

KHW36 to Sep 4

August 29 Su (Optional) — Seeking God in Scripture

This was the word of the Lord that came to Jehoshaphat through the prophet Jehu: “... *some good is found in you, for you ... have set your heart to seek God*” (2 Chron. 19:3). What other people in the Bible were known for seeking God? What reminders of its importance do we find in Scripture? Here are a few examples to read carefully and thoughtfully for today:

Deut. 4:29, *But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Ezra 8:22, *The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him...*

Ps. 14:2, *The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.*

Ps. 24:6, *Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.*

Ps. 63:1, *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

Ps. 69:32, *When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive.*

Ps. 70:4, *May all who seek you, rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, “God is great!”*

Dan. 9:3, *Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.*

Matt. 6:33, *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Acts 17:27, *...that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,*

Col. 3:1, *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

Heb. 11:6, *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

The Divided Kingdom							
Judah				Israel			
Years B.C.	King	Prophet	Scripture	Years B.C.	King	Prophet	Scripture
870-848	Jehoshaphat	Jehu	1 K 22 2 C 17-20	874-853	Ahab	Elijah	
848-841	Joram/Jehoram	Obadiah?		853-852	Ahaziah	Elisha	1 K 22
841	Ahaziah		2 K 8-9, 11-12	852-841	Joram/Jehoram		2 K 1, 3
841-835	Athaliah		2 C 21-24	841-814	Jehu		2 K 9-10
835-796	Joash/Jehoash	Joel		814-798	Jehoahaz		2 K 13

August 30 M Reading 172 — 2 Chronicles 20:1-19 — Jehoshaphat's prayer for help

¹ After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites,^[fn] came against Jehoshaphat for battle. ² Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A great multitude is coming against you from Edom,^[fn] from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar” (that is, Engedi). ³ Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

⁵ And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, ⁶ and said, “O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. ⁷ Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? ⁸ And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, ⁹ ‘If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment,^[fn] or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.’ ¹⁰ And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy— ¹¹ behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit. ¹² O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

¹³ Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. ¹⁴ And the Spirit of the LORD came^[fn] upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. ¹⁵ And he said, “Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s. ¹⁶ Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.”

¹⁸ Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. ¹⁹ And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

ESV Footnotes

(20:1) Compare 26:7; Hebrew *Ammonites*

(20:2) One Hebrew manuscript; most Hebrew manuscripts *Aram* (Syria)

(20:9) Or *the sword of judgment*

(20:14) Or *was*

From Fear to Faith — Jehoshaphat displayed strong, godly character when faced with the vast threatening armies of people bordering Judah on the east and south: “*Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD*” (v. 3). Notice his quick response to fear. Do we turn to God immediately when we are overcome with fear? That is a reaction of one whose heart is genuinely committed to God. Also, the king did not seek God alone but rallied his whole kingdom to do the same (v. 4), declaring a national fast to demonstrate the seriousness in their prayer for help. Jehoshaphat’s public prayer reflected the theme of Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple in chapter 6: when in trouble, seek God’s help. God answered through Jahaziel, whose message was much more specific than the very general message from Ahab’s false prophets (18:11). Jahaziel said that the opposing army would “*come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel*” (20:16). God’s command, “*Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD*” (v. 17) sounds very much like Moses’ challenge to the people of Israel on the shore of the Red Sea: “*Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today*” (Ex. 14:13). This threat against Judah was not God’s punishment for sin; it was an opportunity to grow in faith. We will see in our next reading how God responded to their faith.

²⁰ *And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed."* ²¹ *And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever."*

²² *And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed.* ²³ *For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.*

²⁴ *When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the horde, and behold, there^[fn] were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped.* ²⁵ *When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them, in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much.* ²⁶ *On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah,^[fn] for there they blessed the LORD. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Beracah to this day.* ²⁷ *Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies.* ²⁸ *They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD.* ²⁹ *And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.* ³⁰ *So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.*

ESV Footnotes

(20:24) Hebrew *they*

(20:26) *Beracah* means *blessing*

Believing and Blessing — Jehoshaphat had believed Jahaziel's prophecy that if Judah went 12 miles (19 km) the next day to the designated valley, they would "*find them ... not need to fight ... and see the salvation of the LORD*" (20:16-17). That Jehoshaphat believed God's promise of not having to fight was shown by directing the Levite singers to march "*before the army*" (v. 21). Singers would meet the enemy first! Notice, also, that God did not act until Judah did: "*And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush...*" (v. 22). God's response often waits for faith's action. And what did they sing? It was a song of thanks in advance for whatever it was that God was going to do for them: "*Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever*" (v. 21). Thanking God in advance was another evidence of their faith. Also, Judah not only blessed the Lord but God blessed His people in return. It took three days to carry all the spoils back to Jerusalem. That was a huge blessing. Then, on the fourth day, Judah returned to the battle scene where they "*blessed the LORD*" and named the place the "Valley of Blessing [Beracah]" (v. 26). Oh, that we might develop that kind of trust in what God has promised to us in our New Testament era! Ask in faith today! Act in faith! Thank Him for what He will do even before you see it!

1 Kings 22

⁴¹ *Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. ⁴² Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem.*

His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. ⁴³ He walked in all the way of Asa his father. He did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD.

Yet the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places.

⁴⁴ *Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.*

⁴⁵ *Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he showed, and how he warred, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?*

⁴⁶ *And from the land he exterminated the remnant of the male cult prostitutes who remained in the days of his father Asa.*

⁴⁷ *There was no king in Edom; a deputy was king.*

2 Chronicles 20

³¹ *Thus Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem.*

His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. ³² He walked in the way of Asa his father and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD.

³³ *The high places, however, were not taken away;*

the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their fathers.

³⁴ *Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from first to last, are written in*

the chronicles of Jehu the son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

1 Kings 22 (cont.)

⁴⁸ *Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold,*

but they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber.

⁴⁹ *Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships," but Jehoshaphat was not willing.*

⁵⁰ *And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father, and Jehoram his son reigned in his place.*

2 Chronicles 20 (cont.)

³⁵ *After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly.*

³⁶ *He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber.*

³⁷ *Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made.*

" And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.

2 Chronicles 21

¹ *Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David, and Jehoram his son reigned in his place.*

Mixed Commitment — Jehoshaphat was mostly good but he had some lapses: He was *"doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. Yet the high places were not taken away"* (1 Kings 22:43). He also removed the remaining male cult prostitutes (v. 46). It was likewise good that he *"made peace with the king of Israel"* (v. 44) to avoid war but it was wrong that he partnered with him again: *"He joined him in building ships..."* (2 Chron. 20:35-36). The prophet Eliezer rebuked him for that alliance and promised the destruction of the ships (v. 37). It seems that Jehoshaphat learned a lesson in obedience through that experience and thereafter refused another alliance with the king of Israel (1 Kings 22:49). Generally, born-again Christians are also mostly good but sometimes we lapse by going against God's known will. We might not have prophets to rebuke us but we have God's Word to guide us. When we fail and God has to "wreck our ships" in discipline, we need to learn from our lessons and lessen our lapses!

Meditation: It might seem a little strange that the reason given for not removing all the high places was that *"the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their fathers"* (2 Chron. 20:33). These *"high places"* were locally constructed altar sites for worship on hilltops. Worship of heathen idols had been done in those places but it seems that Jehoshaphat had already removed them, along with their foreign idols: *"...he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah"* (17:6). So, the high places of chapter 20 must have been places where Yahweh was worshiped. What was wrong with that? The people were at least worshiping Yahweh! The problem was that God had chosen only one place for offering sacrifices, which was now at the temple in Jerusalem. This is why those people had not *"set their hearts"* on God; they were worshiping in partial obedience. Choosing convenience marred their proper worship of God. *That* we worship God is less important than *how* we worship God. When we excuse ourselves with partial obedience, God sees it as disobedience.

1 Kings 22

⁵¹ Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. ⁵² He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. ⁵³ He served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger in every way that his father had done.

2 Kings 1

¹ After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel.

² Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness." ³ But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?' ⁴ Now therefore thus says the LORD, You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" So Elijah went.

⁵ The messengers returned to the king, and he said to them, "Why have you returned?" ⁶ And they said to him, "There came a man to meet us, and said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, Thus says the LORD, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" ⁷ He said to them, "What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?" ⁸ They answered him, "He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

⁹ Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'" ¹⁰ But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

¹¹ Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty men with his fifty. And he answered and said to him, "O man of God, this is the king's order, 'Come down quickly!'" ¹² But Elijah answered them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

¹³ Again the king sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up and came and fell on his knees before Elijah and entreated him, "O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight. ¹⁴ Behold, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of fifty men with their fifties, but now let my life be precious in your sight." ¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he arose and went down with him to the king ¹⁶ and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word?—therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'"

¹⁷ So he died according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, because Ahaziah had no son. ¹⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

A Place for Trust — King Ahaziah was the son of Ahab and Jezebel; no wonder he was rotten! Like his mother, he learned to place his trust in her god, Baal-zebub (“Lord of the flies”). His name alone should have brought doubts regarding something worth trusting. But when he fell and seriously injured himself, he sent messengers to seek information from a false god. Yahweh, however, is a “jealous God,” as He declared when giving the Second Commandment about not making or serving any carved image (Ex. 20:5). God was also jealous about His people, even His wayward people in breakaway Israel: “*Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub...?*” (2 Kings 1:3). But Ahaziah was taught to trust Baal more than Yahweh. There is a penalty for misplaced trust. Twice in this passage, God declared, “...*therefore ... you shall surely die*” (vv. 4, 16). Where do we place our primary trust when we are flat on our back in serious trouble? We need to train ourselves to think first about God and ask Him for help. He is far more powerful and caring than anything else in which we could place our trust.

Meditation: You might have thought it was unfair of God to kill those two groups of fifty soldiers who came to arrest Elijah but we don’t see the whole picture. God knew what would happen if Elijah went with them the first two times; He could have been protecting him from death. Perhaps it was needed as a lesson for Ahaziah about being heavy-handed with God or His people. The captain of the third group of fifty certainly had learned from it to be respectful and humble when he came to Elijah and “*fell on his knees,*” called him a “*man of God,*” and begged for his life: “*please let my life ... be precious in your sight*” (v. 13). We cannot judge God by looking only at the circumstances of life because we don’t have the full perspective that He knows and does. It is enough to know that He is perfectly good, just, and cares for us.

September 3 F Reading 176 — 2 Kings 2:1–12a — Elijah transported to heaven

¹ Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² And Elijah said to Elisha, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. ³ And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?” And he said, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.”

⁴ Elijah said to him, “Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. ⁵ The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.”

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. ⁷ Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸ Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.” ¹⁰ And he said, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.” ¹¹ And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. ^{12a} And Elisha saw it and he cried, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw him no more.

Everybody's Secret — It was a secret that Elijah was going to be transported to heaven but everyone seemed to know it. It had been revealed to the prophets at Bethel but when they tried to inform Elisha about it, he replied, “Yes, *I know it; keep quiet*” (v. 3). The same thing happened with the prophets at Jericho. Finally, we find that Elijah also knew that he was to be miraculously transported, as indicated by his comment to Elisha: “...*if you see me as I am being taken from you...*” (v. 10). Sure enough, Elijah was carried up in a whirlwind with chariots and horses of fire. That was similar to the later experience of the Eleven as they watched Jesus go into heaven, except that they were told that He “*will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven*” (Acts. 1:11). Was that a secret? No! Jesus had told them, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them...*” (Matt. 28:19-20). The former great secret in Elijah's time was transformed into Jesus' great news. The first secret was to be kept quiet but the second one was to be broadcast. Peter began the public announcement on the Day of Pentecost when he proclaimed, “*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38). The born-again life we have experienced is the good news that we are to spread around to everyone we know.

Meditation: Why did Elijah tell Elisha to stop following him? Three times he said, “*Please stay here...*” (vv. 1, 4, 6). Is that really what he wanted Elisha to do or was he just testing him? And why didn't Elisha obey his master? To each of Elijah's requests, Elisha responded, “*I will not leave you.*” Was Elisha being rebellious or had he been told by God not to leave him? Earlier, God had told Elijah to find and anoint Elisha “*to be prophet in your place*” (1 Kings 19:16). Somehow, Elisha seemed to know that he must not let Elijah out of his sight.

September 4 Sa (Optional) — Psalm 62:1-12 — Trusting only in God

King Ahaziah chose to seek help from the god Baal-zebub instead of Yahweh and paid for it with his life. Earlier, King David showed that he was much wiser in seeking not the Lord of the Flies but the King of Heaven. Note the many expressions in this psalm of David that emphasize his wise commitment to God alone.

To the choirmaster: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

- ¹ *For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.*
- ² *He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.*
- ³ *How long will all of you attack a man
to batter him,
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?*
- ⁴ *They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.
They take pleasure in falsehood.
They bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse. Selah*
- ⁵ *For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.*
- ⁶ *He only is my rock and my salvation,*

- my fortress; I shall not be shaken.*
- ⁷ *On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.*
- ⁸ *Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah*
- ⁹ *Those of low estate are but a breath;
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.*
- ¹⁰ *Put no trust in extortion;
set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.*
- ¹¹ *Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,*
- ¹² *and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.
For you will render to a man
according to his work.*

- What *benefits* does David say come from trusting in God alone?
- What common *substitutes* for trusting in God are mentioned here?
- Toward what other source of trust are you tempted to shift away from God?
- Try to find one of the verses above to memorize that will help you.