

## Lesson 9      29 September 2013

### Israel's Victory Over Moab

**Lesson Scope:** [2 Kings 3](#)

#### **Lesson Focus**

King Ahab's wicked reign ended with his death in the battle against Syria at Ramoth-Gilead. Then Ahab's son Ahaziah reigned two years, until he died from injuries received in a fall. This left the throne of Israel to his brother, Jehoram. These two kings had a sister, Athaliah, who married Joram (Jehoram), son of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah. These family ties may explain Jehoshaphat's cooperation with the king of Israel.

When Ahab died, Moab rebelled against Israel. This revolt continued unchecked during Ahaziah's short reign. Then Jehoram, Israel's new king, sought to restore the servitude of Moab. He asked the help of Judah's king, Jehoshaphat, as well as that of Judah's vassal, the king of Edom. The confederate army's surprise invasion took them a roundabout way, through the wilderness of Edom, to the border of Moab. The seven-day journey left the army stranded without water for the men and their animals. The distressed kings sought an answer to their dilemma from Elisha, the prophet of the Lord, who had accompanied the army. At the Lord's command through Elisha, the army dug the valley full of ditches. The next morning God supplied water abundantly.

This is an Old Testament account from which we are drawing New Testament lessons. We cannot take everything in this passage as an example for us today. The church is not political, and it does not engage in carnal warfare. However, we can draw lessons from this study for our spiritual warfare. Close association with the ungodly will always bring us into troubling situations, and so forth. Be sure to see the emphasis on the connection of obedience and faith to having victory over the enemy. God's principles of truth never change.

The Lord helps those who cooperate with Him. When we dig the ditches, He will fill them with water

**Lesson Aim:** To see prerequisites for experiencing the work of God among us.

**Theme Verses:** [2 Kings 3:16-17](#). And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

## Lesson Text

### Questions for Study

#### Human Dilemma

[2 Kings 3:1-10](#) <sup>1</sup> Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. <sup>2</sup> And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. <sup>3</sup> Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. <sup>4</sup> And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. <sup>5</sup> But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. <sup>6</sup> And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel. <sup>7</sup> And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I *am* as thou *art*, my people as thy people, *and* my horses as thy horses. <sup>8</sup> And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom. <sup>9</sup> So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them. <sup>10</sup> And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!

#### Divine Direction

[2 Kings 3:11-19](#) <sup>11</sup> But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here *is* Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them

into the hand of Moab. <sup>14</sup> And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee. <sup>15</sup> But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. <sup>16</sup> And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. <sup>17</sup> For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. <sup>18</sup> And this is *but* a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. <sup>19</sup> And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

### **Abundant Provision**

**2 Kings 3:20-25** <sup>20</sup> And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water. <sup>21</sup> And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border. <sup>22</sup> And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side *as* red as blood: <sup>23</sup> And they said, This *is* blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil. <sup>24</sup> And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in *their* country. <sup>25</sup> And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kirharaseth left they the stones thereof; howbeit the slingers went about *it*, and smote it.

### **Human Dilemma**

1. How was this desperate situation of the kings and their army typical of human dilemma?
2. What lessons can we learn from Jehoshaphat's alliance with the wicked king of Israel?
3. How might our response to difficult circumstances reflect a warped view of God?

### **Divine Direction**

4. Explain the roles of Jehoshaphat and Elisha in finding an answer to the need.

5. In what ways does society benefit from the presence of godly individuals among them?

### **Abundant Provision**

6. What is significant about the timing of God's answer (1 Kings 3:20)?

7. Why was digging ditches necessary for victory over Moab?

8. What are some spiritual parallels to the utter destruction meted out (3:25)?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

Mesha, king of Moab, rebelled and thereby refused to bring the tribute quota of lambs and rams to the king of Israel (1 Kings 3:4-5).

"Which poured water on the hands of Elijah" (1 Kings:11) was a compliment that portrayed Elisha as the personal servant and disciple of Elijah.

A minstrel (1 Kings 3:15) was a singer who played a stringed instrument.

The army's passage through the country of Edom could have been in the hope of watering the army and cattle in the brook Zered, which passed through the valley. These wadis were often dry, but they quickly turned into raging torrents when rain fell on the mountains of Edom (1 Kings 3:20).

Diverting the water into ditches (1 Kings 3:16) would have controlled the flooding and spread the water over a large area. The redness of the morning sun shining on this large spread of water looked like blood to the Moabite army. They wrongly assumed that the confederate kings had developed a quarrel and killed each other. In their eagerness to take the spoil, they lowered their guard and were defeated.

To "fell every good tree" (1 Kings 3:19) was unusually severe (Deuteronomy 20:19-20).

### **Principles and Applications**

#### **Human Dilemma**

1. When man comes to the end of his resources, he is in a position to see God work (1 Kings 3:9). Sometimes our "well-laid plans" lead us into trouble. It would have been far better for Jehoshaphat to seek the Lord's direction and favor before he embarked on this military expedition with the wicked king of Israel. The crisis of thirst likely helped Jehoshaphat to think through the situation more thoroughly. Apparently it had been his advice for the battle plan that led them in this roundabout way.

The Lord mercifully arranges circumstances to bring us up short and to remind us that we need His help. When we respond by calling on God and obeying His instruction for the present distress, then our extremity be-

comes God's opportunity.

2. Despair will hinder God's work and blind men to His power (1 Kings 3:10). Instead of repenting when they experience a crisis, wicked men in desperation often blame God for their trouble. The constant fear of impending judgment on sin blinds the wicked to the power of God to help. Without the witness of the godly, many would die without answers. It is our calling to point men to an almighty God, who can deliver from sin and give hope in desperate situations.

### **Divine Direction**

3. The faithful seek God's will in times of distress (1 Kings 3:11). Seeking God's will is an expression of faith that will always be rewarded (Isaiah 65:24). The righteous trust God that all of their circumstances are arranged for good (Romans 8:28). Distress should cause us to stop and consider our course. God can redirect us in His way. The Lord is able to take our distressing situations and turn them into a great victory for His glory.

4. God's will is revealed through His faithful servants to His people (1 Kings 3:11). Without Jehoshaphat's presence, Elisha would not have inquired of the Lord for the army (1 Kings 3:14). Without Elisha's spiritual contact with the Lord, Jehoshaphat likely would not have received direction.

Why would we turn for help to human wisdom in the form of books or professional counseling when we experience difficulty in life? The best help will come from the people of God who know the Word of God. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

5. Full obedience is necessary to experience God's deliverance (3:14, 16-17, 20). Digging ditches in the desert would have seemed like a futile and senseless way to remedy this situation. Conversely, the diligent effort of the army in digging many ditches played a large part in their victory the following day.

How careful are we to obey the direction given by a Biblical church and her leaders? We do not need to understand every detail of the church's requirements before we obey. God will bless those who submit and conscientiously obey even when they do not fully understand (Hebrews 13:17). God used Israel's ditches to bring greater blessing and deliverance than any human thought could have conceived. God has perfect answers in perfect timing for those who completely submit to His will in trust and careful obedience.

## **Abundant Provision**

6. God abundantly provides for those who worship Him from the heart (1 Kings 3:20). Worship will calm our spirits as we renew a vision of our great God and His power. Elisha called for a musician and received a message from God through the Spirit.

Sacred music still plays an important role in the worship of God's people; it prepares them to hear His voice. It is interesting that God's answer with water came the next morning at the time of another worship scene while the meat offering was being offered in the temple at Jerusalem. Between these two worship scenes, the army was busy in practical obedience to God's direction to dig ditches.

7. God gives the victory to those who trust Him and patiently fulfill His commands (1 Kings 3:22-24). Victory is sure and complete when we follow the Lord's directives. Through Elisha, God gave specific commands for the battle. He likewise gives clear direction for our battles when we seek it. We must be willing to submit our battle plan to God's approval if we would win our battles today. Failure to experience victory proves either our lack of trust in God or our lack of obedience to Him. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

## **Important Teachings**

1. When man comes to the end of his resources, he is in a position to see God work (3:9).
2. Despair will hinder God's work and blind men to His power (3:10).
3. The faithful seek God's will in times of distress (3:11).
4. God's will is revealed through His faithful servants to His people (3:11).
5. Full obedience is necessary to experience God's deliverance (3:14, 16-17, 20).
6. God abundantly provides for those who worship Him from the heart (3:20).
7. God gives the victory to those who trust Him and patiently fulfill His commands (3:22-24).

## **Answers to Questions**

1. How was this desperate situation of the kings and their army typical of human dilemma?

The kings had carefully planned their strategy and their route. They had formed an alliance to pursue their goal, but they neglected the most im-

portant part—seeking the Lord's direction. This is typical of the failure of the best of human plans, because men cannot see ahead. Without divine direction, we will fail.

2. What lessons can we learn from Jehoshaphat's alliance with the wicked king of Israel?

(a) We cannot expect God's blessing on our plans when we join hands with apostate people. (b) When parents associate with apostates, they open the door for their children to find ungodly companions from among them. (c) Jehoshaphat's son's marriage to Ahab's daughter created further ties that made it difficult to perpetuate the faith. Jehoshaphat's son undid the good that his father had accomplished. While the wicked may benefit from fellowship with the godly, the negative influence on the godly outweighs that possible good. (d) Every account of Jehoshaphat's alliances with Israel's wicked kings brought him trouble, including several threats to his life.

3. How might our response to difficult circumstances reflect a warped view of God?

King Jehoram suggested that God wished to destroy the whole army, which was a warped view of God and His graciousness to His people. It reflected the guilt of a wicked man fearing the judgment of a holy God. The distress they were in resulted from their own lack of foresight. We should never blame God for our troubles. Bitterness is an indication of one who is blaming God.

4. Explain the roles of Jehoshaphat and Elisha in finding an answer to the need.

Without godly Jehoshaphat's leadership, the kings would have despaired without seeking an answer from God. Elisha was the instrument God used to give the answer. However, Elisha would not have sought God's will were it not for the presence of Jehoshaphat.

5. In what ways does society benefit from the presence of godly individuals among them?

The godly are a light set on a hill. When trouble comes and men despair, they can go to God's people for answers. Through their word and life, the godly are guides to help the wicked understand what God requires, and how that He blesses the right. This becomes a restraining force in the world. The godly reveal the character of God when they show love and compassion for others in need. God's people practice virtues like thriftiness and productiveness that can benefit any community.

6. What is significant about the timing of God's answer (1 Kings 3:20)?

The answer came at the offering of the morning sacrifice. God still answers

our need and pours out blessings at regular times of worship, whether personal or collective.

7. Why was digging ditches necessary for victory over Moab?

God honors obedience to His commands. The ditches collected the water that God sent, which also gave the Moabites the illusion of blood covering the valley when the sun shone on the water in the ditches. This became an important part of the victory when the Moabites advanced, thinking the kings had already destroyed each other and had left the spoil for them to collect.

8. What are some spiritual parallels to the utter destruction meted out (1 Kings 3:25)?

It is important to remember that our warfare is spiritual rather than carnal. We do not support political rallies nor use force to close abortion clinics or barrooms. The preaching of the Gospel will, however, have an effect on communities as it did in Ephesus, where the people burned their books of curious arts and stopped buying images of the goddess Diana to the point that the silversmiths became alarmed (Acts 19:18-41).

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Our sovereign Lord is calmly fulfilling His purposes on earth in spite of human failure and need. As a loving heavenly Father, He always desires the best for His people. His all-seeing eyes ever perceive our need, and He delights to help when we humbly call upon Him. God's instructions are always right, even when we do not fully understand the reason behind them. Simple obedience brings blessing and victory far beyond our comprehension.

### **Research Guide**

1. Read A Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles.
2. Research "Mesha," "Edom," and "Moab" in a Bible dictionary.