

With Christmas past we now look forward to the New Year, a new Millennium. Although we actually entered into the 2000th year since Christ's birth a few years ago. It is now only about thirty years to the 2000th year since his death and the beginning of the church. What an exciting time to live! We have more resources at our hands for Christian education, more songs to lift our voices in praise to, than any age that ever lived.

I felt led this morning to look at some new beginnings in God's word and maybe we can get a heart for what God has for us in the coming year ahead. The organized church has produced in America a group of people that confesses Christ and yet on the whole completely resemble the society around them. We have talked about how the Lord wants Spirit filled sons and daughters that represent Him to the world. He is after a pure and spotless bride. It is time for a real change in our nation away from formulas and methods, away from following a man, away from dependence on hierarchy and back to the priesthood of the believer. We must get back to each believer having a living personal relationship with Christ that is the all pervasive essence of their lives, a relationship that affects everything they do. Col 3:17 Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

2Chron 17:3-10 Jehoshaphat king of Judah has a great beginning. Especially note verse 6. His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord. He is restoring the Law in Judah and having the people taught the Law. God's blessing is on him and the country. This is one of those peaceful periods of Judah when because of obedience God keeps marauders and turmoil away from the nation. The blessing of God is evident everywhere. It reminds me of the period after our nation's Civil War. Indeed there had been a civil war in Israel but the result was two countries. That long stretch to WW1 was filled with new movements of God. There was a great awakening of the people and a return to the Bible and godly living. But let's move forward in time.

18:1&2 Ahab! Jezebaal's husband! What is he doing chumming up to this guy? Look at the extravagance! And after that great feast he gets to the point. Be my ally in war. 3,4 At least he said that first they needed to seek counsel of the LORD. The rest of this chapter is a fascinating story that involves false prophets and a true prophet, a vision of the courts of heaven, and finally a "get your house in order" warning from God.

We should understand something here. Ahab hates God. He has seen the prophet Elijah call fire from heaven and consume the sacrifice and water and stones. He has seen and heard the truth and his heart is harder than diamond. He hates the Lord and his messengers. He has this prophet imprisoned for obedience to him and the Lord. Now what I don't understand is Jehoshaphat

still goes to war with him. What is even stranger is he is willing to be the decoy and dress as the king. The commanders go after Jehoshaphat, he calls out to the Lord and they see it is not Ahab, so they stop pursuing him. A stray arrow hits Ahab between the armor plates. He dies watching the battle.

Now Jehoshaphat has survived but Ahab has not. When Jehoshaphat returns to Jerusalem he is met by a prophet. 19:1-4 Jehu tells him, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is upon you.³ There is, however, some good in you, for you have rid the land of the Asherah poles and have set your heart on seeking God." This word shook me. I was always taught the LORD loves everyone. This word against Jehoshaphat is because he loved those that God hates. There are those that have set their hearts against God and are enemies of God. God does not love them. Don't believe that try David's Psalm of the love of God 139:21,22. We are to forgive OUR enemies, not God's. On the cross Jesus forgives ignorance. "They know not what they do" but there are those whose hearts are set on evil and know where they stand. They hate God. We are not to love them or help them or align ourselves with them.

He takes the warning to heart and focuses on turning the people to God. Ps 51:13 He wasn't a bad king before he aligned himself with Ahab. But compromise with evil brought a compromised testimony and the wrath of God. All the blessing to this point was because of a right walk. When we are obedient we open a door for blessing. God can't put his blessing on what is evil. So when Rehoboam compromised he shut the door to God's blessings. But when the word of the Lord came with conviction he turned back to the LORD. Not just for himself but he became somewhat of an evangelist winning those around him. 19:4f In verse 10 he passes on the warning that he received and has it taught to all. Don't sin against the LORD or his wrath will be upon you.

Let's apply that to today. When the HS convicts us we are to turn wholeheartedly toward the LORD. If there is compromise we must end it. What we then learn from the Lord we need to pass on to others.

1. Hear what God is telling you, from the Word, sharing with the brothers, that still small voice.
2. Obey wholeheartedly, turn and make the change He is asking for your good and His glory.
3. Share the lesson with others so they too can benefit from the warning and victory God gave you.

Unfortunately Jehoshaphat compromised in the end of his life in this very area he had failed before. He made ships with the king of Israel which were destroyed before they became of service. It is still said that he did what was right in the

eyes of the Lord but this failure marred his testimony. So we could add a fourth point.

4. Remember the lessons. A one time victory does not mean it is good for life. The enemy will return to our weak areas and try again.

As individuals go, so goes the Nation. Unless we as Christians move forward in our spiritual lives, mature, quit compromising with evil, the blessing of God cannot continue. The nation is filled with compromise because individuals lives are full of compromise. Let us be a part of a restoration of our country by first ending compromise in our own lives and then sharing the lesson with other.