

The Choir That Sang a Victory

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Many Bible stories tell us about people who had trouble believing what God told them, but this story is refreshingly different. After Solomon's reign the kingdom of Israel split into two competing kingdoms, Israel and Judah, and few of their kings really served God. But when King Jehoshaphat of Judah asked God to deliver his nation from the enemies surrounding them and God said that He would, the king chose to show his belief in Him in a most unusual way... and God answered his prayers with an equally powerful victory. The original story is recorded in 1 Chronicles 20:1-30.

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, sat on his throne in Jerusalem,
terrified by the news he had just received.
The kings of Moab, Ammon and Mount Seir had declared war on Judah
and were already crossing the Dead Sea, not far away.

The truth was inescapable:
The kingdom of Judah was doomed!

You see, after Solomon's death, ten of the tribes of Israel had split off
to form the Northern Kingdom with its capital in Samaria,
leaving Judah and Benjamin to themselves as the Southern Kingdom.
They were far too small to fight such a massive foe.

But the kingdom of Judah still possessed Jerusalem
and the Great Temple of God that Solomon had built there.
That alone gave Jehoshaphat hope in this dark hour.

Jehoshaphat did what any wise king would do in such a situation—
he sought guidance from the Lord.
He sent out messengers, commanding everyone in Judah
to fast and pray for God's help.

Then he himself went to the Temple to fast and pray
and meet all the people who came to join him.

And come they did!
Jehoshaphat stood in front of the multitude and led them all in prayer:

*"Oh mighty God of our ancestors, ruler of all,
You alone are the one true God.
No army can stand against You!
Didn't You give us this land as our inheritance,
driving out those who lived here before us?"*

*We built this temple here so we could worship You,
and You told us that You would protect us,
and that when we called out to You
You would hear us and rescue us.
Please, O Lord, hear us now!
Our enemies are coming to destroy us
and we are helpless to protect ourselves.
We don't know what to do,
and so we come to You now, for help."*

And even as King Jehoshaphat prayed,
and the men of Judah stood before him
with their wives, their young children and their babies,
one voice spoke up.
His name was Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah,
and he came from a long line of Levite priests.
The Spirit of God fell on him and he said,

*"Listen, King Jehoshaphat! Listen, all you people of Judah!
This is what the Lord says:
Don't be afraid, for this battle is MINE.
I, the Lord God, will fight for you!
Tomorrow you will march out to meet them.
They will come up through the Ascent of Ziz
at the end of the valley that leads here...
but you will not have to fight.
Just take your positions and watch Me fight for you.
For I am with you, people of Judah and Jerusalem;
I, the Lord God, am with you!"*

Then the king and all the people knelt face down on the ground
and began worshipping the Lord,
and the Levite priests praised His name with loud shouting.

The next morning Jehoshaphat led the army out,
and on the way he stopped and turned to the people.
"Listen to me! Believe in God and we will be able to stand firm.
Believe in His prophets and we will succeed!"

Then he spoke to the leaders of the people
and they decided to let SINGERS lead the army,
all of them praising the holiness of God!
And so they led the Judean army onward, singing:

*"Give thanks and praise to our God,
for His mercy and love last forever!"*

And as the singers began to sing,
even before they reached the valley,
God caused their enemies to begin fighting amongst themselves!

The armies from Moab and Ammon
turned against the army from Mount Seir,
and when the army from Mount Seir was dead
they turned on each other.

So when the army of Judah arrived at their appointed place,
all they could see were dead bodies,
stretched out to the horizon.

It took the Judean army three days just to gather all the plunder!

And on the fourth day they all gathered together
and renamed that valley the Valley of Beracah (or Blessing),
and then they returned to the Temple in Jerusalem,
praising God for delivering them from their enemies.

But when the surrounding kingdoms heard about the slaughter
and about how God Himself had protected the kingdom of Judah,
this time *they* were the ones who were terrified!
And so the people of Jehoshaphat's kingdom lived in peace
because God was protecting them.

When the Bible says that God dwells in the praise of His people, it means it.