

2 Chronicles 20:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

Analysis

And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

This verse is part of the narrative of Judah's kings, specifically addressing God's judgment on those who seek Him in crisis. The Chronicler's theological perspective emphasizes immediate divine retribution—kings who seek God prosper, while those who forsake Him face judgment. This pattern provides instruction for the post-exilic community on the conditions for God's blessing.

The account demonstrates God's covenant faithfulness despite human unfaithfulness. Even in judgment, God preserves a remnant and offers restoration through repentance. The repeated cycle of apostasy, judgment, and restoration reveals both human sinfulness and divine mercy. References to the temple, proper worship, and priestly service emphasize the Chronicler's concern for correct religious observance.

Theologically, these accounts point beyond immediate history to God's ultimate purposes through the Davidic line. Despite repeated failures, God preserves David's dynasty, anticipating the perfect King who will reign in righteousness. The pattern of judgment for sin and restoration through repentance prefigures the gospel message of salvation through Christ.

Historical Context

This passage occurs during the divided monarchy period when Judah existed separately from northern Israel. The Chronicler writes from a post-exilic perspective, addressing the restored community in Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile (539 BCE onward). His emphasis on temple worship, proper religious observance, and God's covenant faithfulness speaks directly to the needs of his audience who had just rebuilt the temple and were reestablishing their identity as God's people.

The historical context demonstrates both God's judgment on persistent sin and His readiness to restore those who genuinely repent. The Chronicler omits most northern kingdom material, focusing on Judah and the Davidic line to emphasize God's faithfulness to His covenant promises. Archaeological discoveries from sites like Lachish, Beersheba, and Jerusalem corroborate the biblical accounts of various kings' reigns and building projects.

Understanding the Chronicler's post-exilic perspective is crucial—he's not merely recording history but applying past lessons to his contemporary audience, showing that the same principles of seeking God, maintaining proper worship, and covenant faithfulness that determined blessing or judgment in the past still apply.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse illustrate the principle of divine retribution (blessing for obedience, judgment for sin)?
2. What specific applications does this passage have for maintaining spiritual faithfulness in contemporary Christian life?

3. How does this account point to God's ultimate purposes through the Davidic line and the coming Messiah?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּעֲשֵׂה	יְהוָשָׁפָט	בָּעֵד	אֶל	אֶל	אֶל	וְיַעֲשֵׂה
bowed	And Jehoshaphat	his head with his face	to the ground			
H6915	H3092	H639	H776	H3605	and all Judah	H3063
וְיַשְׁבֵּה	יְרוּשָׁלָם	נִפְלָא	לִפְנֵי	לִפְנֵי	לִפְנֵי	וְיַשְׁמַח
and the inhabitants	of Jerusalem	fell	before	the LORD	worshipping	
H3427	H3389	H5307	H6440	H3068	H7812	
לִיהְוָה:						
the LORD						
H3068						

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 4:31 (Worship): And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

2 Chronicles 7:3 (Worship): And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Job 1:20 (Worship): Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped.

Genesis 24:26 (Worship): And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

Psalms 95:6 (Worship): O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

