

Jehoshaphat Makes Judicial Reforms

Key Verse: “[He] 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.”
—II Chronicles 19:6

Selected Scripture:
II Chronicles 19:4-11

JEHOSHAPHAT WAS ONE

of the few righteous rulers over Israel’s two-tribe kingdom of Judah. In particular, he instituted during his reign a number of reforms concerning justice and judgment. These important matters had fallen into disarray and corruption under the evil reigns of previous kings. Restoring these was critical, he knew, to his ultimate goal of bringing the people “back unto the LORD God of their fathers.”—II Chron. 19:4

The first thing Jehoshaphat did was “set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah.” (vs. 5) Just as important, as stated in the Key Verse, he instructed them to take great care that they not judge according to man, but that they do so “for the LORD,” who was to guide them in judgment. He continued his instruction by reminding them that there should be no “respect of persons” or “taking of gifts”—bribes—as they rendered judgment. This would be considered “iniquity with the LORD our God.”—vs. 7

There are lessons here for the Lord’s people of today. Although it is not yet time for the general judgment of man’s hearts before the Lord, it is the time for the

consecrated to be judging their own standing before him. The Apostle Paul counsels us to “judge ourselves,” making corrections to our life as we do, in order that we “not be judged” severely by our Heavenly Father. (I Cor. 11:31) This “judging” of ourselves involves many things—our decisions along the narrow way, the way we spend our time, how we use our means, the type of character we develop, the way in which we serve the Lord, our attitudes and actions toward our brethren and fellowman in general, and all other aspects of our life. As the king instructed the judges of his day, we, in our judging of the things mentioned above, are to seek to do so according to God’s will and way, and not man’s. We are also to judge matters not looking for the “respect of persons,” or for “gifts” of a worldly or fleshly kind which might cause our judgment to stray from God’s standard of righteousness.

Jehoshaphat appointed the Levites and priests to a special judgment task, that of rendering justice involving controversies and conflicts among men, as well as specific violations of the Law. This was a particularly sobering assignment, since it would involve the administering of punishment. Even life and death matters would have to be decided on occasion. Under such circumstances, to render righteous and fair judgment would be vitally important. The king specially counseled these judges to act “in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.” (II Chron. 19:9) He also encouraged them, saying, “Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.”—vs. 11

Like these special judges, those of the Lord’s people now who are faithful in the current judgment of their own life’s affairs, will be given a special privilege and great responsibility in the next age. Together with their head, Christ, they will “judge the world in righteousness” during the thousand-year judgment day of Christ’s kingdom.—Acts 17:31 ■