

Eliezer and Jehoshaphat

2 Chr. 20:31-37

20:31 And **Jehoshaphat** reigned over Judah: he was thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. **20:32** And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the LORD. **20:33** Howbeit the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers. **20:34** Now the rest of the acts of **Jehoshaphat**, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, who is mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel.

20:35 And after this did **Jehoshaphat** king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly: **20:36** And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongeber. **20:37** Then **Eliezer** the son of Doadavah of Mareshah prophesied against **Jehoshaphat**, saying, "*Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works.*" And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

1 Kings 22:48-50

22:48 **Jehoshaphat** made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not; for the ships were broken at Eziongeber. **22:49** Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto **Jehoshaphat**, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But **Jehoshaphat** would not. **22:50** And **Jehoshaphat** slept with his fathers. . .

a neglected king & prophet?

Of the various kings of Judah who reigned during the divided kingdom, only Hezekiah is named more than Jehoshaphat. (*Jehoshaphat's name appears 77 times.*) Why, then, is he included in this "neglected people in the Bible" series? The main reason is because our present study of the little known prophet, Eliezer, involves the king.

Another reason is that many Christians know little about the various Old Testament kings, other than David, Saul, and Solomon. Most of the kings who reigned during the divided kingdom are neglected, because the books of Kings and Chronicles are read far less than First and Second Samuel, in which Saul and David are prominent.

The story of Nathan confronting David in Second Samuel chapter 12 is well known, but the story of Eliezer confronting King Jehoshaphat is not. This study is centered on the interaction between Eliezer and Jehoshaphat in 2 Chr. 20:35-37 more than on the king's entire life. --- (*As shown on the left, there is a parallel passage in 1 Kings 22:48-50 as well, but Eliezer is not mentioned therein.*)

negatives

Though we might expect Eliezer to be mentioned in 1 Kings 22:48-50 as well as in 2 Chr. 20:37, for some reason he is not. King Jehoshaphat was important, of course, but if Eliezer was much of a prophet shouldn't he have appeared in both passages?

Eliezer appears only at the end of the Chronicler's account of the life of Jehoshaphat, in what sounds more like a postscript than part of the main story. Since the king was not perfect, he had to be confronted by a prophet once.

But that interaction is far shorter and less heated than the earlier one between Micaiah, another prophet, and King Ahab in 18:6-27. Micaiah spoke at length against an evil king. Should Eliezer have prophesied against a far better one (20:32)?

The ships—which were built on the Gulf of Elat, south of Judah—were not the problem. Rather, cooperating with evil King Ahaziah led to judgement. (*The ships were probably destroyed on dry land, 1 Kgs. 22:48.*)

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

A	() Eliezer was not a famous prophet.
A-1	() He was a one-line prophet.
A-2	() His prophesy was totally negative.
A-3	() It does not say that the Lord sent him.
A-4	() He is not mentioned in 1 Kings 22:48-50.
A-5	() He is not the main character in 2 Chr. 20:31-37.
A-6	() His should not have prophesied against a good king.
A-7	() He prophesied <u>AFTER</u> the ships were destroyed (20:37).
A-8	() His prophesy is short compared to Jahaziel's in 20:15-17.
A-9	() Jehoshaphat probably ignored his message (1 Kgs. 22:49).
B	() Jehoshaphat was not perfect.
B-1	() He was a greedy king (1 Kgs. 22:48).
B-2	() He did not remove all the idols (20:33).
B-3	() He should not have cooperated with Ahaziah.
B-4	() He did not finish well (20:35-37, 1 Kgs. 22:49-50).
B-5	() He was a compromiser (20:36-37, 1 Kgs. 22:48-49).

positives

The ships were designed as large sea-worthy cargo vessels like those used in the Mediterranean to sail to Tarshish (1 Kgs. 22:48). But the goal was to sail them to Ophir, which may have been in Southern Arabia, East Africa, or perhaps even India. This ambitious project was made possible by the miraculous victory that God gave to King Jehoshaphat and Judah earlier in answer to prayer. (See 2 Chr. 20:1-30.) Much earlier, Solomon successfully built and sailed a similar fleet (1 Kgs. 9:26-28).

Could Jehoshaphat's project have succeeded as well? If he had continued to depend upon the Lord rather than cooperate with King Ahaziah, perhaps it would have. The only sin that was pointed out by Eliezer was evil collaboration with the wicked king of Israel. It does not say that Jehoshaphat was greedy, despite the fact that the ships were designed to carry gold (1 Kgs. 22:48). So the trading project might have been successful. Even so, the destruction of the ships close to home probably saved lives.

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

C	() Eliezer was a true prophet.
C-1	() The Lord sent him.
C-2	() His prophesy was clear.
C-3	() His ministry was important.
C-4	() His prediction came true (20:37).
C-5	() He spoke against Jehoshaphat's sin (20:37).
C-6	() He explained why God would destroy the ships.
C-7	() His ministry was a lot like that of Jahaziel in 20:14-17.
C-8	() He is the most famous prophet in 2 Chronicles (21:12-17).
C-9	() It was a good thing that the king's ships were destroyed.
D	() Jehoshaphat was a good king.
D-1	() God gave him victory over various nations (20:1-30).
D-2	() Jehoshaphat's purpose was not sinful (1 Kgs. 9:26-28. 22:48).
D-3	() Unlike the people, Jehoshaphat was not idolatrous (20:33).
D-4	() He was not wicked like King Ahaziah of Israel (20:35).
D-5	() He did that which was right (2 Chr. 20:32).

conclusions

worksheet answers

There are several obviously incorrect lines about Eliezer on the worksheets. First, he is not the most famous prophet in Second Chronicles (C-8). Elijah, who appears in 2 Chr. 21:12-15, is much better known. Second, there is no reason to believe that it was wrong for Eliezer to speak against Jehoshaphat just because the king was a good king most of the time (A-6). Third, 2 Chr. 20:37 does not indicate that the prophet spoke about the destruction of the ships after the fact (A-7). Rather he was so certain that the prophesy would be fulfilled, that he spoke of it *as if it were an event in the past*.

Most of the lines about King Jehoshaphat are either correct or partly correct. However, the king probably did not ignore the prophet's message (A-9). As a godly king, he would not have done so. Moreover, his refusal to cooperate with King Ahaziah in First Kings 22:49 probably shows that he had learned from the prophet and from his past mistake. Likewise, there is insufficient evidence to say that Jehoshaphat was ambitious in a sinful way (B-1).

So what?

Probably the main point in Second Chronicles chapter 20 is that we all, and especially those who are leaders, need to trust in the Lord rather than trust in men. In most of the chapter, King Jehoshaphat displayed great faith in, and reliance upon the Lord. Yet, at the very end of the chapter (in 20:35-37), he failed to trust God. Perhaps this was because he felt a greater need to trust the Lord when the enemy was about to attack, than he did later after the danger was past. (This seems to be the case with King Hezekiah in chapter 32.) Good leaders trust in the Lord, but sadly they, and we, fail to do so at times.

Finally, as in each study in this series, secondary characters, Eliezer and Jahaziel, show that the ministries of lesser-known people are necessary and important. Eliezer's negative message was needed in 2 Chr. 20:37, and Jahaziel's positive message was needed earlier in the chapter, in 20:15-17. Neither of these prophets is known outside of this chapter, but how different the chapter would be without them! It is not just the ministries of the famous that are important.

applications

Apply the points which you believe are most important or seem most needful.
