

The Story (14): Jehoshaphat: Fell Down to Worship

(2 Chronicles 20)

I. Introduction

A. The right body position to pray? *Head bowed? Eyes closed? Hands folded?*

1. Wait, isn't that the same body position as when we're taking a nap!
 - a. I wonder if that's a commentary on our expectations of prayer?
 - b. Can we see prayer as powerful when in same position as dozing?
2. Bible doesn't have a particular prayer posture, but it mentions these:
 - a. Solomon knelt before God with outstretched hands (**1 Kings 8:54**)
 - b. Israel fell face down to pray (**Neh 8:6**). So did Jesus (**Matt 26:39**)
 - c. He also says the opposite, "When you stand praying" (**Mk 11:25**)
 - d. There are times Jesus lifts his eyes to heaven to pray (**John 11:41**)
 - e. Paul also talks about lifting holy hands as we pray (**1 Tim 2:8**)

B. One prayer posture the Bible seldom if ever mentions? **SITTING**

1. Early leaders in our movement talked about a lack of proper prayer
 - a. **Barton Stone**: We won't kneel for fear of dirtying fancy clothes
 - b. **Walter Scott**: People don't really believe in prayer; tell by posture
 - c. **Alexander Campbell**: Made a connection in posture and prayer—
Kneeling is a sign of submission, standing is a sign of reverence, and sitting is a sign of nothing
2. **Point**: Does our posture say something about our heart in worship?
 - a. If we humble our hearts before God, the body just may follow suit
 - 1) Guy criticized his church when people lifted hands in worship
 - 2) "It's like everyone is surrendering!" Bingo! That's the point!
 - b. Worship isn't about running through holy list of liturgy (Peterson)
Worship is a strategy by which we interrupt our preoccupation with ourselves and attend to the presence of God.
 - 1) Most common word, "To bow down or kneel before a king"
 - 2) The heart must bow before our bodies can go along for the ride
3. We continue *The Story*; we come to God's nation as "house divided"
 - a. Solomon's empire dissolves, and two small, fragile nations arise
 - b. In the middle of it all, we meet King Jehoshaphat and his worship

II. Fell Down to Worship: Background

- A. The glory and the grandeur that was King Solomon died with him
 - 1. Actually, his great empire began to crumble well before his death
 - a. Solomon the wise became Solomon the blathering idiot (**11:3-4**)
 - b. When he failed to follow God's wisdom, God's blessing failed too
 - 2. God told Solomon the kingdom would be taken from him (**11:11**)
 - a. It wouldn't happen in his life but his son's (because of David)
 - b. Judah would remain under his son's rule (because of David)
 - c. So soon after Solomon died, his kingdom became a house divided
 - 3. Starting in **1 Kings 12**, the story of Israel is really Israel and Judah
 - a. 1 & 2 Kings will bounce back-n-forth between the North and South
 - b. 1 & 2 Chronicles will focus only on southern kingdom of Judah
- B. There are several important things to remember in Kings and Chronicles
 - 1. **First**, Israel (North) is a constant episode of *The Game of Thrones*
 - a. Often became king in Israel by killing predecessor (7 of 19 kings)
 - b. On other hand, Judah is always ruled by someone in David's house
 - 1) **1 Kings 15-22** covers Asa (41) and Jehoshaphat (25) in Judah
 - 2) During the same time, Israel had 6 kings, one lasting a week
 - 3) They have same number of kings; Judah lasts 136 years longer
 - 2. **Second**, Israel and Judah are almost always at war with one another
 - a. Civil war starts at the division of king and shapes much of history
 - b. Neither kingdom would prosper because of the war. Example--
 - 1) King Asa (Judah) was almost defeated by King Baasha (Israel)
 - 2) Asa paid Syria to attack Israel from behind to take pressure off
 - 3) That started a war with Syria that would almost destroy Israel
 - 3. **Third**, Israel's kings are evil and corrupt; none of them follow God
 - a. Jeroboam begins his Northern Kingdom with institutional idolatry
 - 1) He sets up golden calf at Dan & Bethel for people to worship
 - 2) This keeps North from following God; murder/mayhem result
 - b. Prophets are sent to the North, but these kings never follow God
 - c. On the other hand, Judah has a few kings like Hezekiah and Josiah

III. And Fell Down to Worship: Jehoshaphat

- A. In **2 Chron 20**, an alliance of Edom, Moab and others attack Judah
1. A vast army was on way; King Jehoshaphat knows he's outgunned
 - a. Jehoshaphat responds by turning to God in fasting and prayer
 - b. He gathers the people at Temple to pray; that prayer is recorded
 - 1) He recognizes God's power and past acts of salvation (**20:6-7**)
 - 2) He lays before God the current distress they suffer (**20:10-11**)
 - 3) He lay the crisis before God, and he asks God to act (**20:12**)
 2. What a powerful prayer and statement of faith. "*eyes are on you*"
 - a. Someone needs to write a book and call it *Prayer of Jehoshaphat*
 - b. Is this ever us? We don't know what will happen but look to God?
 - c. Sometimes when you don't have a prayer, prayer is all you need!
- B. God answer's is clear a he speaks through the prophet Jahaziel (**20:15**)
1. The battle belongs to the Lord! God, not Jehoshaphat gives victory
 - a. They will march out, but they must do so in faith in power of God
 - b. They marched with praise team up front (**Read: 2 Chro 20:20-22**)
 - 1) God's people led with their worship! They marched in praise!
 - 2) They put the praise team up front and marched into battle!
 2. They met crisis with prayer and their response was praise (**20:18-19**)
 - a. When they saw God's salvation, they are overwhelmed by worship
 - 1) Worship was spontaneous and overwhelming (*they fell down*)
 - 2) Worship was also planned and a bit liturgical (*led by Levites*)
 - b. The format didn't matter, but hearts filled with gratitude did!
 - 1) They were overwhelmed by a powerful, relentless enemy
 - 2) They threw themselves on God and prayed for his mercy
 - c. They kept their eyes on the God who acts, "*our eyes are on you*"
- C. Worship was the grateful response of God's people to God's deliverance
1. Worship isn't the repetition of religious ritual out of habit and duty
 2. It's a heartfelt cry of our need for God & thanksgiving for His mercy
 3. You won't be overwhelmed by worship if not overwhelmed by grace

IV. Conclusion

- A. We just completed our 29th year at Pepperdine Lectures (now *Harbor*)
1. On an early trip, we met Michelle, an actress who moved from NY
 - a. She was looking for a new church... in location and in personality
 - b. She'd been brought to faith in a conservative, legalistic church
 - 1) They preached against things like dancing and wearing makeup
 - 2) And she was in the Broadway production of *Cats! Oops!*
 2. She heard about the lectures and decided to visit late night worship
 - a. Hallal was leading worship with their upbeat, contemporary songs
 - 1) People were raising hands, singing out, putting everything in it
 - 2) And at one point, Michelle lets out a whoop, cry of joy to God
 - b. Afterward she said, "*That! I want to find a church that's like that!*"
 3. Michelle never became a star; she got married several years later
 - a. Friend went to wedding, meeting producers, actors, stunt people
 - b. All of them were Christians; many were led to Christ by Michelle
 - c. Michelle has a heart for God; sometimes it's a heart that whoops!
- B. Point isn't we should all raise hands to sing, kneel to pray... or whoop!
1. The point is that we need to pray like Jehoshaphat (**1 Chron 20:12**)
 - a. Pray knowing how lost we are without God, "*we have no power*"
 - b. Pray realizing how little we know, "*we do not know what to do*"
 - c. Pray expecting that our God will act, "*but our eyes are on you*"
 2. When we realize we're saved by God, worship is natural (**20:18**)
 - a. What do you do when really see that salvation belongs to our God?
 - 1) You worship! It doesn't matter if you sit, stand, kneel, fall flat
 - 2) You worship! It doesn't matter if you raise hands, jump or not
 - 3) You worship! Sometimes you get carried away, or you should
 - b. You don't judge others who are too demonstrative... or not enough
 - 1) You don't notice because your eyes are fixed on glory of God
 - 2) Is our reticence in worship & prayer because we don't see God
 3. We'll give our all in worship & prayer if see salvation belongs to God