

引言 INTRODUCTION

What makes a country great? You will get different answers depending on whom you ask. The general public want a safe environment to make a living and build a family. Economists will assess the wealth of a country. Military experts focus on the power for a nation to defend itself. To our Lord, a country will be great when its leaders obey Him. The Bible is God's timeless truth. All the earthly authority comes from God. Success and failure of a ruler hinge upon the foundation of his core values. Eventually, every king and president will have to give an account of their work before the Lord. He will give a final verdict whether a leader is good or evil. Today we will continue our study on king Jehoshaphat of Judah. He was a good king in God's eyes. "Like father, like son," so goes the saying. Jehoshaphat shared some traits his father king Asa had. They both followed God in what they did. They tried to eradicate the problem of idolatry in the country. Judah was prosperous and strong during their reigns. But they also had some common weaknesses. They did not completely remove the worship of false gods. Both men also made an alliance with an ungodly nation. When we look at the kings in the Bible, we cannot help but think of the leaders in our society. We should use the same Biblical principles to evaluate their work. The Southern Baptist Convention does encourage pastors to talk about politics from the podium. The goal is not for a pastor to share his personal opinions. My responsibility is to inform you what God says, so that you can scrutinize the matters in our society with a Biblical worldview. Let us examine why Jehoshaphat is a good king.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 屬靈的定位 Spiritual Position

First, we will look at the spiritual position of Jehoshaphat. We will read **2 Chronicles 17:3-6**. Jehoshaphat made up his mind to do what God saw as right. He "walked" in the ways of David, and he "followed" God's commands. Those two are the same Hebrew word. Jehoshaphat imitated the example of David and used the Law as a compass for his life. The author also says Jehoshaphat "sought" after God, but not the Baals the northern kingdom worshipped. He relied on God for advice. Then Jehoshaphat's heart was "devoted" to God. The word conveys his enthusiasm. Those verbs altogether describe Jehoshaphat's dedication to God accompanied by his deeds. James the New Testament writer encourages us to hear and live out God's Word. We have to study and apply Biblical principles in our daily life. People will know our passion for God when they see our actions. Jehoshaphat set up a good example for his people. He motivated his countrymen to model after him. Verse 7 to 9 tell us that Jehoshaphat sent officials to every town to teach people the Law. Verse 9 says: **They taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the Law of the Lord; they went around to all the towns of Judah and taught the people.** It was one thing to stop people from paying tribute to idols. It was more important to instruct them to worship Jehovah alone. It is like asking kids not to eat chips and not to drink soda. They will ask a natural question: "Then what can I eat and drink?" We said before that the role of prophets became more prominent when Israel established kingship. When the Israelites were still in the wilderness, Moses played multiple roles of a prophet, priest, judge and an army commander.

Later God told Moses to assign the Levites to take care of the ceremonial duties. Besides, people of moral character were chosen as judges. Brave men were drafted as army captains. The kings should delegate responsibilities to capable officials as the nation grew larger. However, a king was not only an administrator. He was also a spiritual leader. God foretold Moses that His people would ask for a king in the future. Therefore, God gave clear instructions for kings. in **Deuteronomy 17:18-19** – 18 When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. 19 It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees. “The Law” refers to the first five books of the Bible. When I was a kid, one homework I disliked the most was copying. I thought only the cruelest teachers would torture their students in such a meaningless way. Recently, a brother quoted scientific research to prove that writing by hand helps people remember what they learn. Somehow the motions trigger memory in our brains. Perhaps I need to look for my elementary school teachers and thank them! To the Jews, the Law was a sacred book. The finished work would become the kings’ personal Bible. They were to read it and apply it in their ruling. Jehoshaphat saw the importance of the Law. He was the first king to design a national religious education program to help people understand and practice God’s Law. From Israel, let us review some history in the U.S. In 1949, Bible reading was in the public-school curriculum in at least 37 states. You can imagine that people who do not believe in God were not happy about it. The practice was challenged in courts later. In 1962, the Supreme Court also ruled that prayer led by public-school teacher was unconstitutional. Here in the south people are relatively more conservative. I remember once my older son played in a sport game. A coach he led everyone in a prayer before the competition. Some Christian friends on the west coast could not believe it when I shared the incident with them. While we can no longer teach the Bible in school, we should always do so at home. We are competing with the world to “detox” all the influence from the social media, music and movies. Some behaviors and languages are bad not only because parents do not like them. They are forbidden because God says so. We need to shape the spiritual position of our kids so that they will choose to do the right things even when we are not around them. Such positive habits will gradually become their character. They make wise decisions because they want to please God.

2. 軍事的力量 Military Power

Jehoshaphat secured his spiritual position in the Lord. Besides, he also strengthened his military power. Let us look at **17:1-2**. Jehoshaphat built city walls and assigned guards. Verse 2 mentions some towns Asa occupied in Ephraim. The location was right across the northern border. The southern and northern kingdoms had an intricate relationship. Sometimes, they fought with each other. In certain occasions, they helped each other. Since Jehoshaphat’s son married Ahab’s daughter, he might want to maintain a friendly relationship with the north. But at the same time, he was cautious about this potential enemy. Besides the north, there were other countries interested in taking over Judah. Thus, it makes perfect sense to beef up its military power. We see the result of Jehoshaphat’s effort in **verse 10**: The fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not make war with Jehoshaphat. I find the description quite interesting and comforting. Foreign nations dared not attack Judah when they saw its military power. But behind the scene, it was God who put the fear in those enemies. It reminds me of **Psalms 127:1**: Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless

the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. Any protection is useless if God is not keeping us safe. We protect our family and our properties. We lock our doors. Some people install an alarm or a smart doorbell. But we trust that God will look after us. We feel secure in our sleep or when we are away. The Bible says God sends His angels to surround us. We continue to look at the military power of Jehoshaphat in [verse 12 to 13](#). The store cities could be warehouses for food, government resources and military supplies. Those facilities could be at strategic locations for easy access. In verse 13 we see the phrase “experienced fighting men.” The same phrase is repeated in verses 14, 16 and 17. Those two Hebrew words together describe courageous and effective soldiers. Therefore, they were not people who just graduated from a military academy. They were veterans who went to wars before. Judah had a strong military power under Jehoshaphat’s leadership. God gave the king wisdom and resources to safeguard his citizens. [Romans 13:4](#) gives us the Biblical support for law and order: For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. God gives rulers the authority to penalize evil-doers. There must be police to watch out for law-breakers and a military for national defense. We call them “forces” because they are equipped with the necessary weapons to subdue enemies. A country will be in danger if the leaders are being too gentle to the bad guys. We see people vandalizing buildings, looting properties and hurting people in some cities. Numerous immigrants are crossing our southern borders. Some foreign countries constantly pose threat to us too. You do not need to be a politician to figure out those are dangerous situations. It is commonsense! Our elected leaders have an obligation to preserve the well-being of the citizens by deterring potential enemies. We need to pray for them that God will give them wisdom and courage to take decisive actions.

3. 審判的制度 Judicial Policy

Jehoshaphat determined to build a great country. He maintained a close spiritual position with God. He also equipped a strong military power to defend against enemies. Thirdly, Jehoshaphat established a judicial policy to preserve a fair and stable society. Let us read from [2 Chronicles 19:4-7](#). Verse 4 says Jehoshaphat traveled around the country from the south to the north to urge people to return to God. Appearance of a high government official in today’s world can create a commotion. Just imagine how warm a welcome a beloved king would receive when he paid visits to rural towns. Jehoshaphat’s tour paved the way for his judicial policy. He appointed judges in many cities. The king prescribed duties for those judges in verse 6. Ultimately, they exercised their judgment on behalf of the Lord. As such, they must ensure neutrality and uniformity in the proceedings. Jehoshaphat chose those people not only because he liked them, but also because he trusted them. Besides the duties, Jehoshaphat continued to lay out the proper mentality the judges should have in verse 7. First and foremost, they had to fear the Lord. They should be dreadful of God’s condemnation if they violated His standard. They should also mirror three attributes of God’s. The first quality is justice. God’s Law is absolute – a matter is either right or wrong to Him. There is no gray area nor “it depends.” Second is impartiality. A judge should not show favor to a rich and powerful person. He should not lean toward a poor person either. People of any background can potentially commit the same sins. Thirdly, a judge should not take any bribe. The Bible describes that money can blind the eyes of a person. In addition to the district magistrates, Jehoshaphat also formed an appeal court system. We will continue to read [verse 8 to 10](#). Similar to most countries, the supreme court was located in the capital city of

Jerusalem. Verse 8 tells us who were the qualified justices. First, they were chosen from the Levites and priests. The priests are also Levites. They were good candidates because they knew the Law thoroughly. Next, some civic leaders were selected as chief justices too. They were respected and trustworthy among the people. Verse 9 states the requirements for those judges. The same criterion of fearing God is mentioned. They must also serve their duties faithfully, meaning that they should do what they were told to do. Then they must also do so wholeheartedly, meaning that they should see their position as God's calling. In any profession, you can distinguish people who do it for a salary versus those who truly love their jobs. The latter group of people are passionate about helping others, creating a great invention or saving the environment. They do not mind working over-time or walking an extra mile. Murder is the only specific offense that is mentioned in verse 10. It the most extreme way for a person to cause harm on others. It is more serious that seizing one's properties or defaming his reputation. Notice that a judge had to warn an offender not to sin against God. Any sin to a person is ultimately an offense against God. Listen to king David's confession in **Psalm 51:4** – Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. David wrote this psalm to show his remorse over the adultery he committed with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband. Sin is a violation of God's holiness and righteousness. Even though morality is ever on the decline, the law of any nation can find its root in the Bible. Humans have dignity because they are created in God's image. Every person should be treated fairly before the law regardless of background or social status. That is why the statue outside a courthouse holds a scale and has her eyes blindfolded. Judges should be objective and impartial. They should make verdicts without succumbing to political pressure.

結論 CONCLUSION

A country will be great when its leaders obey God. Our society is far from perfect. There are many issues that frustrate us whenever we watch the news. We can become pessimistic, thinking that things will only get worse. We can become pragmatic, thinking that we should be fine only if we have a job, food and a home. However, God wants His children to become prophetic. I do not mean that we can predict the future. Rather, we should be equipped with God's wisdom to look at our world. We constantly ask if God evaluates particular issues as right or wrong. We boldly stand firm on godly standards in our circle of influence. We also pray for our government leaders, whether or not we support their views. Ultimately, we put our complete trust in the Lord.

引言 INTRODUCTION

有什麼因素能使一個國家強大？你問不同的對象，就會得到不一樣的答案。老百姓希望有一個安全的環境來謀生和建立家庭。經濟學家會評估一個國家的財富。軍事專家專注於國防力量。對我們的神而言，一個國家要強大，它的元首必須要順服神。聖經是永恆不變的真理。所有地上的統治權柄都來自神。領袖的成功與失敗取決於他的核心價值。最終，每個君王和總統都必須在主的面前交帳。神會裁定一個領袖是善還是惡。今天，我們會繼續來看猶大王約沙法。他在神眼中是個好王。俗語說：「有其父必有其子。」約沙法分享他父親亞撒的一些素質。他們都跟隨神。他們也試圖消除國家中拜偶像的問題。猶大國在他們在位期間都繁榮昌盛。但是他們也有一些共同的弱點。他們沒有完全清除假神的敬拜。他們還與一個不信神的國家結盟。當我們看聖經中的君王時，我們不禁想到了我們國家的領袖。我們應該使用相同的聖經原則來評估他們的表現。其實美南浸信會鼓勵牧師在講台上談論政治。目的不是讓牧師分享他們的個人觀點。我的責任是告訴你聖經的立場，使你可以用聖經的世界觀來評估社會上發生的事情。讓我們來看一下約沙法為什麼是個好王。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 屬靈的定位 Spiritual Position

首先，我們來看看約沙法的屬靈定位。我們來讀**歷代志下 17:3-6**。約沙法下定決心要做神認為正確的事。他行大衛所行的道，並遵行神的誠命。約沙法學習大衛的榜樣，並以律法成為人生的指南針。作者還說，約沙法尋求耶和華，而不是尋求北國人民敬拜的巴力。他高興遵行神的道。那個用詞表達了他的熱情。這些所有的動詞描述約沙法對神的委身是付上行動的。新約的雅各書鼓勵我們不要只是聽道，而並且要行道。我們必須學習聖經，而且在日常生活中運用那些原則。人們看到我們的行為，就會察覺我們對神的熱情。約沙法為他的人民樹立了榜樣。他也激勵同胞效法他。第 7 至 9 節記載約沙法派人到每個城鎮去教導律法。第 9 節說：**他們帶著耶和華的律法書，走遍猶大各城教訓百姓**。阻止人們拜偶像是一回事，但必須也要教導他們敬拜耶和華。這就像要求孩子不要吃薯片和不要喝汽水一樣。他們會問一個自然的問題：「那我可以吃什麼和喝些什麼？」我們之前說過，當以色列建立了君王制度之後，先知的角色變得更加明顯。當以色列人仍在曠野時，摩西扮演了先知、祭師、法官和軍

官的多重角色。後來神告訴摩西指派利未人來履行禮儀的職責。此外，品格高尚的人被選為審判官。英勇的人被選為軍官。隨著國家人數的增長，王應該將職責委派給有能力的官員。但是，王不僅是個行政長官。他也是屬靈領袖。神預告摩西，日後他的子民會要求立王。因此，神明確地指示王該做的事情。申命記 17:18-19 說 - 18 他登了國位，就要將祭司利未人面前的這律法書，為自己抄錄一本，19 存在他那裡，要平生誦讀，好學習敬畏耶和華他的神，謹守遵行這律法書上的一切言語和這些律例。這裡的「律法」是指舊約最前面的五卷書。當我唸小學的時候，我最討厭的一樣的功課就是抄書。我覺得只有最殘忍的老師才會以這種毫無意義的方式折磨學生。最近，一位弟兄引用一份科學研究，證明寫字可以幫助人們記住所學的內容。抄寫這個動作觸發大腦的記憶。也許我應該去找我的小學老師並感謝他們！對猶太人而言，律法是一本神聖的法典。抄寫後的作品將成為王的個人聖經。他們要閱讀並使用其中的原則來治國。約沙法看到了律法的重要性。他是設計教育計劃以幫助人們理解和實踐律法的第一位王。從以色列的歷史我們來回顧一下這個國家的歷史。在 1949 年，至少有 37 個州的公立學校課程中都包括讀聖經。你可以想像不相信神的人會不高興。這個做法後來在法庭上受到質疑。在 1962 年，最高法院還裁定，老師在公立學校帶領禱告不符合憲法。在南部的人相對較為保守。我記得我的大兒子曾經參加過一場球賽。有一位教練在比賽前帶領大家禱告。當我與一些西海岸的基督徒朋友分享這件事時，他們覺得難以置信。雖然我們不能在學校教導聖經，但我們應該在家裡教導小孩學聖經。我們與社交媒體、音樂和電影抗衡，幫助孩子「排毒」。某些行為和言語之所以不好，不僅是因為父母不喜歡，乃是因為神如此說。我們需要塑造孩子的屬靈定位，即使我們不在他們身邊，他們也會做正確的選擇。這些正面的習慣將逐漸形成他們的品格。他們做出明智的決定，是因為他們想要討神的喜悅。

2. 軍事的力量 Military Power

約沙法確立了自己的屬靈定位。此外，他還增強國家的軍事力量。讓我們來看 17:1-2。約沙法建築城牆並安排守衛。第 2 節提到亞撒在以法蓮佔領的一些城鎮。該位置是在北部邊界以外。南北兩個國家之間有著錯綜複雜的關係。有時，他們互相攻打。但在其他情況下，他們互相幫助。由於約沙法的兒子娶了亞哈的女兒，他可能想與北方保持友好關係。但與此同時，他也提防這個潛在的敵人。除了北國之外，還有其他一些國家有意佔領猶大。因此，增強軍事力量是完全合理的。我們在第 10 節看到了約沙法所作努力的結果：耶和華使猶大四圍的列國都甚恐懼，不敢與約沙法爭戰。這個形容很有意思，也令人安慰。別國看到猶大的軍事力量，便不敢出兵。但是在背後，是神把恐懼放在那些敵人的心中。這讓我想到詩篇 127:1：若不是耶和華建造房屋，建造的人就枉然勞

力；若不是耶和華看守城池，看守的人就枉然警醒。如果不是神看顧我們，任何安全措施都是無用的。我們保護自己的家人和財產。我們鎖上門。有些人還安裝警報器或智能門鈴。但是我們相信最終是神眷顧我們。我們在睡覺或外出時都感到安全。聖經說神派遣祂的天使來護衛我們。我們繼續來看第 12 至 13 節如何形容約沙法的軍事力量。那些積貨城可能是存放食物、政府物資或是軍事用品。這些設施可能是位於戰略性的地點，以方便調配。在第 13 節中，我們看到「大能的勇士」這個用詞。在第 14、16 和 17 節中也能找到相同的用詞。這兩個希伯來詞語加起來是描述勇敢而有效的士兵。因此，他們不是剛剛從軍校畢業的新兵。他們是上過戰場的老手。猶大在約沙法的領導下擁有強大的軍事力量。神賜予他智慧和資源來保護他的人民。羅馬書 13:4 提供社會中法治的聖經基礎：因為他是神的用人，是與你有益的。你若作惡，卻當懼怕；因為他不是空空的佩劍，他是神的用人，是伸冤的，刑罰那作惡的。神賦予統治者權力懲罰犯法的人。一個國家必須有警察去抓破壞法律的人，並有軍隊負責國防。這些部隊都配備了適當的武器來制服敵人。如果領袖們對壞人太溫和，一個國家就會有危險。我們在新聞中看到一些人在某些城市破壞建築物、搶劫並傷害他人。目前有許多人越過我們的南部邊界。一些外國也不斷對我們虎視眈眈。那些都可能是危機。這是常識，不是政治！我們的領袖有義務防範潛在的敵人來維護人民的安全。我們需要為他們禱告，求神給他們智慧和勇氣採取果斷的行動。

3. 審判的制度 Judicial Policy

約沙法決意要建立一個強大的國家。他依靠神定好了屬靈的定位。他還配備了穩固的軍事力量來防禦敵人。第三，約沙法確立了健全的審判制度，以維護一個公平穩定的社會。讓我們讀歷代志下 19:4-7。第 4 節說，約沙法從南到北巡視全國，勸告人民歸向神。現代政府高官的出現可以引起騷動。試想一下，當一位受愛戴的君王訪問鄉鎮時，他會受到多麼熱烈的歡迎。約沙法的這次行程為他的審判制度鋪路。他在許多城市任命了法官。在第 6 節他規定了審判官的職責。最終，他們是代表神執行審判。因此，他們必須確保訴訟程序是中立和一致的。約沙法之所以揀選那些人做法官，不僅是因為他喜歡他們，還因為他信任他們。除了職責之外，在第 7 節中約沙法也強調審判官該有的正確心態。首先，最重要的是，他們必須敬畏耶和華。如果他們違反了神的標準，他們會接受神的懲罰。他們還應該反映出神的三個屬性。第一是公義。神的律法是絕對的。對神而言，只有對或錯，沒有灰色地帶，也沒有「看情形」。第二是沒有偏私。法官不應該看重有財有勢的人。他也不應一味地憐恤窮人。任何背景的人都可能犯同樣的罪。第三，法官不應受賄賂。聖經描述金錢會蒙蔽一個人的眼睛。除了各地區的審判官以外，約沙法還建立了上訴法庭的制度。我們繼

續讀第 8 至 10 節。與大多數國家一樣，最高法院位於首都耶路撒冷。第 8 節說誰是合格的大法官。首先，他們是從利未人和祭司中選出來的。祭司們也是利未人。他們是合適的人選，因為他們精通律法。除此之外，一些民間的領袖也可以被選為大法官。他們受到人民的尊重和信賴。第 9 節規定了對這些法官的要求。提到了敬畏神的相同原則。他們還必須忠誠地履行職責，意思是他們應該按照指示去做事。然後，他們也必須全心全意地去辦事。這意味著他們應該看到自己的職位是神的呼召。在任何行業中，你都可以分別一些純粹為薪水而工作的人和一些真正熱愛自己工作的人。後者熱衷於幫助他人、創造新發明或是保護環境。他們不介意加班或額外的任務。謀殺是在第 10 節中唯一所強調的罪。殺人是對他人造成傷害的最極端方法，比搶奪財產或誹謗更為嚴重。請注意，法官必須警戒罪犯不要得罪神。任何的罪最終都是對神的冒犯。請聽大衛王在詩篇 51:4 中的表白 - 我向你犯罪，惟獨得罪了你；在你眼前行了這惡，以致你責備我的時候顯為公義，判斷我的時候顯為清正。大衛寫這首詩是以表達他對侵犯拔示巴和謀殺她丈夫兩項嚴重的罪的痛悔之心。罪違反了神的聖潔和公義。縱然社會的道德在不斷下降，任何國家的法律都可以在聖經中找到根據。人之所以有尊嚴，是因為他們是按照神的形象被創造的。不論背景或社會地位如何，每個人都應在法律面前受到公正的對待。因此，法院大樓外的雕像手持天秤並矇住雙眼。法官要保持客觀和公正。他們不應該屈服於政治壓力而作出裁決。

結論 CONCLUSION

一個國家要強大，它的元首必須要順服神。我們的社會一點都不完美。每當我們看新聞時，都會有很多讓我們感到沮喪的問題。我們可能會傾向悲觀，認為事情只會變得更糟。我們也許只求務實，認為只要有工作、有飯吃和有家可歸便心滿意足了。但是，神期望祂的兒女成為先知。我並不是說我們可以預知未來。我們乃是應該具備神的智慧來判斷世界。我們不斷地求問神個別的事情是對還是錯。我們在身處的環境中勇敢地堅持敬虔的標準。我們也為政府的領袖禱告，無論我們是否支持他們的觀點。最終，我們把信心放在主的身上。