

The Battle Between Moab and Israel's Combined Forces

2 Kings 3

2 Kings 3:1-15: *Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not like his father and mother; for he put away the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.*

Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and he regularly paid the king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs and the wool of one hundred thousand rams. But it happened, when Ahab died, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. So King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel. Then he sent to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, saying, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?" And he said, "I will go up; I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." Then he said, "Which way shall we go up?" And he answered, "By way of the Wilderness of Edom."

So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom, and they marched on that roundabout route seven days; and there was no water for the army, or for the animals that followed them. And the king of Israel said, "Alas! For the LORD has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab." But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?" So one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." And Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

Then Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother." But the king of Israel said to him, "No, for the LORD has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab." And Elisha said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you, nor see you. But now bring me a musician." Then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him."

Let's take this chapter in two sections and for each section we'll take a couple of background notes, one doctrinal point and one practical application

Background Notes for 2 Kings 3:1-5

King Jehoram of Israel *"did evil in the sight of the Lord."* He was not quite as bad as his father and mother, Ahab and Jezebel, and he removed the Baal shrine, but he *"persisted in the sins of Jeroboam,"* the king who set up the golden calf shrines in the northern kingdom of Israel.

King Jehoram decided to attack the king of Moab because Moab was no longer paying tribute to Israel. Jehoram wanted to regain the tribute by forcing Moab into subjection again. He asked Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to join him. Jehoshaphat was a good king, but he foolishly joined ungodly King Jehoram.

Along with the king of Edom, they made plans to attack Moab. Moab was located in today's central Jordan. They decide to attack Moab from the south, so they had to make a long trip around the southern end of the Dead Sea. But before they could mount an attack, they ran out of water. An army without water can't move - it's a sitting duck for the enemy! At this point Elisha arrived, and he brought a gracious word from the Lord.

Doctrinal Point for 2 Kings 3:1-15

Bad company corrupts good character.

"Bad company corrupts good character" comes from 1 Corinthians 15:33. If you choose the wrong kinds of people as close associates, they will affect your character - and that's exactly what happened here to good King Jehoshaphat. King Jehoshaphat of Judah was a good and godly king, but he mixed with the wrong company. As a result, he did some foolish things. He got into trouble because he linked himself with wicked King Jehoram. Jehoram's wicked company corrupted Jehoshaphat's good character.

The same thing will happen in our lives, if we choose ungodly people as our close friends and associates. We need to be careful, especially with business associations. Many of you in business rub shoulders with unbelievers all the time, and we are to share the gospel with them. Obviously, there's got to be contact - business lunches, social occasions, etc. But be careful that your Christian character is not affected! Make sure to let your faith be known. Make a strong identification with Christ right from the start, or you may find yourself "corrupted." Your thoughts and language may be corrupted, and your business ethic may be compromised. Bad company corrupts good character.

Practical Application for 2 Kings 3:1-15

Use praise music to calm your spirit.

In verse 15 Elisha called for a musician. When the musician played, "*the hand of the Lord came upon him.*" What was Elisha doing out in the wilderness? He may have come along as a military chaplain, or maybe the Lord sent him along especially to watch out for King Jehoshaphat. Good King Jehoshaphat made a foolish decision to go with Jehoram; yet because of Jehoshaphat's presence, Elisha said that he would ask the Lord.

Before he received word from the Lord, Elisha called for a musician because his spirit was so disturbed. The music calmed his spirit. This is good practical advice. Praise music can calm your spirit! When your spirit is disturbed because

of a problem, or decision that you may need to make, or if you're driving in bad traffic, listen to some Christian praise music. It can calm your spirit so that the Lord can speak to you. The practical application is appropriate for all of us. Use praise music to calm your spirit!

2 Kings 3:16-27 - *"And he said, 'Thus says the Lord: 'Make this valley full of ditches.' For thus says the Lord: 'You shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you, your cattle, and your animals may drink.' And this is a simple matter in the sight of the Lord; He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand. Also you shall attack every fortified city and every choice city, and shall cut down every good tree, and stop up every spring of water, and ruin every good piece of land with stones."*

Now it happened in the morning, when the grain offering was offered, that suddenly water came by way of Edom, and the land was filled with water. And when all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, all who were able to bear arms and older were gathered; and they stood at the border. Then they rose up early in the morning, and the sun was shining on the water; and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood. And they said, "This is blood; the kings have surely struck swords and have killed one another; now therefore, Moab, to the spoil!"

So when they came to the camp of Israel, Israel rose up and attacked the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they entered their land, killing the Moabites. Then they destroyed the cities, and each man threw a stone on every good piece of land and filled it; and they stopped up all the springs of water and cut down all the good trees. But they left the stones of Kir Haraseth intact. However the slingers surrounded and attacked it.

And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not. Then he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall; and there was great indignation against Israel. So they departed from him and returned to their own land."

Background Notes for 2 Kings 3:16-27

Through the prophet Elisha, the Lord predicted that Israel's forces would get water, and that the Lord would enable them to defeat Moab. Everything took place just as the Lord said. The Moabites walked right into the midst of the waiting Israeli troops. There was no contest until the king of Moab decided to sacrifice his son to the pagan god Himesh. He took the crown prince and offered him as a burnt offering at the top of the city wall, so all the Israeli troops could see what was going on!

What happened in the last verse is not quite clear, but it seems that because of this sacrifice, the troops of Moab fought with such increased fury that the Israeli army called it quits right when victory was in their grasp, and they returned home.

Doctrinal Point for 2 Kings 3:16-27

The Lord can bring water to the wilderness.

In verses 17 and 18, Elisha said, “*You shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you, your cattle, and your animals may drink. And this is a simple matter in the sight of the Lord...*” How did the Lord accomplish this miracle? We don’t know! There was no local storm. But in any case, there’s a spiritual lesson for us here: the Lord can bring water to the wilderness.

Do you feel you’re in a spiritual wilderness, without water to quench your spiritual thirst? Maybe you feel like King Jehoshaphat. You know you’re in a wilderness place because you made some foolish decisions. The Lord can bring water to your wilderness, but it takes a willingness to obey the Lord and trust that He can do it.

And that is what we see here. The people were willing to do what the Lord said. The Lord said, “Fill this valley with ditches.” They obeyed - and that took faith. It’s not easy to have the faith to dig ditches when you’re dying of thirst under the hot sun, but they trusted the Lord, they obeyed, and they received water. The Lord can bring water to your wilderness.

Practical Application for 2 Kings 3:16-27

Let’s be faithful ditch diggers!

In the spiritual picture God is giving us here, I think we can liken the water to the Word of God. In Scripture the Word of God is often likened to life-giving water. It can quench our spiritual thirst, because it’s the living word of God. But notice that the people had to trust God and obey! They had to dig the ditches so that the water could flow into them.

We need to be faithful “ditch diggers”! We need to enlarge our capacity to take in the Word of God. How do we do that? We need to spend time each day studying the Bible. We need to avail ourselves of the teaching of God’s Word. Too many of us are satisfied with just scratching the surface - but surface scratches won’t contain much water. No wonder we’re thirsty! We need to dig deep ditches. Then the God’s Word can flow into our beings and quench our spiritual thirst. Let’s be faithful ditch diggers!