

## 2 Kings Ch 3

Elisha is now the premier prophet in all of Israel and Judah. And even as Elijah had a platform of prominence in the nation, Elisha (his protégé) now is given the same position. Now that doesn't mean that he's looked up to and respected by everyone, but God has given him that position nonetheless to be a voice that proclaims to the people the message and mind of God. For some 10 yrs he simply served Elijah, was content in that position of total humility just wanting to do what God had called him to do. Not looking for the spotlight, not needing all eyes on him, he was called to be Elijah's servant and he was faithful to the end. And as we spoke briefly on Sunday morning regarding Jesus that in humbling Himself more than any man, God also exalted Him more highly than any man, we see the principle remain in tact here that in the Kingdom of God the way up is down, and the way down is up. Jesus explained it like this, "... *he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*" Matt 23:11-12 The one who willingly and contentedly lowers himself will be raised up, but the one who seeks to raise himself up because of pride will be unwillingly lowered. You remember one day Jesus was at a banquet, and He was watching everyone scramble for the best seats, wanting to be as close as possible to those places of honor where perhaps the host, or the bride and groom were seated. And He said to them, "When you're invited to a wedding feast, don't scramble for the best seats in the house lest someone more honorable than you come in and the host say to you, 'Excuse me, could you sit down there so that this gentleman can sit here' and then with shame you begin to take a lower seat." He said, "But rather when you're invited come it and assume the lowest seat, then if someone says to you, 'Friend, what are you doing down there, come up here with us' then you'll have glory in the sight of all those who are sitting at the table with you." And then He issued this same principle of "whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." Elisha took the lowest seat (so to speak) in taking the form of a servant before Elijah, and now God has exalted him in the presence of all, you've heard me say it before; *humility = usability*.

In this chapter we'll see kings humble themselves before Elisha, and you just don't really get a higher platform *in this world* than that. The last couple of ch's have been concerned with the last days of Elijah and this transition in the life of Elisha. Now that those things have taken place, ch 3 gives us a peek at how he crosses paths with the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, and we begin to follow now the way that God was using his life *personally* much like we did with Elijah.

Vs1-3

So we have here the 9<sup>th</sup> bad king in a row over the nation of Israel, they never had one good king after the division of Israel and Judah. Perhaps you remember from ch 1 that Ahaziah (also the son of Ahab) only reigned in Israel for 2 yrs, he fell through the lattice in his upper room and was ultimately fatally injured by it in that he never recovered from the fall.

And really it wasn't the fall so much that killed him as it was his resolve not to seek the Lord regarding it but instead to seek after false gods who were in reality not gods at all. The text indicates that God would've restored him had he sought the Lord, but because he chose to forsake the Lord he suffered the fatal consequences. And that was the theme overall that was woven throughout that ch, "The fatality of forsaking God." You just can't rebel against the Word of God with out reaping destruction for your life. The bible teaches us that it's the Word of God that lights our way, that keeps our feet from stumbling, but when we forsake the light of God's Word it's only a matter of time before we take that fatal step, and suffer that fatal fall from trying to grope around in the dark.

Well, Ahaziah didn't have any sons so we read here that his brother (Jehoram) the son of Ahab (not Ahaziah) became king in his place. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord; it just seemed to run in the family. Which of course is a lesson in and of itself regarding the responsibility of the parents to set the standard in the home that the children need to see. Because generally speaking there's natural inclination in kids that causes them to want to be like dad, or be like mom, and God will hold us accountable for the example we give to them. Ahab was a wicked king, and now that his son is on the throne, lo and behold, he's a wicked king, doing evil in the sight of the Lord. Not like mom and dad, you're maybe not as familiar with the name Ahab as you are the name "Jezebel" who was Ahab's wife. So he'd have had quite a challenge to even *compare* to the wickedness of his mom and dad much less *exceed* it. Ahab holds the title of doing more evil in the sight of the Lord, and doing more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

So it wasn't going to take much for Jehoram to do a better job than his dad regarding the extent of sin in his life and bringing sin into the life of the nation, and we read here that he instituted a bit of reformation, but it wasn't because of a godly transformation he his life. He did away with the Baal worship, (and why, we don't know) perhaps for political reasons that he might have an amicable, or semi-cordial relations with Judah, perhaps he noted all the judgments that were incurred throughout his dad's reign and what happened to his brother with regards to Baal so he wised up. But he didn't do away with idolatry in general as is noted there in vs 3. "The sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat" was the sin of worshipping the golden calves that he'd set up in Dan and in Bethel so that the people could worship there rather than going to Jerusalem to worship as the Word of God instructed them to do and in so doing he led the nation right into idolatry. So it wasn't as though Jehoram had repented and sought the Lord, he was just making a few outward changes, kind of cleaning things up a bit with regard to appearance, but his heart was no where near the Lord. Be careful buying into outward reformation with out seeing the fruits of inward transformation in peoples lives. Because there's all kinds of motives for why a person might clean up their act a bit, perhaps (gals) some guy knows that you're not in approval of a certain way of living, so in order to pursue a relationship with you he'll quit partaking in a particular habit of his, be it drinking, cussing, whatever. But that doesn't mean that things are all good now, because it's not the outward reformation that we're concerned with as it is the inward transformation.

The Pharisees had a real clean exterior, but the interior was all messed up and filthy before the Lord, the inward transformation will make for the outward reformation. But the outward reformation doesn't in anyway indicate in and of itself an inward transformation, that's the problem we have here. Sure it's good that he's put away the sacred pillar of Baal, its great when someone quits drinking, or swearing, but that doesn't mean things are right in their life in the sight of the Lord.

Vs4-5

The Moabites had been subjected to heavy taxation since the days of David when David conquered them. You recall that it was the King of Moab that hired Balaam to curse the children of Israel way back in the days of the wilderness wanderings. And even though he couldn't do it, he explained to the king how he could cause the children of Israel to bring a curse on *themselves* by getting their women to mix, mingle, and introduce their pagan forms of worship with the men of Israel. Well as you know that plot worked perfectly and you might say that Moab had been on God's "Bad list" ever since.

And when David plundered them he subjected them to this tribute, or taxation that they were forced to pay to the nation of Israel. And this has been going on for 100-150yrs now so as you might imagine the Moabites are sick of it, but we notice when it was that they sought to come against Israel and it was during this transition of leadership. This is something we noted in ch 1 so we won't exhaust the principle, but we're not to be ignorant of our enemies devices. Satan seeks to make havoc of the church in general. But if he sees a particular aspect of the church that either has A) No leadership, and no structure, but just sheep sort of meandering around aimlessly, or B) a place that has weak leadership, you're only fooling yourself if you think he won't zero in for the kill and seek to bring that people or that project to ruin. This is a transitional period in the time of Israel's leadership, which speaks of potential weakness. So the enemy looks to strike, because he seeks to capitalize on those 2 things, (amongst a myriad of others) but weak leadership, or the absence of leadership is a dangerous thing in the body of Christ. Paul spoke to the leaders there in Ephesus and said that he knew that when he was gone savage wolves would come in not sparing the flock. He understood that the enemy would seek to capitalize on his absence. So again I would implore you to pray for the leadership here, that we might be strong, and sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, being on guard for the protective purposes and well being (not only of ourselves) but for the flock. And that God would help us all that we wouldn't forsake the assembly becoming easy prey out there on our own, but that we would stay under the covering of the protective provisions God has made for us in the corporate body of believers. God has established a particular protocol in the body of Christ for a reason, because He *loves* us, knows what's best *for* us, and wants to take the best possible care *of* us, and we do well to be in harmony with Him and His word (really pertaining to anything) but as it relates to the context, being under the covering and accountability of strong biblical godly leadership. But this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time we've read of Moab's rebellion against the nation of Israel in 3 ch's, so apparently Ahaziah didn't fare well in dealing with it so now Jehoram inherits the issue.

## Vs6-7

The bible is clear that Jehoshaphat was a good and godly king, but he seems to me to be a lot like you and me in that he wants to do the right thing, so he just goes ahead and does what he believes to be the right thing before he ever really seeks the Lord regarding the issue. He's already gotten himself into trouble twice over this same type issue, when Ahab sought an alliance he said these same exact words. You remember how that turned out, Ahab was all, "You go ahead and wear your kingly robes into battle, and I'll wear the common soldiers garb..." "Ok, I guess..." Well that naturally caused the men of Ramoth Gilead to think that Jehoshaphat was king Ahab so they all completely forgot about anything else and pursued him with a passion which left him running for his life, screaming like a Jr. high girl, crying out to God to save him!" But then what happened when Ahaziah took the throne, he hooked up with him to, it cost him a fleet of ships, now he didn't hook up with Ahaziah again but now that his brother is on the throne here he goes again. Now granted Moab had been a sore spot for them to, but when do you actually get to the point where you seek the Lord *before* your decisions instead of when you're in a mess *after* you've made the decision? You've heard the adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." God would spare us so much grief if we'd just seek His direction 1<sup>st</sup>, but oh what joy we often forfeit, and needless pain we bear, all because we don't carry *everything* to God in prayer, that seemed to be a bit of a motto in Jehoshaphat's life. He didn't have direction because he didn't ask for direction, we have not because we ask not, he just says, "Hey you bet brother, mi casa, su casa," and they yoke right up.

## Vs8-9

Jehoram submitting to Jehoshaphat's experience says, "Which way should we go about this?" Jehoshaphat says, "Let's head south through the desert, round the Dead sea to the east and come up against Moab from the south." "Ok sounds good." So they take off, and since Edom is under tribute to Judah they pick them up on the way. Only 1 problem, they didn't realize that after a weeks worth of marching that they wouldn't run across a drop of water, so they're out of rations, be it for them, their armies, or even the animals carrying supplies. They didn't seek the Lord, and now they're experiencing "dry times." Sort of interesting isn't it? As you know the bible likens the Word of God to water, they didn't seek the Word of the Lord for the situation, and here they are suffering in this radical state of dryness, they're thirsting, feeling fatigued, beginning to believe they're going to die. How's your devotions been lately, are you suffering a radical state of dryness, feeling fatigued spiritually? Take the time to drink of the living water from bottomless well of the Word of God, let the Lord satisfy your thirst and refresh your walk, because if not, like these guys you'll begin to spiritually dehydrate, growing weaker and weaker until you ultimately just pine away and die. We need to be refreshed consistently in the waters of God's Word.

## Vs10-12

So we see this mention of Elisha as simply the one who poured water on Elijah's hands, which is synonymous for saying that Elisha was his servant. And now these 3 kings are prepared to go and humble themselves before him, but I want you to notice the stark contrast in Jehoram and Jehoshaphat. In verse 10 Jehoram presumes that God has sanctioned this whole thing to begin with which I never read anywhere that He did, but then he shows himself hopeless thinking that God is against them and bringing all this on them. He's with out hope, because he's with out God in the world. But he represents a good majority in the world today, doesn't seek God at all regarding his decisions in life, but then blames God when it all goes south. The proverbs tell us, "*The foolishness of a man twists his way, And his heart frets against the LORD.*" Prov 19:3 Or to understand that another way, his own foolishness gets him into a mess and then he gets mad at God because of it. Here the Lord hadn't been sought at any point; they've been relying solely on human effort, the plans, ways and strength of man this whole time. And now that things aren't looking too good, Jehoram has the audacity to blame *God* for this mess he's gotten *himself* into.

But Jehoshaphat on the other hand understands that they're in a mess, but rather than blaming God, and thinking that the Lord has thoughts of evil against them, he opts to seek the Lord. It's a "better late than never" kind of a deal; he may've messed up in not seeking Him to begin with but that doesn't justify not seeking Him now. So he humbles himself and asks if perhaps there's a prophet among them that they can inquire of; so as to where Jehoram is with out hope, and *blaming* God, Jehoshaphat is full of hope and *seeking* God, one thinks God is against them, the other knows God is for them, a proper perspective of God will always give you hope. You may be in a dry and desperate situation, perhaps you've made choices with out seeking the Lord and now you're in a spiritual wasteland, but you can seek the Lord now and God promises that when we seek Him with all our heart that He will be found by us. But understand that God knows when we're seeking Him sincerely, or if it's just a matter of convenience, look at vs 13.

#### Vs13-15

There's something about this vs that I just love, but notice the boldness with which Elisha addresses the king of Israel. "What have I to do with you?" "What are you doing here? Go seek the prophets of *your* mom and dad!"

You see it wasn't like he had in inward transformation or Elisha would've recognized that, he was just a desperate man looking for help with no real heart ready to repent. And God sees right through that stuff, and He's just not into the fair weathered friends thing. People who cry out to God when their life is in ruin and then as soon as things are patched up it's, "See ya later God, I'll give You a call the next time I need something." That's the part Jehoram was playing and Elisha said, "Why don't you get out of here, go cry out to Baal, let him save you." And he says, "If it weren't for the fact that I regard Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I wouldn't welcome your presence or even look at your face!"

“But now bring me Calvary Chapel of Judah’s worship team.” And when the worship began, the hand of the Lord came upon him. The bible teaches us that God is *enthroned* in the praises, and *inhabits* the praises of His people. There’s just no getting around the spiritual dynamic of music in general, how much more the praise and worship of God who *is* Spirit.” And how many times we come to church all flustered and in the flesh, but when the worship begins and we just focus on the Lord, there’s a dynamic that takes place that just seems to free me from the flesh and prepare my heart to hear and receive the Word of God. Elisha was no doubt frustrated with Jehoram (it’s obvious by the way he conversates with him) but when the worship begins, he’s able to forget about those things and focus on the Lord, and God begins to speak to his heart.

#### Vs16-19

So God in His mercy says, “Not only will I give you water to drink, but I’ll give you victory over your enemies.” And there’s a couple of principles working here that we want to see quickly. God said that He’d do the miraculous; they had to have faith in that, but how was their faith to be demonstrated? In works, they had to dig ditches to prepare for the water, and the degree of their faith would be directly related to how many and how deep they dug. If they didn’t dig the ditches, they wouldn’t receive the water, if they made light work of it, they’d reap light benefits. If they dug ditches everywhere and made them deep, they be blessed in abundance. It’s probably not the answer they wanted all parched, hot, and ready to die, “Ok boys, there’s not a cloud in the sky, we’re out here in the desert, but by faith lets dig ditches to hold all the water God’s going to provide!” But the principle in effect is that of faith and works working together.

God promised to provide in a miraculous way, and then beyond their expectation of water, He promised to give them victory in the battle at hand, and He says, “All this is a simple matter in the sight of the Lord.” Principle #2 Eph 3:20, God, “...*is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,*” They were going to be content just hearing that they would survive, but God promised them that they’d route their enemies as well. We serve a God of love and grace, if only they’d have sought Him to begin with.

#### Vs20-27

So they had total victory but they walked away from the Moabite stronghold because of the abomination of the king of Moab in sacrificing his eldest son as a burnt offering to Chemosh the Moabite god.

Before we close see this as well, God told them that He give them the water, and by a flash flood sort of a thing running down off the mountains from a fairly long distance away that’s what He did. You’ve seen how fast desert canyons and valleys can flood when they’re hard and cracked ground, it can happen fast, in a matter of minutes. And in the morning, at sunrise as they offered the morning sacrifice God sent them torrents of water, but what God didn’t tell them was that by that same means He would bring them victory over the enemy.

The same water that quenched their dehydration, was used to bring confusion, disorder, and ultimately defeat to the enemy. The work wasn't fun, or something they wanted to do, but God was using them and preparing them for blessing and victory in the future by the work they were doing before they ever saw the fruition of their faith. And God will often move *us* to do things that may or may not make much sense in the moment, but He uses those things to prepare us for what it is that He's going to do, and the victories He's going to bring to our lives in the future.

There are some leadership kind of principles in this picture here of digging ditches. It's hard work, its done with faith in what God will do in the future, it needs to use delegation, all the work is pointless with out a miracle, with out God honoring and blessing. Even though it often feels like a thankless task, and work with out reward, God always blesses beyond the expectation, it's done through the revelation of God's Word just like the digging of these ditches. I'm sure there was a fair share of people criticizing or doubting the work, leadership is often criticized and doubted. But leadership also means not accepting a present state of dryness, but being willing to put your hands to the plow and by faith do the necessary work in advance so that things might be prepared for when God wants to bless.

Ministry's a lot like work, but when you invest your labors into the Kingdom of God, God will be a debtor to no man, He always pays off in huge dividends, because He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all we ask or even think.

Prayer points: Help us to walk by faith, to step out and believe You for Your Word, to be willing to work, and be prepared in advance for what You want to do in the future. That we would be deeply rooted, a people who are strong in You that we might be able to stand against the wiles and warfare of the wicked one. To be watered in Your Word, refreshed by Your Spirit, and to Seek you in advance, not after we're in a mess.