

God's Sovereignty II Chronicles 20:1-30

This past week I spent a little time reviewing some of the Presidential elections in our Nation's history. In 1789 George Washington defeated John Adams by a 2 to 1 margin taking 69 electoral votes to 34. New York chose no electors so 8 votes sat on the table. 35 electoral votes went to other candidates. Of the original 13 colonies only 10 cast their electoral votes. North Carolina and Rhode Island had not yet ratified the Constitution so they could not cast any votes in the election.

In 1792 George Washington again defeated John Adams by nearly 2 to 1.

In 1796 John Adams defeated Thomas Jefferson by only 3 electoral votes.

In 1800 Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr tied with 73 electoral votes and so the House of Representatives by State voted on the President.

In 1876 neither candidate won the required 185 electoral votes so a special electoral commission was created and they nominated Rutherford B. Hayes.

With the exception of just a couple elections, elections were never even close during much of the 19th century. It was also during much of that century that the Vice President was also chosen by electoral vote in a separate race from President.

In landslide victories FDR won 4 elections during the turbulent years of the Great Depression and World War II.

In 1976 one electoral vote was cast from the State of Washington for Ronald Reagan who then soundly defeated Carter and Mondale in the two following elections.

That brings us to the current election. While retaining the presidency Barack Obama won by a smaller margin than in the previous election. Regardless of the margin, he still won.

It's uncertain what we can expect in the next four years. But there were some troubling developments from this election.

Three states ratified same sex marriage. One state did not pass the law identifying marriage as between one man and one woman. That will continue to be a battle for greater laws in favor and stricter laws against speaking openly against it. [I was speaking with a friend this week who attends another church and in a discussion with one of his associate pastors, he stated that he won't perform marriages anymore. He will do a ceremony. Like me, he is fearful that the gay agenda will target conservative churches that won't perform weddings of same sex couples and take them to court for discrimination.](#)

Two states ratified recreational marijuana.

We can expect higher prices on things like gas and food.

We can expect higher taxes.

We can expect higher unemployment.

We can expect weaker military strength and presence.

We can expect a further erosion of first amendment rights related to freedom of speech and worship.

The days ahead are days of uncertainty and anxiety. As I began to prepare for the message several weeks ago leading into this week I had great hopes of bringing an entirely different message from the same passage. With all the pundits weighing in on what a lock candidate Mitt Romney had on the election I came to the election as many others did with the expectation that we would be swearing in a new president in January. The question in their minds wasn't that he would win, but by how much he would win. How wrong we were. Watching the

returns come in Tuesday night I went to bed with a very uneasy feeling and woke the next morning with those uneasy feelings confirmed.

What attitudes should we as Christians have in the wake of the elections and the uncertainty of the future? Should we be in fear? Should we worry or feel despair?

Last week I mentioned that our task commanded in Scripture, regardless of the outcome, is to pray for the nation's leadership. That's a mandate. I left you with a challenge to faithfully pray and I urge you to keep that promise you made to the Lord.

For today I would invite you to take your Bible and turn to **II Chronicles 20**. Would you honor God's Word by standing for Scripture reading **vs. 5-12**.

Our topic today stemming from the outcome of the election is this: God is Sovereign – over everything all the time. He always has been and always will be! He is in total and complete control. The question for us is this: **do we believe it? Do we trust Him when things don't make sense or don't go our way?**

As we go through this passage let's note 4 thoughts.

A daring proclamation

A desperate prayer

A Divine power

A delivered promise

I. A DARING PROCLAMATION – v. 1-4

In this section we see first that there is an enemy at the gate.

A. An Enemy at the Gate – v. 1-2

I want to tell you right up front that there is always an enemy at the gate. In our case we know from Scripture that our enemy is unseen, but he is there.

Ephesians 6:10-12 “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the His mighty power. Put on the

full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the power of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

I Peter 5:8-9 “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Remember him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

There is always an enemy, someone seeking to do evil, someone seeking to do harm, someone on the verge of attack.

In the case of Jehoshaphat and Judah these three people groups were forming alliances to come against them. The Moabites were the descendants of Lot's oldest daughter. Their tiff with Judah goes back a long way to the time when Israel came out of Egypt. The Moabites were less than hospitable to Israel who only wanted to pass through. Instead the Moabites called on Baalam to curse Israel. God placed a curse on them to the 10th generation.

The Ammonites were descendants from Lot's younger daughter.

These groups are also identified as coming against Israel when they were returning to rebuild the walls under Nehemiah. The chronicler, writing in the days of the exile, wanted the Israelites to understand these nations have been at odds with Israel for a long time. It was nothing new.

Scouts had come to King Jehoshaphat to inform him that a vast army had gathered and were on their way to Jerusalem. They were at En Gedi, which is near the Dead Sea about 30 miles from Jerusalem. It was a rocky place filled with caves. It was in that place years earlier David had hidden from Saul.

The enemy was closing in. The enemy was at the gate, they were in the land. Our enemy is always nearby, on the march, looking to take us by surprise and defeat us.

From verses 3 and 4 we notice an emergency gathering.

B. An Emergency Gathering – v. 3-4

If you had been King Jehoshaphat, how would you have responded? Initially I think we would have done the same thing. The NIV says he was alarmed. The KJV says he feared. I would be afraid too. We are always faced with the enemy. Sometimes we wring our hands in worry. Sometimes we sweat profusely from anxiety. Sometimes we shake uncontrollably. **Where can we turn? What can we do? Is there anyone who can help?** Maybe all that went through the King's mind. The alliance he had formed earlier with King Ahab of Israel was shattered after Ahab died in battle. But then following that battle, the Lord had sent a messenger to Jehoshaphat chastising him for such a foolish agreement with someone so wicked.

What should he do? Where else can he go? What chance does he have against a formidable foe?

Notice his response, the response that should be ours as well when we are faced with insurmountable odds, when we are ready to give up in despair.

“Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.”

To resolve is to have a fixed purpose or intention. He didn't call the army together. He didn't coordinate military strategy with his joint chiefs of staff. He didn't abandon the nation by running away to save his life. He didn't seek outside help by hiring mercenaries. He didn't tell everyone to fend for themselves.

He sought the Lord through a fast, and not a fast for just himself, but that all Judah should join him.

We read about another fast in the book of Esther. All the Jews in the land were gathered to fast after the king had unknowingly signed an edict that would have murdered them all at the hands of wicked Haman.

When faced with daunting obstacles it is time for us as a Christian people to fast together. The election may be over but our work is not. Let us continue to seek the Lord by fasting and praying earnestly to petition the Lord on behalf of this nation, on behalf of our president and his staff.

People from all over Judah were called not to take up arms to defend themselves against the enemy, but to prayer and fasting. It was an urgent gathering because the enemy was at the gate. Jehoshaphat issued a daring proclamation. Everyone was called on to fast and seek the Lord. With all the people assembled, we see a desperate prayer in verses 5-13.

II. A DESPERATE PRAYER – v. 5-13

With the nation of Judah gathered in Jerusalem, the king traveled from the palace to the temple. He stood in their midst and began to pray. The first part of the prayer is a call to remember.

A. A Call to Remember – v. 5-9

It is here that we see the acknowledgment of God's sovereignty. When we speak of sovereignty we mean that a person or nation is supreme in power, rank or authority; the person holds the position of ruler. There isn't anyone else above him.

When we speak of the sovereignty of God we mean that He has the absolute, infinite, and unconditional exercise of His will over every area of His creation. God is the disposer of all events throughout both time and eternity as well as Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. He has absolute power over it.

He is sovereign over His creation, nature. Jeremiah asks a rhetorical question when he wonders aloud **“Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain? Do the skies themselves send down showers? No, it is you, O Lord our God.”** (14:22)

“The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen. He loads the clouds with moisture; He scatters His lightning through them. At His direction they swirl around over the face of the whole earth to do whatever He commands them. He brings the clouds to punish men, or to water His earth and show His love.” (Job 37:10-13)

Every act of weather is under His control from tsunamis to hurricanes to earthquakes to drought.

People are also under the sovereign control of God. Whether they know it or not, whether they want Him to be or not; whether they believe it or not. He guides their actions to perform His will for His glory and for our good.

Proverbs 21:1 “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases.”

“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing.” Ezra 1:1

Jerry White writes that “no part of the human heart is impervious to God’s sovereign but mysterious control.”

God is also in control of the nations.

“No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man. But it is God who

judges: He brings one down, He exalts another.” Psalm 75:6-7

Let us never forget even when things don’t make sense or when we want the outcome of an election to be different – God is in control of the outcome. Someone has rightly said that while man proposes, God disposes.

We can make all kinds of plans but God has the final say in the outcome. Some of you may well remember November 3, 1948 when the Chicago Tribune splattered the headlines of its paper to say DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN.

Proverbs 16:9 “In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.”

Converted slave trader John Newton, author of Amazing Grace, once wrote “The kings of the earth are continually disturbing the world with their schemes of ambition. They expect to carry everything before them, and have seldom any higher end in view, than the gratification of their own passions. But in all they do they are but servants of this great King and Lord, and fulfill His purposes, as the instruments He employs to inflict prescribed punishment upon transgressors against Him, or to open a way for the spread of His Gospel... They had one thing in view, He had another.”

Dear people let us never forget in the wake of disappointment about the affairs of our land that God is in control of all things at all times. That God is sovereign invites us to put our absolute trust in Him with regard to the affairs of the nation when we don’t understand. Again sighting Jerry White, he writes “If there is a single event in all of the universe that can occur outside of God’s sovereign control, then we cannot trust Him... Nothing is so small or trivial to escape the attention of God’s sovereign control; nothing is so great as to be beyond His power to control it.” His wisdom, love and sovereignty all work in harmony with each

other to ensure that everything that happens is for His glory and for our good.

Psalm 33:10-11 “The Lord foils the plans of the nations; He thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations.”

1. God determines who rules world governments – **Daniel 4:17, 32**
2. God determines how long they will rule – **Isaiah 40:23-24; Daniel 4:33-36**
3. God determines the laws they make, even if they are contrary to His will or Word – **Proverbs 16:33**

Would you say God is for or against same sex marriage? Then why did He allow three states to pass a law in favor of it?

Would you say that God is for or against murder? Then why would he allow a government like Egypt to rewrite its constitution under a new President that will allow Sharia law which will have a tremendous negative impact on Christians there?

You get my point. God is in control even of things like that in every country.

Jehoshaphat's prayer acknowledges the sovereignty of God over the nations, that He alone rules from heaven and no one else. He reminded God of the nation that was formed from His goodness and the need for deliverance should war or famine or disease afflict them and they cried out to Him from that place where they stood in His presence before the temple. His was a call to remember.

In verses 10-13 there is a cry for retribution.

B. A Cry for Retribution – v. 10-13

After calling out to the Lord in prayer and reminding of His great name and sovereignty over all nations, he speaks about the invasion that is at their doorsteps. He speaks of their inability to face them and that they are powerless to defeat them

alone. He invites God to defend His people by defeating those who were coming against them.

Notice his plea – **“we do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You.”**

It sounds a lot like David when he defected to the Philistines to avoid Saul.

Psalm 34:4-8

Maybe that is how you have felt regarding something in the past. You didn't know what else to do except to look to God.

Maybe that is how you feel right now because of some overwhelming event you are experiencing today. Maybe that is how you felt when you woke up Wednesday morning to the news of the election results.

If you haven't yet, you will at some time have that feeling of uncertainty about where to turn. Evil is pressing in and you don't know where else to go. Call out to God for deliverance. **“Lord, we don't know what else to do, but our eyes are on you.”**

Take refuge in the shelter of His wings. Take comfort that He is in control of all circumstances. Take courage that His ultimate plan will not fail or fall short.

Take joy in knowing He hears and answers.

There is a daring proclamation followed by a desperate prayer.

III. A DIVINE POWER – v. 14-19

King Jehoshaphat has come confidently to the Lord in prayer claiming the promises that were given by the Lord to the people of Israel.

We first see a word from God.

A. A Word From God – v. 14-17

Filled with the Spirit of God, a man from the tribe of Levi stands in the assembly and speaks a word

that has come from God to them in response to their plea for help. The Lord gives them a word of confidence. It's a word for each of us to grab ahold of in our times of desperation whatever they may be **"Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army."** **How many times do we need to be reminded of that promise?**

In Joshua 1 there is the repeated message to Israel as they prepared to enter the land to be strong and very courageous. Don't worry about the size of their walls. Don't worry about the size of their armies. Don't worry about the size of their soldiers.

Joshua 1:8-9 "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee wherever thou goest."

Isaiah 41:10 "Fear not for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness."

Psalms 23:4 "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Do you need that reminder today? Apparently the Israelites needed it that day and I'm going out on a limb and saying that we need the same promise today.

Notice an important statement made in verse 15. **"The battle is not yours, but God's."** Remember that in the days ahead when policies are enacted that are not favorable to the benefit of the country. God

is well aware and it's His battle. But while God was claiming the battle to be His, there was still work they had to do. The next day they were to go out as if they were going to battle, but He also told them they would not have to fight. He gave them the same message that He gave to Moses and Israel when they were fleeing Egypt – "stand firm, don't give up any ground and just watch how God would deliver them. The Lord will be with you."

Do you need to be reminded of that promise today? I needed it on Wednesday and I need it today and you know what? I'll need it tomorrow – so take courage.

From the encouraging word they received from the Lord I see that there is a worshipful response.

B. A Worshipful Response – v. 18-19

I want you to notice that they worshipped God before the enemy was defeated. They didn't wait to see if God would make good on His promise. They had confidence that He would. Anytime God speaks, we should worship. When we are reminded of God's presence and power, we should worship.

Our response to God's provisions in all circumstances should be to worship even if they what happens isn't favorable. When Job lost all he had in a wave of devastating events, what was his response? He fell in worship. That is what Judah does here. And then they stood up and sang. They didn't run to the armory to get their weapons. They didn't come together in battle formation.

They didn't plot out their military strategy. They worshipped and they sang and I think in that moment when they worshipped God all their fear was gone. As it says in **Philippians 4:6-7**, His peace became a shield around their anxious hearts. There was joy on their hearts because they knew God was with them. They knew God was their courage. They knew that God would fight for them.

You see no matter how daunting the enemy may look, the last book of our Bible says that ultimately no matter if evil prevails now, we win in the end, so why not rejoice. Everything that is happening is just one more day, one more event closer to the Lord's return. So why not honor God and revere Him for the victory that will come? It took me a while before I was able to worship on Wednesday because God is still in control.

From the lyrics of contemporary Christian recording artists Third Day come these lyrics:

Your love, oh Lord
Reaches to the heavens
And Your faithfulness
Stretches to the skies

And Your righteousness
Is like the mighty mountains
Your justice flows
Like the ocean's tide

And I will lift my voice
To worship You, my King
And I will find my strength
In the shadow of Your wings

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There is a daring proclamation
There is a desperate prayer
There is a divine power
There is a delivered promise

IV. A DELIVERED PROMISE – v. 20-30

A. Praise is Given – v. 20-23

They had spent the previous day fasting and praying, worshipping and praising. Now it was time to put action into their faith. Were they going to be obedient or not? Mustered together Jehoshaphat assembled them and once again reminded them to take courage and trust God, to remember the words of the prophets who told them

that if they were obedient to follow the Lord they would experience success.

Once again we notice that the King did not line them up in battle formation, but instead put singers up at the head of the line. It reminds of when Joshua put the priests carrying the ark at the head of the people as they marched around Jericho.

The task of these singers was simple: sing to the Lord. But sing what? Sing about His power over their enemies in past campaigns? Sing about His power to rain down fire to consume those who are opposed to Him?

Notice what they were to sing about.
Sing about His splendor. Sing about how glorious He is in appearance. Sing about His holiness.
“Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever.”

The hymnist writes

O worship the King, all glorious above,
And gratefully sin His wonderful love;
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

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(Hymn 171 – Come Into His Presence)

Come into His presence with thanksgiving in your heart and give Him praise, and give Him praise;
Come into His presence with thanksgiving in your heart, your voices raise, your voices raise.
Give glory and honor and power unto Him, Jesus the name above all names.

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While they were singing on their way, the Lord worked in the camp of the enemy to attack one another. First two armies went against one until it was defeated and then they turned on each other. Pretty soon no one was left alive. The Lord had caused them to kill one another. That was done all the while Judah was marching to the place where

the battle was supposed to take place. Judah drew no sword, they nocked no arrow to its bow, they loosed no spear, there was neither the sound of battle cry or trumpet call to arms – only singing and praising the Lord.

When we seek the Lord and trust Him fully as our refuge, praise is given.
Plunder is gathered.

in the days ahead because we believe that God is sovereign in all things. There is no need to look at the future with anxiety. God is still in control. One day, someday the Lord will return and there will be peace because the sovereign Lord will reign over all the nations and we will rejoice, but don't wait until then, offer Him praise now, He deserves it.

B. Plunder is Gathered – v. 24-28

Everywhere they looked there were dead bodies and among the dead bodies was a lot of loot. There was so much there that the passage notes it took three days to haul it away. God not only gave them a great victory that they did not fight for, but also great wealth. When it was all said and done, they met in a valley whose name means the place of blessing where they once again lifted their voices in praise and worship to the Lord.

Then they headed back to Jerusalem where they returned to the place where it all began, they returned to the Temple. There was joy because God had delivered them. He had been faithful to keep His promise. He sets up kingdoms and He dismantles them. It is for His glory.

When we as a nation are obedient to follow the Lord, there is one more thing I see that will occur.

C. Peace is Gained – v. 29-30

When people around see the power and glory of God displayed they will reverence God because they now know that He is sovereign over all. Consequently the land had peace and rest during the remaining days of King Jehoshaphat.

It should be our prayer that this land will once again experience peace because they see the splendor and power of God as He reveals Himself through His people. Let us not lose hope or fear what may come