LESSON 9 • JULY 31, 2022

JEHOShaphat Makes Judicial Reforms

BIBLE BASIS: 2 Chronicles 19:4–11

BIBLE TRUTH: King Jehoshaphat instituted a system of reform that followed the biblical commands for civil law and was organized to promote justice without corruption.

MEMORY VERSE: And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment (2 Chronicles 19:6, KJV).

LESSON AIM: By the end of the lesson, we will: UNDERSTAND that God is the ultimate authority to whom we are accountable; REFLECT on a time when choosing the “fair” or “just” option worked out for good; and JUDGE fairly when given the responsibility.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 2 Chronicles 18:28, 19:11-Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

LESSON SCRIPTURE

2 CHRONICLES 19:4–11 KJV

4. And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

5. And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,

6. And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.

7. Therefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

8. Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.

9. And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.

10. And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass.

11. And, behold, 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 shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.
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BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS

A. Judges (2 Chronicles 19:5) mishpat (Heb.)—Men chosen to exercise authority over God’s chosen people to lead them back to the one true God.

B. Judgment (v. 6) mishpat (Heb.)—A verdict that is pronounced judicially; a formal decree or ordinance.

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY’S LESSON

AIM: Students will learn that they can contribute to a good system of government by basing their own lives on the Word of God.

INTRODUCTION

Establishing a Judicial System

Jehoshaphat created a system of reform by establishing judges for the people of Judah. “Also in the third year of his reign he sent his leaders, . . . to teach in the cities of Judah. 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” (2 Chronicles 17:7, 9, NKJV). Jehoshaphat reminded 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” (19:6, NKJV).

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: Students will learn that a good judicial system is based upon certain biblical principles.

I. The Need for a Judicial System Based upon the Old Testament Law (2 Chronicles 19:4-7)

The people of Judah had forsaken the Law of the Lord. They engaged in the worship of foreign gods, built altars for those gods, and built wooden images of those gods. Many of us, because we are under His grace and mercy, have also disobeyed God. Like the people of Judah, each of us with our disobedience has experienced God’s wrath and ultimately God’s forgiveness. Jehoshaphat made the mistake of making an alliance with the ungodly King Ahab. “And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, ‘Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD is upon you. Nevertheless good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God.’ 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” (2 Chronicles 19:2-4). So it was at this time that King Jehoshaphat began to build a judicial system based on the Old Testament law.

God’s People Return to Justice (verses 4–7)

4–7. And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers. 5 And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, 6 And said to the judges, Take heed what
ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. 7 Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

The judicial system of reform was established in levels to prevent abuse of power. Jehoshaphat taught the Levites and priests to “act in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and with a loyal heart” (verse 9, NKJV). He reminded the Levites and the priests that some of the decisions would be made by others. “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” (verse 11, NKJV).

With the creation of a layered system of reforms, Jehoshaphat was able to bring the people of Judah back to the authority of God. We also see this divine concern for justice expressed in the New Testament: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves” (Romans 13:1–2, NKJV).

II. THE SUPREME COURT (2 Chronicles 19:8–11)

Jehoshaphat set up a central court in Jerusalem to deal with major cases, including homicide and appeals. Notice that Jehoshaphat wanted these cases to be heard by the Levites and chiefs of Israel, and only in Jerusalem. These cases were to be brought before those who could interpret the religious laws and the civil laws. This would imply that the cases had civil and religious overtones. The king’s primary objectives were that all judgment must be done in the fear of the Lord and with a heart that is focused on justice and truth.

The Equipping of the Judges (verses 8–11)

8–11. Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem. 9 And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. 10 And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass. 11 And, behold, 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

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 1

Why did Jehoshaphat send judges to the people of Judah?
shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.

God places people in our lives to equip us for service to Him. “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” (2 Chronicles 17:9, NKJV). When we are prepared to go out and serve, God tells us what our assignment is. “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” (2 Chronicles 19:6, NKJV). God instructs us on our assignment and cautions us to not abuse the authority He has placed within us. “And he commanded them, saying, ‘Thus you shall act in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and with a loyal heart’” (verse 9, NKJV). God reminds each of us that we are accountable for what God has instructed us to do. “And take notice: Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebediah 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” (verse 11, NKJV).

QUESTION 2
What warning did Jehoshaphat give to the judges?

BIBLE APPLICATION
AIM: Students will see the need for a good system of justice.

Needed: Reformation of Our Judicial System
In America, we need reformation in our judicial system that is focused on justice and truth. All too many African Americans know what it is like to be accused of a crime they have not committed. Our penal system is littered with innocent people who do not have the resources or influence to overturn wrong decisions. But one day, all of this will change as God will establish true righteousness and justice in the land.

STUDENTS’ RESPONSES
AIM: Students will seek to be agents of change with God’s help and direction

Reformation
Note the king’s final word to the judges as the reformation is put in place: “Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good” (2 Chronicles 19:11c). Reformation is never easy, whether in a church, family, business, or community. It takes someone like Jehoshaphat to challenge the status quo and recognize that despite the naysayers that fight against reformation, God is with us to bring about the needed change for His honor and praise. Are you a Jehoshaphat?

PRAYER
Dear Father, thank You for being so concerned that we receive justice. Help us to also seek justice on behalf of others. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER
Chuck Colson (1931–2012) had the distinction of being the first associate of President Richard Nixon to be incarcerated for crimes related to the Watergate scandal. Colson had had a midlife conversion to evangelical Christianity the year before he served his prison sentence. The one-time
political fixer radically changed his life, and ultimately started an influential and successful prison ministry. In the 45 years since its founding, Prison Fellowship has grown to become the largest nonprofit organization for convicts and their families.

Prison Fellowship is now a major advocate for federal and state criminal justice reform. For example, the organization heavily promoted the rollback of onerous Clinton-era drug laws, as was accomplished by the First Step Act, signed into law in December 2018. But, of course, lobbying of lawmakers is only part of their story. Prison Fellowship is a hands-on ministry, with staff and volunteers running programs and special events for prisoners throughout the country. Their affiliated ministry, Angel Tree, provides Christmas gifts and summer camps for the children of imprisoned parents. They are unapologetically Christian, sharing the gospel within the largest incarcerated population in the world. If you have a like-minded concern for criminal justice reform, please contact them at prisonfellowship.org to find out how to donate time or treasure.

HOW TO SAY IT

Amariah.  am'uh-RJ-uh.

Beer-sheba.  bee'uhr-SHEE-buh.

Jehoshaphat.  juh-HOSH-uh-fat(').
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PREPARE FOR NEXT SUNDAY

Read Psalm 146:1-10, and next week’s lesson “Praise for God’s Justice.”

Sources:


COMMENTS / NOTES: