



IN THE VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT

This weekend, as we begin our special Week of Prayer and Fasting, I think of one of my favorites stories in the Bible. It is the story of Jehoshaphat, the fourth king of Judah (the sixth king of David's dynasty) after Israel became a divided kingdom. God gave him a miraculous victory against an alliance of vastly superior armies in the Valley of Berakah (which means "praise" or "blessing").

The Moabites, Ammonites and Aramites (or Meunites) have massed their armies on the borders of Judah with the intent of annihilating it. Upon being informed of the invading armies, Jehoshaphat *"resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah"* (2 Chron. 20:2-3, NIV). All of the people came to the temple in Jerusalem to seek the Lord and His help. As they stood before the Lord, Jehoshaphat cried out to God:

"O LORD, God of our ancestors, you alone are the God who is in heaven. You are ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth. You are powerful and mighty; no one can stand against you! O our God, did you not drive out those who lived in this land when your people Israel arrived? And did you not give this land forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? Your people settled here and built this Temple to honor your name. They said, 'Whenever we are faced with any calamity such as war, plague, or famine, we can come to stand in your presence before this Temple where your name is honored. We can cry out to you to save us, and you will hear us and rescue us.' And now see what the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir are doing. You would not let our ancestors invade those nations when Israel left Egypt, so they went around them and did not destroy them. Now see how they reward us! For they have come to throw us out of your land, which you gave us as an inheritance. O our God, won't you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help." (2 Chron. 20:6-12, NLT)

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel, and he delivered this prophetic message:

"Listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Listen, King Jehoshaphat! This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow, march out against them. You will find them coming up through the ascent of Ziz at the end of the valley that opens into the wilderness of Jeruel. But you will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the LORD's victory. He is with you, O people of Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out against them tomorrow, for the LORD is with you!" (2 Chron. 20:15-17, NLT)

Upon hearing this, Jehoshaphat and the people did something very interesting. They fell down to worship God. Then the Levites *"stood to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud shout"* (2 Chron. 20:19, NLT). The next day, Jehoshaphat did something really strange: he appointed singers to lead the army into battle. They marched forward, singing *"Give thanks to the LORD; his faithful love endures forever!"* (2 Chron. 20:21, NLT)

When they came to the battlefield to face the enemy hordes, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground. Even before they got there the Lord had set up His own ambush. He caused all of the soldiers of the invading army to slaughter each other. No one escaped. It was total annihilation. It took three days for Jehoshaphat's army to collect the enemy's weapons, materials and supplies. What an amazing miracle!

Jehoshaphat was unlike the other kings of Judah and Israel. The Lord was with him *"because he lived as his ancestor David had lived when he first became king."* (2 Chron. 17:3) His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord. He obeyed God's commands and did not live as the people of Israel lived.

Jehoshaphat was a great reformer. He removed the pagan shrines from the land of Judah. He appointed teachers and judges to restore God's law and justice all over his realm. He built forts and storage cities in Judah. He organized his army into effective fighting units of 1,000 – each with seasoned commanders – stationed in fortified cities all over the kingdom. Judah's standing army numbered over one million men. Philistine and Arab cities feared him and they paid tribute to be at peace with Jehoshaphat.

That is why it is so astonishing to me that he did not depend on Judah's military might and national resources when Judah was invaded by the Moabites, Ammonites and Aramites. He immediately turned to God for help. Instead of rallying his army to defend Judah, he sought the word of the Lord with prayer and fasting. In the face of a great crisis, the only thing he wanted to do was to inquire of the Lord. God did not disappoint Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. He gave them a great victory when they sang His praises in the Valley of Berakah.

Today, we want to begin our Week of Prayer and Fasting by seeking God in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Like Judah in her time of tremendous need, we can inquire of the Lord what He has planned for us at Miracle Hill. Whatever crisis we're facing, we can cry out to Him for deliverance. In our time of great need, we can also praise and worship Him and listen to His prophetic words. Let's hear Him say to us, *"Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged. The Lord is with you. For the battle is not yours, but God's. You will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the LORD's victory."*