

## Leadership and National Transformation – 2 Chronicles 17

Why is there not more revival, more vibrant prayer, more life transformation. Have we not seen revival come in recent days. What hinders us from experiencing more of God? I have book on revival by Martyn Lloyd Jones. It is one of the best books I have ever read on revival. Here is what Lloyd Jones says “God’s displeasure is upon the church because of her sin, because of her apostasy and her rebellion, but if she truly repents and really seeks him, he will yet meet with her... Oh rend the heavens, come quickly down, and make a thousand hearts thine own.”

### 10 Things That Separate Us From National Revival

- 1) **Fear of God** – the fear and reverence of God in America is at an all time low. When there is lack of humility and no fear of God, good things are slow in coming if at all. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord and the end of wisdom is just the same. The lack of righteousness and justice (not to mention wisdom) in our culture is directly related to our trivial view of God.

“But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.” Ecclesiastes 8:13

- 2) **Divinity of man** – we tend to serve man and not God. We are trained from an early age to please people and we spend the entirety of our lives doing such. But the spiritual kingdom of God always starts with God, not man. He is the answer and focus with no compromise.

And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!”

But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. Acts 5:27-31

- 3) **Muzzle the prophets** – because of the religious environment in churches today those whom God has raised up in his kingdom are given a muzzle and harshly opposed.

I raised up some of your sons as prophets, And some of your young men as Nazirites. *Is it* not so, O you children of Israel?” Says the LORD. “But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets saying, ‘Do not prophesy!’ Amos 2:11-12

- 4) **Leaders build their own kingdom by insulating themselves and by falsely accusing those God sends to speak truth.**

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said: 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.' "

Then Amaziah said to Amos: "Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy. But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it *is* the king's sanctuary, and it *is* the royal residence."

Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I *was* no prophet, nor *was* I a son of a prophet, but I *was* a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'

Amos 7:10-15

**5) Leaders whom God has not sent "speaking" for God.**

And the LORD said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart. Jeremiah 14:14

6) **Gross wickedness and unrepentant hearts.** The absolute miscarriage of justice, lies, deception and rampant wickedness bring a culture to its knees. You cannot escape the judgment of God when a nation refuses to listen to God, obey his commands or repent.

7) **Rebellion of kings** – the failure of leaders to follow God in obedience can lead a nation into utter ruin and devastation.

So Samuel said: "Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to heed than the fat of rams. For **rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.** Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king." I Samuel 15:22-23

8) **Idolatry** – When our idols are destroyed, when they become nothing but powder in our hands, then and only then we will see revival and restoration in our land.

"It shall be in that day," says the LORD of hosts, "*that* I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land." Zechariah 13:2

**9) Prophets are in the dungeon.**

Therefore the princes said to the king, "Please, let this man be put to death, for thus he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man does not seek the welfare of this people, but their harm."

Then Zedekiah the king said, “Look, he *is* in your hand. For the king can *do* nothing against you.” So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king’s son, which *was* in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire. Jeremiah 38:4-6

## 10) Leaders refuse to listen.

Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “If I declare *it* to you, will you not surely put me to death? And if I give you advice, you will not listen to me.” Jeremiah 38:15

I wholeheartedly believe that these 10 things and related problems are keeping our nation from experiencing true revival, restoration and reformation – a true spiritual awakening. Not only that, rebellion has consequences. Jeremiah 38-40 reveal that rebellion and refusing to repent leads to national disaster. God fulfills his word and judgment comes.

Now, this is a list of problems or errors leading us away from God and national revival and reformation. And while this list is helpful, it is only a starting point. What we really need is a solution, not just a list of what not to do. The Bible does give us the answer, as always. Now, I want to be clear, the Bible has many solutions and what we are discussing today is just one of them, but it is a very powerful solution. And I will also say this passage we are about to read is very personal to me. Many years ago God spoke to me through this passage. Sending people out to teach and preach his Word has the power to transform our nation.

Let’s read 2 Chronicles 17

Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place and strengthened himself against Israel. <sup>2</sup> He placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim that Asa his father had captured. <sup>3</sup> The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, <sup>4</sup> but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel. <sup>5</sup> Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand. And all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor. <sup>6</sup> His heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord. And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.

<sup>7</sup> In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah; <sup>8</sup> and with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; and with these Levites, the priests Elishama and Jehoram. <sup>9</sup> And they taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the Lord with them. They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.

<sup>10</sup> And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, and they made no war against Jehoshaphat. <sup>11</sup> Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver for tribute, and the Arabians also brought him 7,700 rams and 7,700

goats. <sup>12</sup> And Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater. He built in Judah fortresses and store cities, <sup>13</sup> and he had large supplies in the cities of Judah. He had soldiers, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> This was the muster of them by fathers' houses: Of Judah, the commanders of thousands: Adnah the commander, with 300,000 mighty men of valor; <sup>15</sup> and next to him Jehohanan the commander, with 280,000; <sup>16</sup> and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, a volunteer for the service of the Lord, with 200,000 mighty men of valor. <sup>17</sup> Of Benjamin: Eliada, a mighty man of valor, with 200,000 men armed with bow and shield; <sup>18</sup> and next to him Jehozabad with 180,000 armed for war. <sup>19</sup> These were in the service of the king, besides those whom the king had placed in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

King Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of Judah after the kingdom was divided. He was co-regent with his father Asa for 3 years. Then, he ruled as king another 22 years. We know from this passage in 2 Chronicles and I Kings 22 that Jehoshaphat was a good king and a reforming leader. In verse 3 the text tells us the Lord was with the king and established his kingdom. The text also says Jehoshaphat was courageous in the ways of the Lord and took the high places and Asherim out of Judah.

So, it is clear that king Jehoshaphat is blessed and prosperous. God establishes his kingship because he walked in the ways of his father David, and obeyed the commands of God. It might be easy to skim over this introduction to king Jehoshaphat, but the truth is this king is quite different in his passion for God. The text tells us that he did not seek the Baals. And I think the author is making a distinction between Judah and Israel. Baal was the chief god of the Canaanite pantheon according to the tablets of Ugarit.

Now, as I already mentioned, Jehoshaphat took the high places and Asherim out of Judah. But, what does this mean? Well, the high places were elevated places of worship. When the Israelites entered the promised land God instructed them to destroy the high places. Numbers 33:51-52 says, "When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places." The high places were connected to immoral practices and idol worship of the Canaanites. It would also sometimes include child sacrifice. Asherim is plural for Asherah, who was a goddess found in the Ras Shamra religious texts. She is also called, "Lady of the Sea" and was a chief goddess of Tyre. She is often seen beside the god Baal. The interesting thing to note is that in 2 Chronicles 20:33 and in I Kings 22:43, the text says the high places were not taken away during the reign of king Jehoshaphat. One can assume Jehoshaphat did remove the high places, but they were possibly rebuilt at a later time. Either way, Jehoshaphat was a righteous and reforming king intent on getting rid of idolatry and focusing the nation on God. God richly blessed the righteous heart of Jehoshaphat. The text tells us all of Judah brought tribute to the king and that he had great riches and honor.

Now, the next set of verses, 7-9, demonstrate one of king Jehoshaphat's greatest reforms. He gave the people the Book of the Law. This likely refers to the Torah, the five books written by Moses (Genesis – Deuteronomy). The men Jehoshaphat chooses to teach the Book of the Law is unusual. Typically, teaching God's law was a priestly function. However,

after the exile there is evidence the Levites helped the people to understand God's law. An example is found in Nehemiah 8:7. But, the princes or government officials certainly did not teach the law. Yet, here in this passage Jehoshaphat selects princes or officials to teach in the cities of Judah. And these individuals are mentioned first. But with them are nine Levites and two priests. Now, there have been several suggestions as to why all these individuals are sent. Albert Barnes notes that only the priests and Levites were the teachers. Sara Japhet suggests there are only 8 Levites because "Tobadoniah" may be a dittography of the preceding two names. She also suggests the three classes of people mentioned are in a hierarchy, with the two priests being in a position of supervision.

James Dixon in his commentary writes, "Princes, Levites and Priests were enlisted as teachers to take the law to the people." And with that I think we can simply say the Bible does not have to agree with what we think or how we believe things should be. The text says king Jehoshaphat sent government officials, Levites, and priests to teach in all the cities of Judah. What was the king doing? He was reforming the nation with the teaching of God's word. A principle we can certainly understand and apply. What the king was doing is incredibly powerful.

Do you think we need revival and reformation in our nation. Well, guess what? God has already given the answer. Send people of all backgrounds out to teach and preach God's holy word. And get this, to ALL the cities! Now, you might say, wait a minute – are you really saying anyone can teach God's word. Well, no. Jehoshaphat chose able men, but they were not all priests. Now, there is no discussion in the text about training these men, just that the king sent them. But certainly I believe we can assume they knew God's law, which the people needed to know. And our New Testament example is Jesus Christ. Who did he choose? Who did he send? Well, it certainly wasn't the religious leaders! Jesus chose men from all kinds of backgrounds.

Now, you might also be thinking – well, how would this work today? And here is what I will say: what the text states is quite simple. Able men were sent into all the cities to teach God's word. You design a simple system where people (men and women) are sent to preach and teach God's word. This solution will bring revival – it will reform hearts and minds. How do I know that? I've read the rest of the chapter. In verse 10, the text tells us the result of the national itinerant teaching ministry that Jehoshaphat initiated. The fear of the Lord fell on all the surrounding kingdoms. There was no war. So, first of all, teaching God's word brought what – the fear of the Lord. Talk about transformation! The surrounding kingdoms were afraid, but it wasn't Israel or the king they were afraid of – it was God Almighty! In addition, the Philistine and Arabian kingdoms brought gifts to king Jehoshaphat. So, I want to stop here for a moment. What exactly is the fear of the Lord. Proverbs tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge or wisdom. It is a respect for God, but it is also, you know, fear. God is holy and he alone holds our destiny in his hands. We need to fear him in reverence and awe and show him his due honor for who he truly is. He alone is sovereign. The truth is, after the preaching and teaching of God's word to the entire nation, in every city, the surrounding kingdoms were afraid. This is the great power of God's holy word. The word of God produces knowledge, wisdom and salvation. It leads us into everlasting life and provides instruction for our daily lives. I believe one of the greatest sins

of modern times is the trivialization of God. Instead of taking God serious, at his word, we play games. We downplay his truth and importance. We allow the culture to dictate how we feel and think about God. But all the while, God has not changed. He is preeminent. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He is the Holy One, the Creator-Redeemer. No one can escape his power, and no one is greater than the Great I Am.

So, what does saturating a nation in God's word do? It not only changes that nation, it changes the surrounding nations as well. It is life-changing, it brings peace in a time of conflict. It brings grace and abundance. There is no greater task than teaching and preaching God's word. So, what can we learn here in this passage. What brings peace – God's authoritative word. What brings blessing – God's pure word, and if I can also say, what brings greatness – God's great word. The greatness of Jehoshaphat comes directly from his obedience to God and passion for God. And it certainly also comes from the sending out of teachers to the nation. If you are looking for an answer – here it is, God's word.

Do we need revival, then preach God's word. Do we need reformation and purification, then preach God's word. It is a simple process, select the right people and send them out to the nation. It will radically change everything. God has already given us the answer.

Now, so far I have mentioned three main points. 1) The Lord was with Jehoshaphat and established his kingdom due to his obedience and passion for God. 2) The king sent out officials, Levites, and priest to teach in all the cities of Judah. 3) The result was the fear of the Lord, peace and prosperity. What I am going to suggest is we also need a Christological approach. We often see types in Scripture. We usually think of Moses, Abraham or David, with these types pointing to Christ. King Jehoshaphat is no different. He is a son of David, which means he is in the Messianic line. That is why he was king. Now, let's consider again our main points and compare them to Jesus. First, the Lord established the kingdom for Jehoshaphat because of his obedience and passion for God. Jesus is a greater Jehoshaphat. God gave Jesus a greater kingdom that would fill the entire earth and save the nations. The obedience of Jesus brought blessing, but not for himself, for all who would believe in him, including you and me. And unlike the blessing Jehoshaphat experienced, we now have the eternal blessing of life with God. A blessing that has no end, lasting forever and ever.

Jehoshaphat created a national teaching ministry. He sent out teachers to all the cities of Judah. He washed the nation in God's word. Who did Jesus send? Well, obviously he sent out the 12 apostles. But he sent out others as well. According to Matthew 23:34, Jesus sent prophets, wise men, and scribes. So, Jesus sends all kinds of different people for the salvation of the world. He sends people out from all backgrounds to teach and preach his pure and holy word. This process washes the nations clean.

In 2 Chronicles the result of the teaching of the word was the fear of the Lord, peace and prosperity. Did the Lord Jesus Christ not bring all of this with his first coming as the perfect sacrifice. The difference of course is that Jesus brings spiritual blessings with the coming of his kingdom to the earth. Philippians 2:8-11 states:

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

I must tell you this passage in 2 Chronicles has greatly affected me. I have been waiting for a time to be sent or to send. God has placed about 7 or 8 cities on my heart to start his reforming work. And this is certainly not the first time he has done this. I am praying for those cities, and looking for opportunities to go and preach or for God to send someone there to move cultural mountains. God's word changes everything. He has already given us his answer.

You may remember the story of Constantine from history. This emperor had a huge impact on the Roman Empire and Christianity. There is no doubt that Constantine's conversion to Christianity completely altered the Empire and Christianity's influence. I believe with all my heart, this short passage in 2 Chronicles has the power to produce the same kind of monumental change if we will just follow the instructional manual. God's word is very powerful.

God placed this specific passage in my heart many years ago. So, my question for you is, what has God placed on your heart. How can you use God's word to further his kingdom. Are you being called to teach or preach God's word. No matter what God has called you to do – do it faithfully. Jehoshaphat obeyed the Lord and transformed a nation. What will God do when you obey? Go, preach, teach, pray, worship, and live a life on fire for God. I promise you – if you and I do that – God will spark a revival not just in our lives, but in many others around us. Together, under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, let's start a national and international reformation that shakes nations!