

Impossible?

Introduction

God is a God of surprises

Protests in Hong Kong

- Against Government
- Law of extradition of people to Mainland China
- Just normal news, not?
- How does God surprise us here?

Hong Kong protests: How "Hallelujah to the Lord" became an unofficial anthem

^ BBC Website Article (22 June)

"Hallelujah to the Lord" has become the unofficial anthem of crowds protesting against a controversial proposed law that would allow people accused of crimes in China to be extradited to the mainland.

For Christians in Hong Kong, the hymn is a sign of faith but also of their concerns that it's not only political but also religious issues that are at stake, should the bill ever pass.

on 11 June - a day before the protests turned violent - a group of Christians holding a public prayer meeting through the night started singing Hallelujah to the Lord.

The hymn was picked up by other protesters - soon even non-Christians were singing it.

The protesters said they sang it hoping it would have a calming effect on police, and would help diffuse tensions.

Surprise?

- Yes, God can even surprise us
- Where we think secular protests
- Become a time of worship to God
- Even those who do not believe in God!

God is a God of surprises

Joram and Moab

^ 2 Kings 3

War between Israel and Moab

The Parties

Joram the King of Israel:

- Joram son of Ahab
- Ahab and Jezebel - worshipping Baal
- Joram is not so bad
- He got rid of the Baal worship
- But not so good, either
- golden calves of Jeroboam + others
- He betted on all sides
- Worshipped God
- But also others

Mesha the king of Moab

- Moab raised sheep and paid a tribute to Ahab
- With Joram, Moab rebelled - no sheep tribute
- Cause of the dispute - Joram wants to attack Moab

Jehoshaphat King of Judah

- At time smaller than Israel
- J. followed Ahab, and saw no reason to do different this time

King of Edom

- Unnamed
- Edom was a vassal state of Judah
- Strategically significant, Moabs south border

The Plan

- Show picture
- Not via the North
- Cons - well fortified
- Via the South
- Pros - Joram had allies: Judah & Edom
- Pros - Surprise attack
- Cons - They needed going a long time through the desert

The Problem

- They lost their way
- They ran out of water
- It all sounds a bit silly and not well thought out!

Help!!!

Jerom: How could this happen? God called us to do this and now it does not work?

^ v10

- But did he or they ask God? The story does not tell
- Jerom assumed that God told him? The story does not tell
- No, I believe it was his idea and when it didn't work, and he blames God
- ^ Do we do that sometimes?

Jehoshaphat

- Should we not ask God?
- Is there a prophet?

Joram's team

- Yes, Elisha is here!
- Surprise!

Help is at Hand

Elisha

- To Joram:
- You have your own gods - go to them!
- Why do come to me and God?
- Joram: Again: God called us to do this - so he needs to help
- Elisha does not give that statement any time
- I help, not because of you, but because of Jehoshaphat!

Prophecy

- Pools of water in the desert
- Neither wind nor rain
- Valley will be filled with water
- This is an easy thing for the Lord
- Deliver Moab in your hands
- overthrow every fortified city & town
- block up the springs
- Destroy the fields

Next morning

- Water arrived
- Moabites arrived - thought water was blood
- But the Israelites surprised them
- Followed into Moab and did everything He told them

Aftermath

Mesha and Moab in despair

- One town remaining but besieged
- Breakout was not successful
- Sacrificed his own son

And then: Fury against Israel!

- Why?
- Is it God who brings the fury?
- Or is it the evil spiritual forces that Mesha unleashes with his sacrifice?
- Result
- They give up and go home
- And Moab is not conquered
- Anti-climax!

God surprises in this story

He brings water where there is none expected

- Miracle
- Without wind and rain

He helps a reluctant King, because of he one who helps him

But in the end Israel's faith in God is not enough

- and they retreat at the wrath of evil
- While God was there to help them succeed!

Commitment to God

Would do outcome have been different?

- If Joram was fully committed to God
- But he had a half-hearted commitment

And the result seems to be very similar

- Joram nearly won
- But lost heart at the last moment
- Overcome by evil spiritual forces
- That he worshipped themselves!

Joram is hedging his bets between God and other things he worships

^ Do we do that sometimes?

Battles

Physical battles

Story does not appeal to us modern Christians

- How does this tie up with
- Love God above all?
- Love your neighbour as yourself?
- Turn the other cheek?

The world of the Old Testament seems much harsher

- Lives do not seem to matter so much
- God is establishing his chosen people
- And the reality at that time is that if the Israelites did not fight - they would not have survived

Spiritual battles

^ Mark 10:23-27

But what can this teach us today?

Although we are not in physical battle - we are engaged in a spiritual battle

- The battle is for our hearts, souls and lives
- The battle is between God and the forces which want us to draw us away from God
- We saw some of these forces at work in the physical battle
- The wrath that came over Israel disheartened them
- Despite the clear miracles and presence of God in their midst

Spiritual battle is for our allegiance

- Joram's allegiance was divided between Yahweh and the other fashionable spiritual forces
- The rich young man's allegiance was divided between Jesus and the riches that he owns
- Without God's help all of us have divided allegiances
- Family, friends, careers, hobbies, good causes, even church as an institute or interest

Spiritual battle is not over

- However, the major milestone has been won by God
- Jesus died on the cross, defeated evil and death
- And he calls us, but also our family, friends and other people to join him in his Kingdom
- We may have already made the choice for him
- May need to ask for forgiveness if we have lapsed
- If not - and you would like to come to me or one of the elders and we will pray with you.

Spiritual battle is hard

- People do not want to know about religion or church or Jesus
- There are so many other physical and spiritual things that draw people away from Jesus
- But it is not impossible
- Camel through the eye of the needle

Jesus: 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.'

- But do we believe that?
- Or are engaged, like Joram, until it becomes hard, and then give up?
- Jesus is calling us to help to bring others to him
- He can do the impossible - but do we expect him to?

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

^ Eph 3:20-21

- Do we expect God to do the impossible?
- Do we expect God to do the impossible through us?
- We need to put our trust in him, for our lives, but also for the people who do not yet know him
- He will deliver!