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### **We have a more sure word of prophecy.**

The twentieth chapter of II Chronicles tells a story of a miraculous deliverance of God's people from a mighty army consisting of several nations. When Judah's King Jehoshaphat heard about it, he feared and set himself to seek the Lord. He gathered the people together to pray and fast. While the Lord's people were gathered together, their enemies were preparing for the battle. The Spirit of God then moved a man named Jahaziel to call out the following words:

*"Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. 'Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. 'You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you" (Verses 15-17).*

Imagine a massive hostile army with tanks and guns traveling toward your city in these times. Your mayor calls the city together to tell everyone and then asks them to pray. Suddenly, one of the citizens stands up and says, "Thus says the Lord to you, 'Don't be afraid. God will deliver you from this great army tomorrow.'" Would you trust this man's words, or would you pack up your loved ones and flee for your life? Most people I know would run for their lives. They would probably be thinking, "Who is this guy telling me that there is no reason to be afraid? Why should I place any confidence in what he is telling me?" In contrast, King Jehoshaphat and the people put their confidence in the words of Jahaziel when they heard him speak. *"And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD."*

Why did the people immediately place their trust in the words of Jahaziel? This is the only mention of him in the Bible, so we don't know much about him. As far as we know, these are the only prophetic words he ever uttered. But even if he had a reputation as a prophet, why were they so quick to believe that he was telling them a sure promise of God? After all, there are plenty of stories of false prophets that promised things which never came about. Personally, I find it somewhat amazing that the people immediately placed their confidence in the words of Jahaziel, especially in such a life-or-death situation. But it turns out that his words came true just as he promised. God caused the enemies to destroy each other. God's people did not have to defend themselves at all.

What does this story have to do with us these days? In some ways, we are in a similar predicament. An army may not be descending on our city, but the threat of death is always present. We can't avoid it, but we can do things hoping to postpone it. For example, we can purposely eat right and exercise regularly.

In Jehoshaphat's day, the people could have run in an attempt to preserve their lives. Instead, they chose to put their trust in the words of Jahaziel. People in our day spend money and make decisions aimed at postponing death, the final enemy. It is as if they are making their best attempt to flee their chief enemy (death).

If you are a Christian, you are like the people who listened to Jahaziel in Jehoshaphat's day. You are placing your confidence in the words of men who spoke of God's promise of deliverance from your chief enemy (death). When things are going well, you probably don't give this much thought. It is in times of sickness or threat of death that your confidence is put to the test. Are the promises you claim to trust reliable or not? Do you have good reason to continue relying upon words recorded by men?

I wrote this article to demonstrate that you have much greater reason to place your confidence in the gospel than the people of Jehoshaphat's day who placed their confidence in the words of Jahaziel. Actually, there was good reason for them to have confidence in his words. They had a long history of such deliverances. God had previously told them that if they forsake Him, He would arrange for their oppression by their enemies. But He also promised to watch over them for good if they would turn to Him and depend upon Him. Prior to the events of II Chronicles 20, a revival occurred and the people set their hearts to seek the Lord. After this, the massive armies began to approach. When they did, instead of fleeing, the people turned by faith to God in prayer. After that, Jahaziel told them that God would indeed deliver. They had good reason to place their confidence in Jahaziel's promise because it was consistent with a long history of such deliverances and also, God's promise to watch over them for good if they look to Him and depend upon Him.

So, we see that their reliance on the words of this man Jahaziel was in fact, very reasonable. But it is far more reasonable for us to place our confidence in the gospel's promised deliverance from our chief enemy (death). Here's why: *"We have a more sure word of prophecy" (II Peter 1:19).* Let me demonstrate.

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Jehoshaphat and his people depended upon the words of the prophets who lived back then. We know from our Bible that their confidence in the words of those prophets was justified and reasonable because their promises came true. We have the benefit of knowing about all that history. From it, we know that God is faithful and His ears are open to His people. But even more significant, we have a more sure word of prophecy than the people of Jehoshaphat's day. They only knew that God had promised to send a Messiah who would conquer our chief enemy – death. But we can look back and know that those promises were fulfilled.

A Prophet much greater than Jahaziel came down out of heaven. He was not a mere man. Just as Moses promised, God put His words in His mouth, and He spoke all that God commanded Him. (See Deuteronomy 18:18.) Other prophets also spoke words that God put in their mouths. But this special promised Prophet taught like no other prophet. Anyone who truthfully analyzes His words must conclude that this Prophet is no mere man. His closest friends knew that His teaching was like no other prophet. When many of those who were listening to Him decided they could no longer follow Him, He asked His closest friends if they were planning to forsake Him. One of these closest friends said, *“Where else can we go? You have the words of eternal life”* (John 6:68). This friend believed this in spite of the fact that this Prophet was only about 33 years old!

Because the Jewish leaders wanted to kill this Prophet, His closest friends knew it was risky to continue following Him. But they continued to do so because they too were convinced that He had the words of eternal life. But they also were continually amazed at the miracles and signs He performed. For example, once when their boat was about to sink from a major storm, Jesus simply rebuked the storm and it immediately became utterly peaceful. When His friends saw this, they began saying to each other, *“Who can this be that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”* (See Mark 4:41.)

The people of Jehoshaphat's day were justified to place their confidence in the prophets of old. But our confidence is based upon the promises of a much greater prophet. This matters because of who this Prophet is. He was no ordinary prophet. One day, three of His closest friends who were with Him heard God Himself say from heaven, *“This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!”* (See Mark 9:7.) The man was more than a prophet. He was God's beloved Son. He taught that He always was with God and had no beginning. He said, *“Before Abraham was, I AM.”* (See John 8:56-58.) Another prophet described Him with these words: *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Indeed, we have a more sure word of prophecy than the people living in Jehoshaphat's day. This word of prophecy is utterly reliable because they come from God Himself. What more could God have done to spell it out? So, let us with confidence place our trust in His promises. Do not fear your chief enemy, death. On the cross, He conquered death once for all. With all authority, He made the following promises:

*“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. “In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”* (John 14:1-3).

*“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. “And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”* (John 11:25-26).

Who is this great prophet? It is none other than Jesus, God's only begotten Son who came down out of heaven. He knows how daunting death seems to us at times because He tasted death for us. But we now have no reason to fear our chief enemy, death. Jesus conquered death and we are released from its bondage by placing our trust in His sure promises.

*Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Hebrews 2:14-15).