

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 2A

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

Ahaziah did not recover from the illness which resulted from his fall from the balcony of his palace. He had no son. His brother, Jehoram, ascended the throne. He was the second son of Ahab. Jezebel, his mother, was still living. He was the last king of the fourth or the Omri dynasty of the Northern kingdom.¹ He ruled for about twelve years before he died a violent death in the hands of Jehu (2 Kings 9:24). This finally fulfilled the word of the LORD through the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 21:21, 29). Elisha the prophet was active during his reign. The divine records of his reign feature more of the ministry of the prophet of God than that of the king.

OUTLINE

1. Jehoram began his reign (vv.1-3);

¹ Dynasties of Israel: Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:25); Baasha (1 Kings 15:28); Zimri (1 Kings 16:10, 15); Omri (1 Kings 16:16).

2. The Moabites, a vassal of Israel, revolted against Jehoram who sought military help from the king of Judah (vv.4-10);
3. Elijah was consulted (vv.11-19);
4. Faith was shown by obeying Elijah's orders (vv. 20-27)

COMMENTARY

Jehoram Rules Israel – 3:1-3

Jehoram began to reign over Israel in Samaria (849-842 B.C.). The divine writer portrayed him as an evil ruler before the LORD. However, he was praised for not following the idolatrous ways of his father and mother. He removed the idols of Baal which his father had made.

But he continued in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, the first king of Israel. Jeroboam worshipped YAHWEH by making two golden calf images to represent the living and true God. This was in violation of the Second Commandment, that is, "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth*" (Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 5:8).

In this respect, he led Israel to sin against God. He cannot be considered as a reformer in Israel. His name "Jehoram", which means "Yahweh-exalted" is an ironical and a bad testimony.

.Half measures taken in holiness is still sin. Jehoram's rejection of Baalim and Ashtaroth which are the

Canaanite gods that his parents worshipped is no true rejection at all. Turning FROM idols and error and sin must result in turning TO the One Living and True God and not turning to other idols. Jehoram's turning to other idols is most unacceptable to the LORD and this is to put it mildly!

Jehoram Subdues Mesha – 3:4-10

Mesha, the king of Moab rebelled against Israel. The land of Moab was fertile and suited for raising sheep. Mesha took advantage of the death of Ahab and the weakness of his son, Ahaziah to break the yoke which Israel imposed on them. Moab had to pay a very heavy annual tribute to Israel: 100,000 lambs, and 100,000 rams, with the wool.

Jehoram obviously did not want to lose this large income. So he prepared himself for war against Moab. He took a population census of the land. But Moab had grown stronger since the death of Ahab and also during the reign of Ahaziah. Jehoram definitely needed military help to subdue Mesha, the king of Moab. He looked to his fellow Jews in the south, Judah. He solicited the help of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah. He was related to Jehoshaphat by marriage since Jehoshaphat's son, also called Jehoram (see 1Kings 22:50; 2 Kings 1:17), had married Jehoram's (Ahab's son (see 1 Kings 3:1) sister, Athaliah. Once again, Jehoshaphat felt obligated to go to his aid. But he was associating again with the vile and wicked king, just as he did with Ahab, Jehoram's father. He nearly lost his life in the process when he

helped Ahab (1 Kings 22:1-8, 29-32). He again manifested this same compromising inclination.

The two kings decided on a war strategy. They planned to attack Moab from the south. That was a very roundabout way. The way was longer, and involved going through the mountainous regions of Edom. It was definitely more difficult and dangerous. The north route was direct and shorter but the land of Moab was heavily fortified in the north. A plus for the two kings was that Jehoshaphat managed to enlist the help of Edom to join them. Edom was a vassal of Judah. Now the three kings were allied together and should make a formidable force. They took seven days to reach the southern borders of Moab. By that time, they had exhausted their water supply for themselves and the cattle they brought with them. Jehoram made a typical remark like an unbeliever that he was (3:10): "Alas! That the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!" Their behaviour was typical of the unbelieving children of Israel during the times of adversities when they were journeying in the wilderness in the time of Moses (Exodus 17:3).

Elisha was Consulted – 3:11-19

But Jehoshaphat once again asked for counsel from a prophet of the LORD. One of Jehoram's servants responded that there was Elisha, the servant of the great prophet Elijah. Jehoshaphat immediately expressed confidence that the word of the LORD was with Elisha. The three kings accordingly went to meet him. How

Elisha happened to be in the vicinity is not explained. It is probable that God knew what would happen and caused Elisha to be at hand when the need arose. When meeting the three kings, Elisha addressed Jehoram. He raised the question why he did not consult the prophets of his father (Ahab) and the prophets of his mother (Jezebel). Jehoram replied that it was the LORD who had called them together to deliver them from the Moabites. There was no previous testimony to this statement. It was either a blatant lie or self delusion on Jehoram's part. Jehoram was guilty of manipulating theology for personal gain. Elisha responded that he believed that the LORD is truly the living God and had respect for Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah. Insofar as Jehoram was concerned, Elisha had no business and time for him.

Strangely, Elisha asked for a minstrel, one who played the harp. It is not explained why he wanted to hear music or what was the purpose of it. From the experience of Saul, David played the harp to refresh Saul (1 Samuel 16:23). One can hardly surmise that Elisha was in such an emotional mood. However, the divine comment is that when the minstrel played, "the hand of the LORD" was upon Elisha. The directive of the LORD was for them to dig many ditches in the valley. There would not be wind or rain, but the valley would be flooded with water so they and their livestock might quench their thirst. This was nothing in comparison with the victory that they might have over the Moabites. They were commanded to

utterly destroy the fenced cities and the best cities of the land of Moab. They were to fell every good tree and stop all wells of water and spoil the grasslands by scattering stones in them (3:19).

Faith in Action – 3:20-27

The next morning at the time when the Temple Meat Offering was offered in Jerusalem, water came pouring down by way of the mountain ranges of Edom and filling the valley with water. It was God's providence in a dry land. Just as God had promised, it was done. The Moabites had news of the invading armies of Israel, Judah and Edom. All the Moabites who were able to bear arms were gathered at the southern border. They rose up early in the morning. The sun was shining on the valley now flooded with water. The Moabites saw the water from their side like the colour of blood. They thought that the three kings had slaughtered one another and caused a bloodbath that filled the valley. Without a second thought, they raced down for the spoil. When they reached the Israeli camp, the Israelites rose up and killed them. Taken by surprise and unprepared, the Moabites fled before the Israelites.

But the combined armies of Israel pursued them into their cities and destroyed them, felled the good trees, stopped the wells as the LORD had commanded them. However, they left the walls of the city of Kir-haraseth intact. When the king of Moab realised that he was losing the battle, he tried with seven hundred of his men in a desperate attempt to push through the Edomite sector to escape. But he

could not. Then he took his eldest son, the crown prince and offered him as a human sacrifice to his god. This action caused a “great indignation against Israel” (3:27). The Israelites abandoned their attack and left for home.

The phrase “there was great indignation against Israel” is difficult to understand as we are not told who exactly were angry with Israel. Could it be that the kings of Judah and Edom were angry with Israel because of what they saw the king of Moab did to his own firstborn son that they broke off their alliance with him? Or could it be that the people of Moab were so angry by what happened to their king’s sacrifice of his son that they rose in indignation against Israel?

Another explanation was that the firstborn son whom the King of Moab killed was not his own but the firstborn son of Edom. When the Edomite king saw that his alliance with Israel caused the death of his firstborn son, he rose in indignation against Israel and broke off the alliance. This explanation is not accepted because the King of Edom would have wanted greater revenge on the King of Moab and not less after he saw his firstborn son being killed in this terrible way.

This writer is of the opinion that the most likely explanation would be that the sudden act of atrocity done by the king of Moab to his own son by offering “him *for* a burnt offering upon the wall” was too much for the kings of Judah and Edom to stomach that they became angry with Israel (who wanted the Moabites to remain as their slaves

in order to collect annual tribute). The King of Moab was prepared to kill his own firstborn son who was to take over his kingdom which means that he was prepared to let his kingdom die than to be slaves to the King of Israel. Israel being the aggressor and motivated by greed nearly resulted in the annihilation of the Moabites who were also related to Edom, Israel and Judah via Lot who was Abraham’s nephew. This tragedy might have prompted the kings of Judah and Edom to break ranks with the king of Israel.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Jehoram’s accusation of the LORD’S intention of delivering them into the hands of the Moabites should be strongly censured. He is typical of the kind of persons who would twist the Word of God for, personal gain. His use of God’s Word was selfish and carnal. He cared only for the tribute he would have lost if Moab broke off from his kingdom. He has used the name of God in vain and for greed. If he were to check the Scriptures, he would have learned that he should not hold Moab as his vassal state. Such behaviour is unbecoming of a Christian. It is totally unacceptable and brought great shame to the name of the LORD. Jehoram should bear all the blame for what happened in this chapter.

Under the circumstances (one of compromise) Jehoshaphat’s reaction to the acute situation is perhaps a little commendable. He feared God up to a point and as his manner demonstrated, his response was to enquire of the LORD through

His prophet. It was not just any prophet. When he heard that Elisha had been serving Elijah, he recognised the former as a true prophet. He went down with Jehoram and the king of Edom to see Elisha instead of requiring the prophet to come up to him. This is humility. He was highly respected by Elisha who gave him his blessing from the LORD. In times of troubles and need, it is always right to seek the counsel of God in His Word.

Sometimes the counsel that God gives in His Word might seem illogical to us. The three kings were told to dig many ditches in the valley to collect water. It was dry land and this advice was quite absurd. But what is heartening is that the kings believed Elisha's word. They put their faith into action just as James states (James 2:17): *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead.”*

This is a very valuable lesson to learn and practise. If we want “results” from God, we should exercise our faith in our daily lives. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 2 Kings 3:1-12; Matthew 7:7-8; James 1:5-8.

TUESDAY: 2 Kings 3:13-27; Romans 8:31-39.

WEDNESDAY: 2 Kings 3:1-27.

THURSDAY: 2 Kings 3:1-27.

FRIDAY: 2 Kings 3:1-27.

Discussion Questions

1. Jehoram, son of Ahab, did a half hearted cleansing when he got rid of his parents' idols. But he did not remove the idols of Jeroboam. Is this kind of sin a common sin today?

2. How would you describe the alliance of Israel, Judah and Edom? Do you know of any parallel alliances today?

3. Why did God help the three kings defeat the Moabites?

4. If you were invited by your family members (unbelievers) to join them as one of the business partners because they need your financial strength, would you accept?

5. By helping the three kings, do you think that Elisha had compromised his ministry?

6. What from this chapter impacts you most in your life?