

Monday - Week Twenty-six

Lesson Seventy-five: Jehoshaphat

Read: 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 17-21

Summary: Jehoshaphat sometimes impresses us with his faithfulness and at other times disappoints us with his sin.

Background and Comments

- Early in Jehoshaphat's reign Judah (the southern tribes) enjoyed incredible prosperity. The simple reason for this prosperity was the king's obedience. The Bible says that Jehoshaphat's heart was devoted to the Lord. Pretty simple, isn't it?
- Jehoshaphat's sin was to get involved with the sinful northern tribes. He sought to strengthen the ties between the two nations through an arranged marriage between his son and Ahab's daughter. Jehoshaphat even entered into a treaty with Ahab!
- The battle recorded in 2 Chronicles 20 makes us shake our heads in wonder. The only thing Judah's army did that day was to sing praises to God and worry about how they would carry all the plunder home.

Lessons for Today

- Ahab had gathered 400 prophets who were willing to say whatever Ahab wanted them to say. Unfortunately the number has gotten quite a bit higher in the last few thousand years. Can you identify any religious leaders who are willing to tell people what they want to hear? How might your pastor be tempted to do the same thing?
- Jehoshaphat had trouble because he hung around with a bad crowd. We Christians have to watch out that we aren't influenced by this sinful world. At the same time we cannot neglect the world because we are still supposed to share the Gospel with people. How do you keep this balance in your life? What struggles do you have in this area?
- The king certainly had a huge impact on life in Judah, didn't he? Do you pray for your leaders?

Read: Psalm 119:57-64; Luke 18.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, give me the courage to hear things that I don't want to hear. Give my pastor and Christian friends the courage needed to say the things that I don't want to hear. In turn, give me the courage to say things that people don't want to hear. When someone is caught in a sin use me to lovingly call them to repentance by confronting them. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Tuesday - Week Twenty-six

Lesson Seventy-six: Joash

Read: 2 Chronicles 21-23; 24:15-27; 2 Kings 11-12

Summary: God raised up a king to lead the people of Judah in a God-pleasing way. Yet even this godly king fell to temptation.

Background and Comments

- Ahab and Jezebel's wickedness didn't only ruin the northern tribes; it also influenced Judah through Ahaziah and Athaliah (Athaliah was Ahab and Jezebel's daughter who married Jehoram. Ahaziah was Athaliah and Jehoram's son.). Murder became the order of the day.
- Joash (the only son of Ahaziah not killed by Grandma Athaliah) was rescued by a priest and his wife. Six years later Athaliah was killed when Joash was brought out into the open and made king.

Lessons for Today

- Joash was a godly king because he had been brought up by godly people (the priest Jehoiada and his wife Jehosheba). The work of Christian parents, Sunday school teachers, Christian day school teachers, grandparents, and anyone else who works with our young people is extremely important. It's so easy to put these things in second place behind jobs, entertainment, hobbies and even cleaning the house. What can you do to keep your perspective sharp?
- Joash instituted a period of spiritual renewal in Judah. Have you ever had a time of spiritual renewal in your life? Is it time for one now? Here are some tips on spiritual renewal:
 1. Take an honest look at the priorities in your life
 2. Recommit yourself to the foundation of your spiritual life: Bible study and prayer.
 3. Find a Christ friend who can hold you accountable as a Christian.
- After such a promising start Joash ended up disobeying God in horrible ways. In the New Testament God warns us against thinking that we are too "secure" to fall into great sin. How can you keep yourself humble in this area?

Read: Psalm 119:65-72; Luke 19.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, keep me faithful. In Jesus' name; Amen.

Wednesday - Week Twenty-six

Catechism Review

Read Questions 209-217

1. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 gives us exciting, shocking news: we do not belong to ourselves! Is this slavery? Yes ... but before we react negatively we need to remember that we were in slavery to someone else (the devil) before we were slaves of God. What does it mean that we are slaves of God? Why is this slavery so wonderful?

2. How would you respond: "I can never be perfect so why try?"

3. Is it true to say that "faith saves"? (I thought that God is the only One who can save us.)

4. Question 214 and 215 talk about how we come to faith (the Holy Spirit puts faith in our heart). Many churches teach that we must "make a decision for Christ". Why is that wrong and what is the danger in that teaching?

Read: Psalm 119:73-80; Luke 20.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of faith in Jesus. Amen.

Thursday - Week Twenty-six

Lesson Seventy-seven: Isaiah

Read: Isaiah 1, 6, 7, 9, 53

Summary: Isaiah was active as a prophet for 60 years! This man of God faithfully proclaimed God's Word to kings and citizens alike.

Background and Comments

- Isaiah 6 tells us how Isaiah came to be a prophet in the first place. Even as a young man Isaiah knew that he was sinful and did not deserve to be a prophet. God used a fiery coal touching his lips as a sign that Isaiah's sins were forgiven (note that the coal was taken from the altar ... signifying a sacrifice for sin). Isaiah 6:9-10 tells us that the majority of Isaiah's ministry would be spend warning people who would not listen to him. Yet Isaiah was faithful to the Lord!
- There are Messianic prophesies in chapters 7 and 9. Can you find them? How were they fulfilled?
- Here are some other very noteworthy passages in Isaiah: 12:1-3; 40:1-8; 43:25; 49:14-16; 52:7; 55:8-9; 61:1-2.
- Isaiah is a miniature Bible. Isaiah has 66 chapters ... the Bible has 66 books. The first part of Isaiah (mainly judgment) has 39 chapters ... the Old Testament has 39 books. The second part of Isaiah (mainly comfort) has 27 chapters ... the New Testament has 27 books.

Lessons for Today

- Isaiah 53 stands as one of the great chapters of the Bible. This chapter isn't striking only because it tells us what would happen to Jesus but because it tells us exactly why Jesus suffered. This chapter clearly teaches us that Jesus suffered in our place. How could you use Isaiah 53 in your evangelism efforts?
- Isaiah 1:18 is beautiful because it pictures forgiveness so vividly. We tend to think in pictures rather than in abstract ideas. Jesus knew that and used parables when He taught. How would you talk to a young child about forgiveness using Isaiah 1:18? Better yet, how could you make an object lesson out of it?

Read: Psalm 119:81-88; Luke 21.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for keeping Your wonderful promises, especially the promise to send a Savior. Let me go back to Your promises often for encouragement, joy, and peace. Amen.

Friday - Week Twenty-six

Life Questions

Topic/Question: What is meant by “church discipline”? Isn’t it mean to “kick someone out of the church?”

Bible References and Considerations

- Church discipline is clearly explained in Matthew 18:15-17. Jesus outlines four stages of church discipline. If someone falls into sin we are to:
 1. Go by ourselves to warn him or her.
 2. (If that doesn’t work ...) Take someone else along and warn again.
 3. (If that doesn’t work ...) Tell it to the church (so everyone can warn)
 4. (If that doesn’t work ...) Treat him like an outsider (excommunication)
- These are stages of church discipline. Perhaps the first stage (talking to the person alone) might stretch out over a year before it becomes clear that nothing is changing. In another case it might become clear after one visit!
- The purpose of church discipline is love. If we don’t warn people about their sin we are being horribly unloving because we aren’t doing anything to help their spiritual condition.

Practically Speaking

- The biggest objection to practicing church discipline is that it will push the people away from the church. Here are some comments:
 1. People who are caught in a sin have pushed themselves away from the church. Their only hope is to be confronted with their sin.
 2. Jesus tells us to do this - that is reason enough to practice discipline.
 3. The church is built on the forgiveness of sins, not on how happy people feel at any given time.
- Whose job is it to practice church discipline? The pastor, the elders, the church council? It is each Christian’s “job” to warn against sin, to use God’s law and gospel. Are there people you know caught in a sin? Have you prayed for them? Are you ready to talk with them about it (being ready to use the law and the gospel)?
- Do you encourage your pastor and elders as they deal with “tough” issues of church discipline?

Read: Psalm 119:89-96; Luke 22.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, give me the courage and wisdom to humbly point out sin in other people’s lives. In Jesus’ name I pray; Amen.