

2 Chronicles 16-20 – Chapter Study

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Ch. 15 ends with –

¹⁹ And there was no war until the 35th year of the reign of Asa.

There'd been a massive invasion of Ethiopians, allies of Egypt, earlier in Asa's reign but God had given Judah such a stunning victory it had sparked a glorious revival in which the entire nation renewed their covenant with God.

Following that, there was no more war until . . .

¹ In the 36th year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

As we've seen in our previous studies, every since the days of Rehoboam, there was a state of border war between Israel & Judah.

Asa's father Abijah had managed to extend the border north about 3 miles and turned the area into a heavily fortified region.

During the last few years of Asa's reign, the new king of Israel, Baasha embarked on a campaign to reclaim the land Abijah had taken.

He pressed the border back to just 5 miles north of Jerusalem, then began turning the key city of Ramah which lay right on the border, into a major fortress.

Asa knew if Ramah was completed, it would be very difficult for Judah to ever assert hegemony over the border again.

² Then Asa brought silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-Hadad king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, ³ "Let there be a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you silver and gold; come, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me."

When Israel split in two in the days of Rehoboam, the weakening of the nation allowed the nations around Israel to once again grow in power & influence.

We've already seen how Egypt re-emerged as a major power.

Now we see Syria once again flexing its muscle.

Baasha, the king of the northern kingdom knew that before he embarked on a campaign against Judah, he needed to ensure the safety of his northern border

with Syria, so he struck a deal with Ben Hadad, the king of Damascus.

Asa took treasure from both the royal coffers & the treasuries of the Lord at the temple, and shipped it to Damascus with emissaries, asking Ben Hadad to break his treaty with Baasha.

Asa's hope was that Baasha would redeploy his troops to meet the threat from the north and leave the southern border free so that he could invade from the south and dismantle the works at Ramah.

4 So Ben-Hadad heeded King Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel. They attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim, and all the storage cities of Naphtali. 5 Now it happened, when Baasha heard it, that he stopped building Ramah and ceased his work. 6 Then King Asa took all Judah, and they carried away the stones and timber of Ramah, which Baasha had used for building; and with them he built Geba and Mizpah.

The plan worked! In fact, it worked too well.

This Syrian victory over the northern region of Israel sparks the beginning of a resurgence of Syrian power that will prove to be a major problem for both Israel & Judah in the years to come.

It was the wealth Asa sent that enabled Ben Hadad to raise the men & arms needed to wage war on God's people.

File that away – we'll come back to it later.

7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: "Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand."

At this point in Israel's history, prophets were called "seers" because they were often given their messages from God thru the medium of a vision.

They were those who saw the unseen realm of the Spirit.

Hanani rebuked Asa because in dealing with Israel he never sought the Lord.

Which is interesting when we remember Asa's earlier response to the invasion by the Ethiopians.

In fact, Hanani refers to it . . .

8 Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand.

The Ethiopians had invaded with a force of a million men, and though outnumbered nearly 2 to 1, BECAUSE Asa had prayed & asked for God's help, and reminded the men of their utter dependence on God, He gave them an astounding victory.

They came back from their victory loaded down with loot & treasure – a good part of which ended up in the treasury of the temple.

Maybe the reason Asa didn't see the need to ask the Lord for help with Israel was because while there was no one else to turn to when the Ethiopians attacked, in dealing with Baasha & Israel there was – the Syrians.

And now, Asa had at his disposal, the means to appeal to Ben-Hadad; all that

loot taken from the prior battle.

Why ask God for help when you can do it yourself?

This is an error many make – they cry out to God when the need is obvious & overwhelming; and God comes through in a marvelous way.

But when some lesser need arises, they never even consider God or include Him in their plans.

And because God is not a part of their thinking; they don't see who the real enemy is or where the real problem lies.

The real enemy wasn't Israel, it was Syria, as the future makes clear.

And Asa empowered that enemy – how?

By taking the treasure God had given them & surrendering it to the enemy.

This is *precisely* what we do.

Satan has no power – Colossians 2 says he was defeated & disarmed at the cross of Christ.

The only power he possesses is what we lend him by believing his lies.

Time – energy – words – money – sex – even physical strength.

Listen: there is no challenge, no trial so small that God doesn't want us to turn to Him for help in.

Indeed, everyone of them ought to be seen as a gracious reminder to keep ourselves dependent on the Lord.

⁹ For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."

Mark that well, for what Hanani said that day is no less true today.

God is real! He is eagerly SEARCHING for loyal hearts SO THAT HE CAN SHOW HIMSELF STRONG on their behalf – in their situations, circumstances, trials, challenges.

And that's often times WHY we find ourselves IN a trial & why it doesn't just go away at the wave of our prayer wand.

The question is NEVER – "Is God Faithful, or Able?"

The question is – "Are we loyal? Still? Now? How about---now?"

God's eye is ON US THE WHOLE TIME.

He already knows how loyal we are. He wants us to know it to.

Once **WE** realize that no matter what, we'll never forsake our trust in Him – then He will move to deliver, heal, redeem, save, rescue, or give the victory.

Even as Job said; 'Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him.'

The real test of Asa's heart would be how he responded to Hanani's rebuke.

If his heart was solid with God and had just gotten a little off track, then he'd hear in these words the voice of God and would repent.

If not, then his heart's gone way off.

¹⁰ Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time.

He was convicted by the Spirit of God.

But instead of repenting as he ought, he attacked what he perceived as the source of his spiritual pain – Hanani.

The evidence he was in a bad place was seen in his harsh & unjust treatment of just random people.

It's sad but true that when some people are in emotional pain, they think everyone else should suffer too.

Asa was one of those.

¹¹ Note that the acts of Asa, first and last, are indeed written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ¹² And in the 39th year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians. ¹³ So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the 41st year of his reign.

Asa failed in his test with Israel, so 3 years later another test settled over him – a physical affliction.

He had some disease of the feet that crippled him.

Some commentators suggest it might have been gout but gout was an uncommon disease in ancient Israel.

Others suggest that since Asa was in his 70's, it may have been problems associated with diabetes.

Whatever the origin, it was debilitating – and the *real* problem was that though Asa was unable to secure help from the doctors, he **REFUSED** to ask God for help.

His rejection of Hanani's rebuke grew into an obstinate refusal to look to God. Two years later – he died.

¹⁴ They buried him in his own tomb, which he had made for himself in the City of David; and they laid him in the bed which was filled with spices and various ingredients prepared in a mixture of ointments. They made a very great burning for him.

Which was a common practice at the death of a ruler.

He wasn't cremated – he was buried in the royal tombs.

But the people would still build a massive bonfire as a memorial to him.

Asa is an example of someone who starts well and show great promise, experiencing the favor & blessing of God in a marvelous way.

But no matter how charmed our life may be, if at any point we dig in our heels and refuse to do what the Lord says, it can all go south real quick & the end can be as disastrous as the beginning was glorious.

Asa's problems all began when he did not follow through on what the prophets Azariah had told him when returning from the victory over the Ethiopians – he'd not reinvested the ministry of the teaching priest in the life of the court or nation.

He thought his EXPERIENCE OF THE POWER OF GOD was superior to & replace the need for the Word of God.

Not so! Both must be ours in equal measure.

One cannot be allowed to usurp the importance or place of the other.

QUESTION: In light of Asa's last years, how can 15:17 says his heart

was “loyal [to the Lord] all his days?”

The loyalty referred to in 15:17 isn't in the sense we've been talking about in our study here – where he maintained his earlier dependence on the Lord.

The context of 15:17 refers to *how Asa dealt with idols & their altars.*

He was loyal all his days in the sense that he *never worshipped idols.*

D. Jehoshaphat Chs. 17-20

1. Jehoshaphat's powerful kingdom Ch. 17

¹ Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place, and strengthened himself against Israel. ² And he placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken.

Jehoshaphat goes down as one of the greatest of Judah's kings.

He was a very sharp young man who had paid attention to his father's reign and knew where he'd erred, determining to not only not repeat his mistakes but to correct them when he had the chance.

He knew that his father had made some serious mistakes that would result in future trouble for Judah –

So one of the first things he did was to beef up the fortifications of the northern border.

³ Now the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals, ⁴ but sought the God of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel.

As I mentioned Sunday, Jehoshaphat is the fist of David's descendants who are likened to him in the way he walked with God.

As we'll see, that was made clear in his devotion to the Word of God.

Just like David, Jehoshaphat knew that a love for God is carried over into a Love for His Word.

⁵ Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah gave presents to Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and honor in abundance. ⁶ And his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.

Since we covered this in depth Sunday, I'll be more summary with them tonight.

Since there'd been 2 campaigns to eradicate all evidences of paganism during Asa's reign, these high places were new.

They sprang up during Asa's last years when he strayed from the Lord.

And the reason they popped up was because the revival that had occurred after the defeat of the Ethiopians couldn't be sustained without doing what the prophet Azariah had said – to reinstall the role of the teaching priest – which Asa had failed to do.

Jehoshaphat knew this – so not only did he order the demolition of the high places, he attacked the root of idolatry in the heart of the people . . .

⁷ Also in the 3rd year of his reign he sent his leaders, Ben-Hail,

Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. ⁸ And with them *he sent* Levites: Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah—the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. ⁹ So they taught in Judah, and *had* the Book of the Law of the LORD with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people.

Now watch God's response to Jehoshaphat's leadership →

¹⁰ And the fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat. ¹¹ Also *some* of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver as tribute; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred male goats.

Though Jehoshaphat took the practical steps of building up the military defenses of Judah in v. 2, he knew the real success of the kingdom lay in its devotion to the Lord in Spirit & Truth.

So he blanketed the land with the Word of God.

And God blessed it all in a mighty way!

How the Philistines & Arabians respond to Judah was a powerful lesson to all those who'd just seen what happened during the reign of Asa in his dealings with Israel & Syria.

¹² So Jehoshaphat became increasingly powerful, and he built fortresses and storage cities in Judah.

Why have so many storage places been built around here? Because we've got so much stuff we need places to keep it.

Jehoshaphat built storage cities because the blessing of treasure & their produce was so great, they need a place to store it.

¹³ He had much property in the cities of Judah; and the men of war, mighty men of valor, were in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ These are their numbers, according to their fathers' houses. Of Judah, the captains of thousands: Adnah the captain, and with him 300,000 mighty men of valor; ¹⁵ and next to him was Jehohanan the captain, and with him 280,000; ¹⁶ and next to him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to the LORD, and with him 200,000 mighty men of valor. ¹⁷ Of Benjamin: Eliada a mighty man of valor, and with him 200,000 men armed with bow and shield; ¹⁸ and next to him was Jehozabad, and with him 180,000 prepared for war. ¹⁹ These served the king, besides those the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

2. Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab 18:1-19:3

¹ Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance;

That looks back & sums up the blessings of ch. 17.

Then we look forward to sum up the troubles of ch. 18 . . .
and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab.

This marriage was Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram to the daughter of the king & queen of Israel – Ahab & Jezebel = her name was Athaliah; a woman whose wickedness was surpassed only by that of her mother.

Ch. 18 will be our text for Sunday, so let's move on to 19:4

3. Jehoshaphat's appointment of judges 19:4-11

4 So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem; and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD God of their fathers.

As we'll see Sunday, Ch. 18 relates a major blunder in the life & career of good king Jehoshaphat.

He narrowly escaped from it with his life and arrive back home realizing his error.

He repented and asked God's forgiveness – then embarked on a public campaign of sharing his testimony firsthand.

We read of no other king doing this – going out among the people to *personally* make sure they hear & see him leading in a call back to the Lord.

This was a remarkable act of leadership.

Jehoshaphat wanted everyone to understand that the covenant with God wasn't just the official policy of the royal court.

Their relationship with God was real & sincere.

Here's how this would play out in a modern setting –

A candidate for president, doesn't just say when asked by a reporter, that he's a Christian, but he goes on to say, "I'm so glad you asked that question. Let me share my testimony with you."

Then when he finishes his story he says, "Now I'd like to lead us all in prayer," and concludes with "In the precious, matchless name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, before Whom every knee in heaven & on Earth will bow and confess as Lord, Amen!"

That, in effect, is what Jehoshaphat did.

5 Then he set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, 6 and said to the judges, "Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. 7 Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes."

What Jehoshaphat did here was an even deeper level of application of the Word of God than he'd done in ch. 17 when he reinvested the role of the teaching priest.

Here he installed a judicial system based on the application of the Mosaic Law.

He reminded the judges that their task was not to decide cases based on what was best for man according to their own ideas of fairness, but were to use the Scriptures as the basis for their judgments.

Then he reminded them that just as they made judgments over the cases that

appeared them, so *they stood* before the Supreme Judge Who would use a righteous judgment with them.

Though our legal system an application of the Mosaic Law like that of ancient Israel, what Jehoshaphat says here to the judges of that day applies equally to the judges of our country because their responsibility is the same – to adjudicate justice.

And the fact of the matter is – while our courts don't apply the Mosaic Law, Western jurisprudence is based on the moral principles of the Bible. Many scholars & historians have made this crystal in their research. You can trace our legal system with its *civil & penal codes* back to the 10 Commandments & the morality of Scripture.

Whenever I read of some judge's goofy decision which is an obvious violation of justice, I shudder at how he's/she's going to have to answer to God for that. I've studied at length the process the Supreme Court went through in arriving at the Roe v. Wade decision of January 22, 1973.

The one over-riding moral principle that ought to have seen the court throw out the case was the sanctity of human life.

But history shows there was an activist group on the bench that wanted to legalize abortion so they first made-up a legal fiction called "Right to privacy" then extended that to a woman's right to terminate the life of her unborn child.

I shudder when I think of how those 7 judges will stand before God to give account for their decision, which has resulted in the death of some *48 million* unborn children. [\[1\]](#)

⁸ Moreover in Jerusalem, for the judgment of the LORD and for controversies, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests, and some of the chief fathers of Israel, when they returned to Jerusalem. ⁹ And he commanded them, saying, "Thus you shall act in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and with a loyal heart: ¹⁰ Whatever case comes to you from your brethren who dwell in their cities, whether of bloodshed or offenses against law or commandment, against statutes or ordinances, you shall warn them, lest they trespass against the LORD and wrath come upon you and your brethren. Do this, and you will not be guilty. ¹¹ And take notice: Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters; also the Levites will be officials before you. Behave courageously, and the LORD will be with the good."

Along with the regular judges that were set up throughout the land, Jehoshaphat set up a kind of supreme court in Jerusalem where the especially difficult and capital cases were tried.

4. Jehoshaphat's defeat of a foreign alliance 20:1-30

¹ It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle

against Jehoshaphat. ² Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, “A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, [Dead Sea] from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar” (which *is* En Gedi). ³ And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

An alliance of people living on Judah’s eastern border now united in an attack.

They crossed over the Jordan & began to march on Judah’s southern territory. Since the kings of Judah had been building up their northern defenses against attacks from Israel & Syria, the southern region was less prepared for an invasion.

Of course this alliance knew that.

Jehoshaphat realized the peril and immediately turned to the Lord, calling the entire nation to join him.

Note that he didn’t make an appeal for help to Israel or Syria or anyone else.

He’s learned his lesson.

God WANTED him to know he’d learned, thus this invasion.

Now God can bless them with another stunning victory.

⁴ So Judah gathered together to ask *help* from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. ⁵ Then 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 fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You *not* rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand *is there not* power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? ⁷ Are You not our God, *who* drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? ⁸ And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying, ⁹ ‘If disaster comes upon us—sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine—we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name *is* in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.’ ¹⁰ And now, here are the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir—whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and did not destroy them— ¹¹ here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. ¹² O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us;

Wait a minute – No Power????!!!!!!?!?! Need I remind you Jehoshaphat that you have 1,160,000 troops?

nor do we know what to do,

Huh? Not know what to do!

That 1,160,000 are all mighty men of war – soldiers highly skilled in combat & strategy.

Jehoshaphat knows all that. But he also knows if God doesn’t help them – neither

numbers nor skill will either. So he says →
but our eyes are upon You.”

We look to YOU for victory.

13 Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the LORD. 14 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. 15 And he said, “Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: ‘Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle *is* not yours, but God’s. 16 Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. 17 You will not *need* to fight in this *battle*. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!’ Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD *is* with you.”

Jahaziel was one of the worship leaders in the temple.

The Spirit of God came on him with a word of prophecy, telling the king & people to go out & meet the invaders but that they would not need to fight. They just needed to go & watch God fight *for* them.

This is totally a fulfillment of 16:9!

In most of the battles Israel fought over the years, even when they were trusting in God, they had to enter into actual combat.

God gave them victory as they committed their ways to Him and stepped out in faith in Him.

But here – the whole reason this invasion came was so God could reveal that Jehoshaphat had learned his lesson & was now trusting in the Lord.

So He said – Just watch Me take care of things.

18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. 19 Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high. 20 So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.” 21 And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: “Praise the LORD, For His mercy *endures* forever.” 22 Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and

they were defeated. ²³ For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy *them*. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

The people of Judah realized, if things are as God said, what's the best way for us to respond?

Let's worship! When they did, God caused the alliance to fall apart & they wiped each out.

Praise causes confusion in the ranks of our enemy.

²⁴ So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped. ²⁵ When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found among them an abundance of valuables on the dead bodies, and precious jewelry, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were 3 days gathering the spoil because there was so much. ²⁶ And on the 4th day they assembled in the Valley of Berachah [blessing], for there they blessed the LORD; therefore the name of that place was called The Valley of [Blessing] Berachah until this day.

²⁷ Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat in front of them, to go back to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. ²⁸ So they came to Jerusalem, with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets, to the house of the LORD. ²⁹ And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. ³⁰ Then the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

5. Jehoshaphat's last days 20:31-37

³¹ So Jehoshaphat was king over Judah. *He was 35 years old when he became king, and he reigned 25 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.* ³² And 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 Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for as yet the people had not directed their hearts to the God of their fathers.

What's this???? How can this be? Didn't we read in 17:6 that Jehoshaphat removed the high places?

Yes – & he renewed the task of the teaching priest to make sure God's Word was being proclaimed throughout the kingdom to end the rot of idolatry in the heart of the people.

These high places weren't for the worship of idols; that weren't pagan shrines.

These were high places devoted to the worship of Yahweh.

The words here mean the people, who in the previous verses are shown to believe in God, aren't totally faithful to Him.

He'd made it clear that all sacrifice to Him was to be at only one place – at the temple in Jerusalem.

They weren't allowed to offer sacrifices to the Lord where ever they pleased precisely because without instruction from the Word, they'd develop goofy ideas about God and then be making offerings to what in effect was an idol of their own imagination, all the while thinking it was God.

That's why God commanded them to bring their offerings & sacrifices at the temple – where they could be instructed from the Word by gifted & skilled teachers.

And why they were required to go to Jerusalem 3 times a year – so that their imagination could be reined in by Scripture.

So, why did the people do their own thing, neglect this command, and set up their own high places to worship God at?

Because it was closer & more convenient. It was cheaper; it placed less demands on them.

Which motives all reveal that they had allowed their relationship with God to become a duty & obligation, a burden – the very *opposite* of what God intended. [Sunday]

³⁴ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, indeed they are written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, which *is* mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel. ³⁵ After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted very wickedly. ³⁶ And he allied himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish, and they made the ships in Ezion Geber. ³⁷ But Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, “Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works.” Then the ships were wrecked, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

Jehoshaphat tried to restore the navy that had brought such prestige & wealth to Israel during the days of Solomon.

He wasn't able to pull it off by himself so he made an alliance with the Ahaziah, the ultra-wicked king of Israel.

This was a foolish alliance.

And there's good reason why Ezra records it here at the end of Jehoshaphat's life.

Why – we'll discover on Sunday.

[1] <http://www.nrlc.org/ABORTION/facts/abortionstats.html>