

Jehoshaphat, King of Judah



When King Asa died, his son, Jehoshaphat, became the next king of Judah. Jehoshaphat was 35 years old when he became king and he ruled 25 years in Jerusalem. He made Judah strong so they could fight against Israel. Jehoshaphat put soldiers in all the strong cities of Judah.

Jehoshaphat Does Good Things for Judah

Yahweh was with Jehoshaphat because he did good things. He lived as his father Asa did when Asa first became king. Jehoshaphat did not ask for help from the Baal idols. He asked for help from the true God. He obeyed God's commands and did not do evil things like the people of Israel did. So Yahweh made Jehoshaphat a strong king over Judah. All the people of Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat. So he had much wealth and honor. He wanted very much to obey God. He also removed from Judah the places for worshiping false gods and the Asherah idols.



In Jehoshaphat's third year as king, he sent priests and Levites to teach the law of God to the people in all the towns of Judah. He wanted all the people to know about Yahweh, the true and living God. *What a good example he is for all of us!*

The nations near Judah were afraid of Yahweh. So they did not start any wars with Jehoshaphat. Some of the Philistines and Arabs brought gifts and silver to Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat became more and more powerful. He built strong cities and storage towns in Judah. He trained soldiers in Jerusalem. His army had more than 1,000,000 soldiers!

Jehoshaphat Makes an Agreement with Ahab

Jehoshaphat made a big mistake by making a marriage agreement with King Ahab of Israel. He agreed to let his son, Jehoram, marry King Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. Remember that King Ahab was married to that wicked woman, Jezebel. So Athaliah was the daughter of evil Jezebel!



A few years later Jehoshaphat visited Ahab in Samaria. King Ahab of Israel asked King Jehoshaphat of Judah, "Will you go with me to attack the Syrians at Ramoth in Gilead?" Jehoshaphat answered, "I will be with you. We will join you in the battle." Jehoshaphat also said to Ahab, "But first we should ask Yahweh to guide us."



So King Ahab called a meeting of his 400 false prophets. Ahab asked them, "Should we go to war against Ramoth in Gilead or not?" They answered, "Go, because God will let you beat them." But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there a prophet of Yahweh here? If there is, let's ask him what we should do."

Micaiah Tells the Truth

Then King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "There is one other prophet. We could ask Yahweh through him. But I hate him! When he prophesies he never says anything good about me! He always says something bad. His name is Micaiah. Jehoshaphat said, "King Ahab, you shouldn't say that!"

So King Ahab called for Micaiah. He told Micaiah to tell them the truth. Then Micaiah said, "I saw the army of Israel. They were scattered over the hills like sheep without a shepherd. The Lord said, 'They have no leaders. Let each one go home and not fight.'"

Then King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I told you! This prophet never says anything good about me. He only says bad things about me." But Micaiah continued to speak. "Ahab, the Lord has caused your prophets to lie to you. The Lord has decided that great trouble should come on you." *Notice how Micaiah spoke the truth even though he knew it would cause him trouble! God wants us to always tell the truth, even when it is hard to do.*



Just then a false prophet named Zedekiah, went up to Micaiah and slapped him in the face. Zedekiah said, "Do you really believe that the Lord's spirit has left me and is now speaking through you?" Micaiah told him, "You will find out on the day you try to hide in a secret room!" King Ahab then commanded Micaiah to be put in prison. He only gave him bread and water. Ahab said, "Keep Micaiah in prison until I come back safely from the battle." Micaiah said, "Ahab, if you come back safely from the battle, then Yahweh has not spoken through me. Remember my words, all you people!"



Ahab Is Killed in Battle

So Ahab and Jehoshaphat went to fight the Syrians at Ramoth in Gilead. Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I will go into battle. But I will wear normal soldier's clothes so no one will know who I am. You can wear your royal clothes so everyone will know you are the king."

The King of Syria gave an order to his chariot commanders. He said, "Don't fight with anyone but the King of Israel. It doesn't matter if they are important or unimportant." When these commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought he was the king of Israel. So they turned to attack him. But Jehoshaphat called out, and Yahweh helped him. God made the chariot commanders turn away from Jehoshaphat. When they saw he was not King Ahab, they stopped chasing him.

A Syrian soldier happened to shoot an arrow and hit Ahab. The arrow went in between the pieces of his armor. King Ahab died at sunset.



Jehu Comes Out to Meet Jehoshaphat

Jehoshaphat came back safely to his palace in Jerusalem. Jehu son of Hanani went out to meet him. Jehu was a prophet. He said to Jehoshaphat, "Why did you help evil people? Why do you love those who hate Yahweh? That is the reason Yahweh is angry with you. But there is some good in you. You took the Asherah idols out of this country. And you have wanted to obey God."

So Jehoshaphat continued to try to bring the people of Judah and Israel back to God. He appointed judges throughout the land who could make decisions about the Law of God. He warned them to be careful in what they were doing because God wants people to be fair.

Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites Attack Judah

Later on, some people from Moab, Ammon and Edom gathered a large army to fight with Jehoshaphat. This time Jehoshaphat gathered the people of Judah together and asked God for help. God promised to help Jehoshaphat win. So Jehoshaphat put singers in the front of his army who sang and praised



Yahweh as they marched towards the enemy army. God responded by making the people of Moab, Ammon and Edom kill each other. So when Jehoshaphat's army arrived, they looked at the enemy's large army but only saw dead bodies lying on the ground!



God gave the people of Judah the victory because they trusted him to win the war. He will also help you conquer problems in your life if you will learn to trust him like Jehoshaphat did.

After that war, all the kingdoms of the lands around Judah heard how Yahweh had fought against Judah's enemies. So they learned to fear Yahweh and did not attack Jehoshaphat anymore.

Jehoram Becomes the Next King

Finally, Jehoshaphat died and was buried in Jerusalem. His son Jehoram became the next king of Judah. Jehoram was 32 years old when he became king and only reigned 8 years. He did what the Lord said was wrong. This was because he had married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Athaliah taught Jehoram to do evil things.



We can learn a big lesson from Jehoram's mistake. When you get old enough to get married, make sure you ask God to help you find someone who loves God and wants to serve him with all their heart. Then you will not be influenced to do evil things by your partner like Jehoram was.

