

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CHRONICLES 20

Jehoshaphat having notice of a numerous army coming against him, (^{<401E>}2 Chronicles 20:1,2), betakes himself to fasting and prayer with his people, (^{<401B>}2 Chronicles 20:3-13), when they were immediately assured of victory by a prophet, which filled them with joy and thankfulness, (^{<4014>}2 Chronicles 20:14-21), and accordingly their enemies destroyed one another, and Jehoshaphat and his people returned to Jerusalem rejoicing and praising God, (^{<4012>}2 Chronicles 20:22-30), and the chapter is closed with an account of the latter part of Jehoshaphat's reign, (^{<401E>}2 Chronicles 20:31-37).

Ver. 1. *It came to pass after this also*, etc.] After Jehoshaphat's return from Ramothgilead, and putting the civil and religious affairs of his people on a better footing, when he might have expected much peace and prosperity:

that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon; both the descendants of Lot, (see ^{<583B>}Psalm 83:8),

and with them other besides the Ammonites; a great company of Arabians, according to Josephus ^{f70}; or "with the Meamonites", which the Targum understands of the Idumaeans or Edomites; and so do other interpreters, and which they conclude from (^{<4010>}2 Chronicles 20:10,22,23). Jarchi thinks the Amalekites are meant, who were of the race of Edom; but the notion of Kimchi seems best, that these are the people that are so called from the name of a place, Meon, and, by an inversion of letters, the same with the Meunim or Maonites, mentioned along with the Zidonians and Amalekites, (^{<0702>}Judges 10:12) and whom the Septuagint version here calls Minaeans; some ^{f71} take them to be such who counterfeited the Ammonites in their apparel and gestures:

these came against Jehoshaphat in battle; being instigated perhaps by the Syrians, who owed him ill will for assisting Ahab against them at Ramothgilead; for from that quarter they came, as the following verse shows.

Ver. 2. *Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat,* etc.] Deserters or spies, or some of the inhabitants of those parts where they had entered, who rode post haste to acquaint him with it:

saying, there cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; that is, beyond the Dead or Salt sea, the sea of Sodom; the Targum is,

“beyond the west of Syria,”

that sea being the western boundary of it:

and, behold, they be in Hazazontamar, which is Engedi; (See Gill on “⁰¹⁴⁷Genesis 14:7”).

Ver. 3. *And Jehoshaphat feared,* etc.] Exceedingly, as the Targum adds, not merely because of the number of his enemies, for he had forces enough to go forth against them, (see ⁴¹⁷⁴2 Chronicles 17:14-19), but chiefly because the Lord had told him that wrath was upon him from him, (⁴⁴⁹²2 Chronicles 19:2) and he might fear that this was the time for the execution of it:

and set himself to seek the Lord; by prayer and supplication, with all seriousness, fervour, and constancy:

and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah; a day of humiliation and mourning for sin before the Lord; when they were ordered to abstain from bodily food and labour, that they might be fit and more at leisure for spiritual exercises.

Ver. 4. *And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord,* etc.] To implore his assistance against their enemies, and his protection of them; and they met not in their several cities, but at Jerusalem, as appears by what follows:

even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord; at the temple, where was the ark, the symbol of his presence.

Ver. 5. *And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord,* etc.] In the temple, in the court of the people, where the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem were assembled, in the midst of which he stood very probably on the brasen scaffold erected by Solomon, (⁴⁴⁸³2 Chronicles 6:13),

before the new court: which must be the court of the priests, for he stood in the great court, or court of the people, and before this, which might be so called, because renewed or repaired when the altar was by Asa, (^{<4458>}2 Chronicles 15:8). Dr. Lightfoot^{f72} thinks it was the court of the women; but it is a question whether there was any such court in the first temple; or that the great court was then divided into two, one for the men, the other for the women.

Ver. 6. *And said, O Lord God of our fathers*, etc.] Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose covenant God he was:

art not thou God in heaven? that dwellest and rulest there, and dost whatever thou pleasest in the armies of it:

and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the Heathens? being King of kings, and Lord of lords, all the world over:

and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? his power being infinite, unlimited, and uncontrollable, and so not resistible by finite creatures, at least not so as to be stopped and overcome.

Ver. 7. *Art not thou our God*, etc.] In a peculiar sense, not merely as the Creator and Governor of men, but in a covenant relation their covenant God and Father:

who didst drive out the inhabitants of the land before thy people Israel; the seven nations of Canaan, to make way and room for Israel:

and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? made a deed of gift of it to them, and settled it on them till the coming of the Messiah, and that as an instance of love and friendship to Abraham; and wilt thou therefore suffer it to be taken from his seed?

Ver. 8. *And they dwelt therein*, etc.] From ages past, hitherto, since it was first given them, and they were put into the possession of it:

and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name; a temple for his worship, honour, and glory, and for him to dwell in; and is a reason why it might be hoped he would protect them, especially when they prayed to him:

saying; and he promised to hear and help them, as follows.

Ver. 9. *If when evil cometh upon us*, etc.] Any calamity,

as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, God's four sore judgments, if by "judgment" is meant wild beasts:

we stand before this house; in the court before the holy place, and holy of holies:

and in thy presence, for thy name is in this house; called upon in it, and it was called by his name, and in which he dwelt:

and cry unto thee in our affliction; as Solomon prayed at the dedication of it:

then thou wilt hear and help; as the Lord promised, (see ^{<1083>}1 Kings 8:33,37 9:3).

Ver. 10. *And now, behold, the children of Ammon, and Moab, and Mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt*, etc.] Charging them not to meddle with them, nor take any of their lands from them, (^{<1815>}Deuteronomy 2:5,9,19),

but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; in obedience to the divine command, when it was in their power to have done it.

Ver. 11. *Behold, I say, how they reward us*, etc.] Evil for good:

to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit; the land of Canaan was their inheritance, an inheritance given them by God, their covenant God and Father, who had a right to dispose of it; and yet so given, that it was still his possession, he was the Lord and Proprietor, they but tenants under him; all which, as they were so many aggravations of the guilt of their enemies, so they were so many arguments with the Lord to protect them.

Ver. 12. *O our God wilt thou not judge them?* etc.] Bring them to thy bar, examine these facts alleged against them, convict them of injustice, and condemn and punish them for it:

for we have no might against the great company that cometh against us; for though the militia of the kingdom of Judah was very numerous, as described (^{<4174>}2 Chronicles 17:14-19) yet on a sudden it might not be easy to gather it together; besides, it was nothing to put trust and confidence in;

and if the Lord was not with them, their strength would be weakness, and they not able to withstand this numerous army:

neither know we what to do; whether to attempt to muster the militia, and go out to meet them, or to shut up themselves in Jerusalem, and make the best defence they could:

but our eyes are upon thee; for advice and direction, for help and protection; the eyes of their bodies were lifted up in prayer to him, and the eyes of their souls, of faith, hope, expectation, and desire, were fastened on him.

Ver. 13. *And all Judah stood before the Lord*, etc.] Looking towards the most holy place, where the ark of his presence was, in an humble and submissive posture; waiting what would be the issue of things, what answer they should have from the Lord:

with their little ones, their wives, and their children: they and their wives, with their children, both small and grown up, which they brought with them, that as the sight of them, now in the utmost danger, might affect them, and make them the more fervent in their supplications to God, so they might hope the Lord would have pity and compassion on them, and save them.

Ver. 14. *Then upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jehiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite, of the sons of Asaph*, etc.] Being a man of some note, though a Levite, his genealogy is given:

came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation; the spirit of prophecy from the Lord, as the Targum, as it was; for he foretold the victory that should be obtained over the enemy, and that without fighting, yea, the particular place where they should meet them; and this came upon him suddenly, while he was in the midst of the congregation, while he and they were waiting upon the Lord, and perhaps had never prophesied before; or if he had, prophecy did not come according to the will of man, but by the will of God; the Spirit of God in that, as in other instances, is like the wind that blows when and where it listeth.

Ver. 15. *And he said, hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou King Jehoshaphat*, etc.] There is a climax or gradation in these words rising from the lowest to the highest; from the

people of the cities in the country, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem the metropolis, and from thence to the king the supreme governor:

thus saith the Lord unto you, be not afraid, nor dismayed, by reason of this great multitude; whose numbers were discouraging to the king, and he had taken notice of them, which this respects:

for the battle is not your's, but God's: the cause was his, and he would espouse and maintain it; not they, but he, would fight the battle, and therefore they had nothing to fear.

Ver. 16. *Tomorrow go ye down against them*, etc.] This was the fast day, and so not proper to march out in, but on the morrow they might go out with great confidence and intrepidity; and as Jerusalem was situated on an eminence, they are directed to go down:

behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; a steep hill, so called from the flowers upon it:

and ye shall find them at the end of the brook; on the bank of Kidron, according to Beckius, which seems not likely to be meant, since they went as far as the wilderness of Tekoa, (⁴⁰⁰⁰2 Chronicles 20:20),

before the wilderness of Jeruel; the same with that of Tekoa, or near it.

Ver. 17. *Ye shall not need to fight in this battle*, etc.] Since the Lord would fight for them:

set yourselves, stand ye still; present themselves they might, as if ready to engage; and keep their ground, not giving way in the least, but would have no need to strike a stroke:

and see the salvation of the Lord with you; which he would work for them, (see ⁴⁰⁴³Exodus 14:13),

and Judah, and Jerusalem, fear not, nor be dismayed; which is repeated for the confirmation of them:

tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord will be with you; to protect them, fight for them, and give them victory; the Targum is, ``the Word of the Lord shall be your help.”

Ver. 18. *And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground,* etc.] Not only in reverence of God, and his prophet, but as a token of his belief of what was said, and his thankfulness for it:

and all Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, fell before the Lord, worshipping him; adoring his goodness to them, in imitation of their king.

Ver. 19. *And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites,* etc.] Who were of the posterity of Kohath, in the line of Korah:

stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high; in high notes; they being the course in turn at this time for this service.

Ver. 20. *And they rose early in the morning,* etc.] Being confident of success, animated by what the prophet said to them:

and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa; which, according to Jerom¹⁷³, was six miles from Bethlehem, and nine from Jerusalem, some say twelve, beyond which was nothing but a desert; it was part of the wilderness of Judah:

and as they went forth; out of Jerusalem, through one of the gates of it:

Jehoshaphat stood and said, believe in the Lord your God; in the promises he had made, particularly with respect to the victory over their present enemies; the Targum is,

“in the Word of the Lord your God:”

so shall you be established; have courage and firmness of mind, as well as be safe and secure:

believe his prophets; sent by him, and that speak in his name, particularly Jahaziel, who had predicted victory to them:

so shall ye prosper; things will succeed to your wishes, and beyond your expectations.

Ver. 21. *And when he had consulted with the people,* etc.] His principal officers, in what order they should march, and in what manner they should form themselves, when they met the enemy, and how they should conduct as if they were to engage:

he appointed singers unto the Lord; to sing his praise, and give him glory, as if the victory was already completed, it being so sure:

and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army; that is, praise God, who is glorious in holiness, whose beauty lies in his holiness, and who is holy in all his ways and works:

and to say, praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever; with which they were to conclude their songs of praise, as David did, and whose songs they might sing; (see ~~136~~ Psalm 136:1-26).

Ver. 22. *And when they began to sing and to praise*, etc.] They sung more or less all the way they went, from the time they set out, but when they came nearer the enemy, they sung louder and louder:

the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which came against Judah; some take them to be their own ambushments, which they set for the destruction of Judah; but the Lord turned them against their own confederates, mistaking them for Jews; so the Vulgate Latin version,

“the Lord turned their ambushments against themselves;”

or rather these were angels, who appeared in the form of the Edomites, and so fell upon the Ammonites and Moabites:

and they were smitten; by them, many of them were destroyed; hence it follows,

Ver. 23. *For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir*, etc.] Supposing that they had acted a treacherous part by them, and took on the side of their enemies:

utterly to slay and destroy them; as they did:

and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir; so that there were none left of them:

everyone helped to destroy one another; in their confusion mistook one another, either for Edomites or Jews, like the Midianites in the times of Gideon.

Ver. 24. *When Judah came towards the watch tower in the wilderness*, etc.] Which might stand upon the hill or cliff of Ziz, for the sake of the

direction of travellers, and the preservation of them from thieves and robbers:

they looked unto the multitude; which they could take a view of from the top of the hill:

and behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped; all to a man slain, there was not one to be seen standing on his feet.

Ver. 25. *And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take the spoil of them*, etc.] Which was all they had to do; they had no need to fight, as they were told, the Lord had fought for them:

they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies; rich garments on them, and gold and silver on them:

and precious jewels, which they stripped of for themselves; with which their clothes, or some part of their bodies, were ornamented:

more than they could carry away; they were so many, that they made too great a burden for them:

and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much; it took up so much time to strip the bodies, to search for their money and jewels, rings, chains, and such like things of value, worn by them.

Ver. 26. *And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah*, etc.] As it was afterwards called from what they did there, as follows, which was the reason of its name:

for there they blessed the Lord; returned thanks to him for this wonderful appearance on their behalf, and gave him the glory of it; no doubt but they had given him praise before in some sort and manner, but now in a set, solemn, and public manner, with one heart and voice they united in ascribing honour, blessing, and glory to him:

therefore the name of the same place was called the valley of Berachah unto this day; the valley of Blessing; this name it bore in the times of Ezra, the writer of this book, even after the Jews returned from the Babylonish captivity; it is thought to be the same that is called by Jerom¹⁷⁴ Cepharbarucha, which he speaks of as not far from Engedi, (see ~~1~~2 Chronicles 20:2), others will have it to be the same with the valley of Jehoshaphat, but not so likely, that seems to be nearer Jerusalem.

Ver. 27. *Then they returned, every man of Judah and of Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy,* etc.] There to praise the Lord in the temple, as they had done in the valley:

for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies; by giving them a complete victory, and making them masters of so much wealth and riches.

Ver. 28. *And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets,* etc.] The three principal instruments of music used in singing the praises of God; these they played upon as they came to the city, and entered it, and passed through it:

unto the house of the Lord; the temple, there to offer praise and thanksgiving again.

Ver. 29. *And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of these countries,* etc.] Whose armies were slain, and all other neighbouring ones; for the word these is supplied:

when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel; and they were afraid to invade their land, or make war with them; nor did the Edomites dare to revolt in the times of Jehoshaphat.

Ver. 30. *So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet,* etc.] Both within and without; they were at peace among themselves, and none from abroad dared to molest them:

for his God gave him rest round about; from all his enemies; the Targum has it, the Word of his God; and so, in the preceding verse, the Word of the Lord fought; and in (^{<4128>}2 Chronicles 20:28) the Word of the Lord made them rejoice.

Ver. 31,32. *And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah,* etc.] Of these two verses, (see Gill on "^{<4124>}1 Kings 22:42"). (See Gill on "^{<4124>}1 Kings 22:43").

Ver. 33. *Howbeit, the high places were not taken away,* etc.] The high places, where idols were worshipped, were taken away, (^{<4176>}2 Chronicles 17:6), but not those where sacrifices were offered to the true God:

for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers; to seek and serve him wholly, according to his will, to offer sacrifices to him only at Jerusalem, as the law required, (^{<6116>}Deuteronomy

12:5-7), they could not as yet be prevailed upon to relinquish the high places, built and made use of before the temple was; partly because they were nearer to some of them than that, and partly out of veneration for them, as being of a long time used.

Ver. 34. *Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last,* etc.]

Those that were done at the beginning, and those that were done at the latter end of his reign:

behold, they are written in the book of Jehu, the son of Hanani, who is mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel; (see ^{<1160>}1 Kings 16:1,7), the same that reprov'd Jehoshaphat, (^{<490>}2 Chronicles 19:2). He wrote a book of his own times, and which was so much esteemed, according to Kimchi, that it was written with, or put along with, the book of the kings of Israel, for so he interprets the phrase; but the Targum understands it of Jehu being the king's historiographer, who had the care and oversight of the diary, journal, or annals of the kings of Israel.

Ver. 35. *And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel,* etc.] Meaning, not after the invasion of the Moabites, etc. and the slaughter of them, but after Jehoshaphat returned from Ramothgilead, when he was reprov'd by a prophet for helping the ungodly, (^{<490>}2 Chronicles 19:1,2) so that it was a great aggravation of his folly and weakness, that after that, and quickly after that, he should join himself to a wicked prince, though not in war, but in trade; for so it must be, since Ahaziah reigned but two years, and those not complete, (see ^{<125>}1 Kings 22:51), but is here related, that Jehoshaphat's weaknesses and blemishes might be laid together:

who did very wickedly; that is, Ahaziah, who walked in the ways of Ahab his father, and of Jezebel his mother, and of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, (^{<125>}1 Kings 22:52).

Ver. 36. *And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish,* etc.] Of which, (See Gill on "^{<1248>}1 Kings 22:48"), and though it is there said, (^{<1249>}1 Kings 22:49), that Jehoshaphat refused letting the servants of Ahaziah go with his, that was after he had been reprov'd for joining with him, and after the ships were broken:

and they made the ships in Eziongeber; of which (See Gill on "^{<1026>}1 Kings 9:26").

Ver. 37. *Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah,* etc.] A city in the tribe of Judah, (^{<16154>}Joshua 15:44)

prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah; an idolatrous prince, with whom he ought to have had no fellowship, even in civil things, it being both a countenancing him, and exposing himself and people to danger:

the Lord hath broken thy works; the ships built at the joint expense of the two kings, that is, the Lord had determined to break them, and now foretold that he would; the Targum is,

“the Word of the Lord hath destroyed thy works:”

and the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish; (See Gill on “^{<11248>}1 Kings 22:48”).