

## **A GOOD KING'S ERROR.**

– 2 CHRONICLES 19:1-11. – JULY 24. –

**Golden Text:** – "Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good."

JEHOSHAPHAT is noted as one of the best kings in the history of Judah. He was the son of Asa, of our last lesson. He had been reigning twenty years at the time of the events narrated in this lesson. He was a still more vigorous reformer than his father Asa, his record being that he utterly destroyed all the groves where idolatry was practised, the implication being that his father had permitted some of them to remain. Additionally he established the true religion throughout his kingdom, and evidently was zealous for righteousness in every sense of the word. The record certainly shows his reign in the most favorable light.

He got into error through ambition. He made a marriage alliance for his son with the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel of the ten-tribe kingdom – Israel. Doubtless his ambition was that ultimately through this union the two nations might become again united as one under his son. Alas! how many good men and good women have been injured by ambition and expediency. How many parents think more of the earthly prospects of their children than of their real happiness and spiritual prosperity. However good and noble and well intentioned such parents may be, their course in such matters indicates lack of faith in God or lack of submission to his will, without the realization that his arrangements faithfully carried out will mean greater blessing than any other.

## **ALLIANCES WITH EVIL DANGEROUS.**

The ambition which led to the intermarrying with the royal family of Israel led also to fellowship and sociability between the

two royal families, and the effect, as might have been expected, was an evil one. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," says the Apostle. A son once asked his mother why she did not permit him to play with certain boys of the neighborhood. She replied [R3394 : page 205] that she feared their influence over him would be for evil. He inquired why she should not expect that his good example would influence these neighbor boys rather than that their example would influence him unfavorably. By way of illustrating her thought, she requested her son to bring her a tumbler full of clean water and a bottle of ink and a pen. When he had brought these she asked him to put a drop of the ink into the tumbler of water. He did so, and she asked him to notice the clouded effect that even a drop of the ink produced; and then suggested that he put one drop of the water into the ink bottle and note how little change would be manifested. The lesson is a good one: there is a corrupting power in evil, a downward tendency to which nothing in righteousness corresponds, and reversely.

The lesson to us is that we need to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world," and, more than this, to seek divine aid in so doing – to appropriate to ourselves the instructions and encouragements, the reproofs and exhortations of God's Word. A little leaven of sin can affect a whole community; it has a power of self-development in fallen human nature that righteousness does not possess. The more we realize this the more we are led to look to the Lord for the great relief that the world needs, and the more we are inclined to pray as well as to labor that the Lord's Kingdom may come, and that through it righteousness may be established in the world, and the divine will be done eventually on earth as it is done in heaven.

The sociability between the king of Judah and the king of Israel led the former to visit the latter, and on such an occasion the host proposed that he would attempt to retake from the king of Syria a certain city that had once belonged to Israel. He requested his guest, the king of Judah, to accompany him to the battle, which was

evidently expected to be a victory. Out of courtesy, and from his desire to cultivate the friendship of Ahab, Jehoshaphat yielded and accompanied him, the result being a disastrous battle from which the king of Judah barely escaped. The Lord, through the prophet Jehu, sent him a message on his return from the battle, saying, "Shouldst [R3394 : page 206] thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee" – indicated by his ignominious return without any evidence of divine favor especially promised to the kings of Judah so long as they were in harmony with God.

### **BE YE SEPARATE, SAITH THE LORD.**

This whole matter teaches an important lesson for the Lord's people: it is for us to seek first the Lord's will in every matter and to leave to him the direction of our affairs and interests. We should be specially on guard against associations with the ungodly – against fellowships, matrimonial alliances, etc., as between them and ourselves and families. We are not to wonder so much that one of the best kings of Judah should commit such an error, but we do wonder that members of the Royal Priesthood, begotten of the holy Spirit, could ever be so negligent of their relationship to the Lord and responsibility to him and to their children, that they should to any extent follow the course of Jehoshaphat; and yet we well know that those who thus attempt to take the guidance of their own affairs and the affairs of their children into their own hands, and hence to ignore the Lord in the matter, are a considerable number. As we grow in grace and in knowledge, and sometimes profit by our mistakes, we should be more and more free from them and therefore more and more pleasing to the Lord.

The Lord's instruction to the new creation is that we should not only love righteousness, but hate iniquity; we should not only love and fellowship with all who are the Lord's people, but we should strictly avoid the fellowship of those who are not his people, who are

enemies of righteousness. This does not mean that we are to hate the wicked, but that, hating the wickedness, we will avoid any fellowship with those who are in sympathy with it, realizing that they are either blinded to the right or ensnared and influenced by the Adversary. What fellowship hath light with darkness, truth with error, righteousness with sin? Let all who love righteousness depart from iniquity: "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord's house."

While thus reprovng Jehoshaphat, the Lord graciously mentioned his approval of his course in destroying the idolatrous arrangements and the tendency of the king's heart to seek the Lord. Evidently the experience was a profitable one and led Jehoshaphat to still greater zeal for righteousness, for he went out amongst the people, either personally or through heralds and representatives, and effected a religious revival, bringing the people back to a higher appreciation of the Lord and observance of his statutes. Evidently the king had a very high sense of justice and honor, as indicated by his judicial appointments in all the cities of his kingdom. His message 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. Wherefore, 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." These are grand sentiments, worthy of a saint of this Gospel age! Surely such a king would be a blessing to any people because of his approximation to the divine ideal of righteousness. What may the world hope for when the great king Immanuel – whose right the kingdom is, and who shortly will take it in the name of Jehovah – shall exercise the powers of the kingdom, and with superhuman knowledge and wisdom shall order the affairs of the world in the highest interests of every creature, in accord with the principles of righteousness.

## **JUSTICE IS THE FOUNDATION OF GOD'S THRONE.**

Very evidently the majority of people – even Christians, "saints" – have not sufficiently high ideals respecting justice. The more we realize what a detestable thing injustice is in the sight of the Lord, the more must we strive to exercise ourselves continually along this line. Justice is not so high an attribute in some respects as love, but it is of primary importance, for the adage is a true one that we should be just before we are generous. The Lord's people should make sure that they render to no man in any respect less than is due him in business transactions, in social affairs, in private conversation, in every way. The saint is to go beyond this, and not only be just but generous – to render nothing less than justice to any, and to be willing to accept from others less than he might justly demand if they seemed not so highly to appreciate the principles of Justice.

We are to remember the wide difference that exists between the Lord's people and the world, and are not to measure ourselves with others in this respect. The majority of the world have not been in the same school as we – the school of Christ – as it is written of the Lord's people, "They shall all be taught of God." As we have been learning in the highest school from the best of teachers for years, it would be strange indeed if we did not have a higher standard both of justice and of love than that which generally prevails amongst men. Let us learn to cultivate justice, let us be diligent students in the school of Christ, that we may be fitted for the graduation tests and thus be accounted worthy to be associated with our Lord as teachers in the great Millennial age school, in which the whole world of mankind shall receive instruction along these lines.

The officers of the court were largely selected from amongst the Levites – the tribe specially consecrated to the Lord's service. Apparently the king could not have acted more wisely in all these matters; nevertheless we are not to expect the kings of Christendom

to follow his example and select only consecrated men for judges, court officers, police duty, etc. The kingdoms of this world will by and by become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Anointed, and then undoubtedly during that Millennial period only the consecrated will be granted positions of power, authority or responsibility in connection with [R3394 : page 207] the government of the world. At present, however, the "god of this world," the "prince of this world," Satan, has largely to do with all the politics of the world, and sees to it that the majority in places of influence and power are faithful to himself.

True, there is today outwardly a good moral tone and a general desire on the part of the public not to be abused or defrauded by those in ruling positions, and a certain amount of decency and order must be maintained and a high standard must be claimed. Nevertheless, we are all witness to the fact that there are various standards of honesty, and that the majority of people both in and out of office have standards that are too low. It is not for us to specially pry into the present condition of things, which rather seems to us to be as good as we could expect, better than we could have hoped, all things considered. We rejoice, nevertheless, that the time is coming when absolute perfection will be secured in the conduct of the world's affairs. God is now selecting his Royal Priests to be his kings and ministers in the administration of the affairs of the Kingdom of his dear Son. Let us be faithful, and learn well the lessons of the present time, that we may be counted worthy a share in this honor.

### **"JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT."**

Jehoshaphat's charge to the Levites who constituted this superior court at Jerusalem is grand also. "Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, with a perfect heart. And whensoever any controversy shall come to you from any 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." The judging between blood and blood would signify the decision as to the degree of culpability in the event of a murder – to determine, [R3395 : page 207] as we do today, whether or not the death were manslaughter, accidental killing, or in the second degree – murder unpremeditated or incited by anger or fear – or, third, if it were murder in the first degree, intended, premeditated. Similarly they were to discern which offences were against the common law, which against the divine law, and which against the usages of society, and were to see that justice would be meted out to all. As we think over those conditions of olden time, we wonder how such matters as these – such evidences that people of thousands of years ago were just, noble, thoughtful, reverential – are regarded by our Evolutionist friends. They seem inclined to think that at that time mankind must have been near the monkey scale of intelligence, but the facts are against them. Here was a king in whose empire justice was no doubt dispensed equally as well as it is with us today in this most favored land at this most favored period.

The closing words of the lesson constitute our Golden Text – "Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good." We commend these words to the Lord's faithful people. Whoever has a duty to perform let him not fear, and while seeking to do unpleasant tasks in a kindly manner, both justly and lovingly, let us fear not man, but rather fear the Lord and be intent on pleasing him. May the words of our mouths as well as the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer!

