

SECOND CHRONICLES

Chapter 19

Jehoshaphat's Reforms

Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. 2 But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD. 3 Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asheroth out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God.” 4 Jehoshaphat lived at Jerusalem. And he went out again among the people, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers. 5 He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, 6 and said to the judges, “Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD. He is with you in giving judgment. 7 Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes.” 8 Moreover, in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem. 9 And he charged them: “Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart: 10 whenever a case comes to you from your brothers who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or rules, then you shall warn them, that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come upon you and your brothers. Thus you shall do, and you will not incur guilt. 11 And behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the governor of the house of Judah, in all the king’s matters, and the Levites will serve you as officers. Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the upright!”

Ch 19 Prophecy of Jehu and the second reform (cf 17:6). This reform (vv 4–11) is the crucial link between the defeat of ch 18 and the victory of ch 20. Jehoshaphat reforms his kingdom’s judicial structure and affirms the centrality of Jerusalem and the temple’s worship personnel. One of those Levites, Jahaziel, will serve as battle prophet (20:14–17); other Levitical personnel will serve as musicians (20:19, 21). (TLSB)

19:1–3 Not found in 1Ki 22. (CSB)

19:1 *in safety*. God spared Jehoshaphat’s life (cf 18:16). But the prophet Jehu would make it clear that by his disobedience, Jehoshaphat had incurred “wrath ... from the LORD” (v 2). (TLSB)

19:2–3 Prophecy of Jehu. Righteous kings must avoid foreign entanglements and trust solely in the Lord (cf 16:1–9; 20:35–37; 25:6–8; 28:16–23). (TLSB)

19:2 *Should you help the wicked ... ?* Jehu’s father Hanani had earlier given Jehoshaphat’s father Asa the same warning (see 16:7–9). Jehoshaphat later committed the same sin again and suffered for it (20:35–37). (CSB)

Jehu. Asa, father of Jehoshaphat, had imprisoned Hanani, Jehu's father (16:10). Now the sons—Jehoshaphat and Jehu—meet shortly after Ahab imprisoned another prophet, Micaiah (18:25–26; 1Ki 22:26–27). One prophet may be imprisoned, but the Lord raises another to announce His judgment. (TLSB)

love those who hate the LORD? Genuine love for one's neighbors means helping them to believe and to do what is right. Jehoshaphat is rebuked for supporting Ahab while he remained unrepentant and unjust. (TLSB)

19:4–11 Jehu's prophetic warning after the warfare account of ch 18 is linked by way of a judicial reform to Jehoshaphat's dramatic victory in the warfare account of ch 20. This judicial reform included the appointment of judges in the fortified cities of Judah (vv 5–7) and the appointment of Levites and priests and heads of clans in Jerusalem (vv 8–11). Luth: "A prince should trust his officials and allow them to act, but only in such a way that he will still keep the reins of government in his own hands. He must not be overconfident but keep his eyes open and attend to things, and (like Jehoshaphat did [II Chron. 19:4–7]) ride through the land and observe everywhere how the government and the law are being administered. In this way he will learn for himself that one cannot place complete trust in any man. You have no right to assume that somebody else will take as deep an interest in you and your land as you do yourself, unless he be a good Christian filled with the Spirit. The natural man will not. And since you cannot know whether he is a Christian or how long he will remain one, you cannot safely depend upon him" (AE 45:121–22). (TLSB)

19:4 *Jehoshaphat ... went ... among the people*. The king traveled throughout the realm personally to promote religious reformation. (CSB)

at Jerusalem. Jehu had reproved the king for going abroad to join Ahab. Jehoshaphat restricted himself to activities he could accomplish in Judah, with headquarters in Jerusalem. (TLSB)

Beersheba ... Ephraim. Rather than persecute the Lord's messenger, as his father had (16:10), Jehoshaphat renewed his efforts to bring "back to the LORD" all the people under his jurisdiction. (TLSB)

19:5 *appointed judges*. The name Jehoshaphat (meaning "The LORD judges") is appropriate for the king who instituted this judicial reform. The arrangement of the courts under Jehoshaphat (vv. 5–11) would be of particular interest to the Chronicler's audience in the postexilic period, when the courts of the restored community would have their own existence and structure legitimized by this precedent. (CSB)

Not identified by name or by group. Centralization of control had already begun under David and Solomon (1Ch 26:29; 2Ch 1:2); Jehoshaphat builds on that foundation. (TLSB)

19:6 *judge ... for the LORD*. Luth: "You see, therefore, what attitude he must have whose duty it is to discharge the office of judge and sword, namely, to subdue all feelings of fear, love, favor, sympathy, greed, ambition, reputation, life, or death, and to be a simple lover of simple truth and just judgment... A judge must bear the hatred of many; he must be in peril because of hostility and be tempted by sympathy and gain. He will not be able to overcome these shocks and stand firm unless he looks to God alone" (AE 9:163). *He is with you*. Judicial authority derived from the Lord through the king. See note, Gn 9:6. See also Moses' admonition to the judges in Dt 1:17. Cf Ps 82:1. Luth: "God Himself appoints and preserves all authority, and if He no longer held it

up, it would all fall down, even though all the world held it fast—therefore it is rightly called a divine thing, a divine ordinance. And such persons are rightly called divine, godlike or gods [Ps 82:6; Jn 10:34–35]; especially is this so when, beside the institution itself, we have a word or command of God for it, as among the people of Israel, where the priests, princes, and kings were appointed by the oral command and word of God” (AE 13:44). (TLSB)

19:7 *let the fear of the LORD be upon you.* Let a terrifying sense of God’s presence restrain you from any injustice. (CSB)

Reform was not a political maneuver or innovation but a restoration of God’s rule over His chosen people. See note, 17:10. The judges were God’s representatives, appointed to administer legislation that expressed His will. Cf Dt 1:17; 16:18–20; 17:8–13. (TLSB)

taking bribes. Cf Ex 23:6–8; Dt 1:17; 16:18–20; 1Sm 8:3; Pr 17:23; Is 1:21–23; 5:22–23; Mi 3:11; 7:3. (TLSB)

19:8–11 Second arena of the judicial reform, centered in Jerusalem, is rooted in religious devotion (v 9). The expressions “fear of the LORD,” “faithfulness,” and “whole heart” are characteristic of Chronicles. Religious renewal begins with the king and is mediated through his appointees. Wholehearted devotion to Yahweh is the standard. The Jerusalem court serves as a court for disputed cases (v 8) as well as more serious cases (v 10; cf Dt 17:8–13). (TLSB)

19:8 *Levites, priests ... disputed cases.* One effect of this judicial reform appears to be the bringing of the traditional system of justice administered by the elders of the city under closer royal and priestly supervision. (CSB)

These were to be brought before a superior court in Jerusalem, presided over by the governor of Judah (v 11). (TLSB)

19:11 *all matters of the LORD... in all king’s matters.*† This division into the affairs of religion and the affairs of the king anticipates the postexilic structure of the Chronicler’s day. Cf. the anointing of Solomon and Zadok (1Ch 29:22) and the administration of the postexilic community by Zerubbabel, a Davidic descendant, and Joshua, the high priest (Zec 4:14; 6:9–15). (CSB)

Jehoshaphat divides the administration within his kingdom into religious and civil matters. Yet he allows the Levites (servants of the temple) to have an official role in civil affairs. Luth: “There are two kingdoms, one the kingdom of God, the other the kingdom of the world.... Anyone who knows how to distinguish rightly between these two kingdoms ... will also properly understand the passages about mercy. God’s kingdom is a kingdom of grace and mercy, not of wrath and punishment. In it there is only forgiveness, consideration for one another, love, service, the doing of good, peace, joy, etc. But the kingdom of the world is a kingdom of wrath and severity. In it there is only punishment, repression, judgment, and condemnation to restrain the wicked and protect the good. For this reason it has the sword, and Scripture calls a prince or lord ‘God’s wrath,’ or ‘God’s rod’ (Isaiah 14 [:5–6]). The Scripture passages which speak of mercy apply to the kingdom of God and to Christians, not to the kingdom of the world, for it is a Christian’s duty not only to be merciful, but also to endure every kind of suffering—robbery, arson, murder, devil, and hell. It goes without saying that he is not to strike, kill, or take revenge on anyone. But the kingdom of the world, which is nothing else than the servant of God’s wrath upon the wicked and is a real precursor of hell and everlasting death, should not be merciful, but strict, severe, and wrathful in fulfilling its work and duty. Its tool is not a wreath of roses or a flower of love, but a naked sword; and a sword is a symbol of wrath, severity, and punishment. It is turned only against the wicked, to hold them in check and keep them at peace, and to protect and save the

righteous [Rom. 13:3–4].... This shows that in the exercise of their office, worldly rulers cannot and ought not be merciful—though out of grace, they may take a day off from their office” (AE 46:69–70). (TLSB)

Ch 19 The Lord calls Jehoshaphat to serve Him with His whole heart—halfhearted commitment simply will not do. This is no less true for us. The Lord desires our wholehearted commitment, for He committed Himself wholly to us in the person of His beloved Son. • Dearest Lord, I yield my whole heart to Your service, that reform may begin with me. Amen. (TLSB)