we do sing every day, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord” ([Colossians 3:16](#)). This sense of worship is our everyday life.

Then what of the second lesson? Each of us has a responsibility to teach, as the priests did in Jehoshaphat’s time. We remember that Jehoshaphat “walked” in the ways of his father David. We too walk in the ways of the Lord. Personal example is the very best form of preaching. What sort of an example do you set in your personal life? Jesus said to his new disciples: “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” ([Matthew 5:14–16](#)). Can people tell that you are one of Jesus’ disciples? Think again of Peter’s words: “Shew forth the praises of him who hath called you” ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). Then the teaching itself—how often do you speak of the Truth to someone else? Are people willing to listen to you because of the person you are?

There is a sense in which this last question leads us back to Jehoshaphat. You will remember that he arranged a marriage for his son Jehoram to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Up until this time, ever since the division of the kingdom, there had been hostility between Israel and Judah, often open war. Now, however, there was a period of peace and even a man of the quality of this king was lulled into a sense of security which was truly false: “I am as thou art,

and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in this war” (2 Chronicles 18:3). Jehoshaphat agreed first and *then* sought the Lord’s guidance—and we all know well the outcome. Ahab lost his life “by accident”; Jehoshaphat cried out as the Syrians pressed upon him (“cried out” means cried out *to the Lord*), and he earned the rebuke of God’s prophet: “And Jehu the son of Hanani 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” (19:2).

Even though this godly king had joined with the king of the ten tribes, that king—Ahab—was particularly obnoxious to the God of heaven because he had allowed into God’s kingdom the worship of Baalim, the very gods worshipped by those nations which the Israelites should have totally driven out from God’s land!

“Our eyes are upon thee”

Jehoshaphat realised he had made a mistake; the words of Micaiah the son of Imla came to pass, and after that alliance Jehoshaphat set to work with even greater zeal. His exhortation, “Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good” (2 Chronicles 19:11), certainly gave heart to his statesmen.

But how often do we engage in some activity which seems harmless enough or even good (when viewed from man’s standards), as was Jehoshaphat’s alliance with Ahab—it had everything going for it politically—and *then* ask God to bless what we have decided to do without any real thought for its full implications? No wonder that this king as he went to battle sought God in prayer: “O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (2 Chronicles 20:5–7, 12). What wonderful words—“Our eyes are upon thee”!

Are we like that? Are we the sort who act first and ask afterwards, or ask first and act afterwards?

These lessons help us in our self-examination this day. Are we faithful to God in the ordinary things of life? “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore we have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to our trust the true riches? And if we have not been faithful in that which is another man’s who shall give us that which is our own?” (Luke 16:10–12). The emblems of bread and wine symbolise for us the devoted life of Jesus, who lived wholly in accordance with his Father’s will, leaving the complete example of faithfulness and trust for us to follow.

TREVOR A. PRITCHARD

¹. Vol. 127: The Christadelphian : Volume 127. 2001, c1990. The Christadelphian, volume 127. (electronic ed.). Logos Library System . Christadelphian Magazine & Publishing Association: Birmingham