

2 Kings Chapter 03 Commentary

2Ki 3:1 ¶ "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. 2 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. 3 Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom."

Jehoram, the son of Ahab, begins to reign over Israel. We are told that he put away, not destroyed, the image of Baal. It may have occurred to him that if Baal could not save his father, he was not a god to put faith in. However, he clave to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was the first king to rule over Israel after revolting and dividing the kingdom. What were the sins of Jeroboam that keep being referred to with each king of Israel? When Jeroboam revolted, he was afraid that Israel would go back to Jerusalem, as they were to do three times each year to worship God, and deciding to return to serving God, they would forsake him or kill him. To prevent this, Jeroboam set up two golden calves and caused Israel to use them as the gods, and to do all their worship to them. He also rejected all the Levitical priesthood and they returned to Jerusalem.

So, what is the continuing sin of Israel's kings? They refuse to let Israel go to Jerusalem and worship their true God, and they encourage them in idolatrous worship, which was centered upon the golden calves that Jeroboam made. Why? Because, if the kings did as they were supposed to do, and read the law of God every day, and kept all the commandments of God, they would lose their position of power, for all Israel would be united under God, and there would only be one king. So, we see that it is vanity, self-conceit, idolatry, and disobedience to God, which brings them to disfavor with God.

What do we see happening in the realm of religions of the world today. The very same thing that is happening in Israel. They are forsaking the true God of Heaven and earth. They are rejecting that Jesus is the Christ. They are teaching that men can save themselves eternally. All of which is after the sins of Jeroboam.

4 "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. 5 But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel."

Remember that since Moab fell to king David, Moab has been under the rule of governors, appointed by the kings of Israel. They paid an annual tribute to Israel because they were subject unto them. They never liked their situation, and now they see an opportunity in which they may break free from this bondage to Israel. Wherefore, Moab rebels against Israel as soon as Ahab dies. Ahaziah was next king after Ahab. He only reigned two years and he died. Moab rebels under the kingship of Ahaziah. Jehoram takes his place.

6 ¶ And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel. 7 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."

King Jehoram, seeing the lose of a great amount of tribute from Moab, sends to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, for assistance to overthrow this rebellion. Jehoshaphat agrees to go to battle with Jehoram. Why would Jehoshaphat agree to do this after the calamity that came with Ahab, Jehoram's father? Apparently, Jehoshaphat was seeking peace between the two kingdoms of Israel, rather than continuing a civil war.

We point out here that there are two kings named Jehoram, or Joram. One is the son of Ahab and Jezebel, which is the one we are talking about here. The other was the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who was married to the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. This marriage could have also influenced Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, ¶ to render assistance to Ahab and his son Jehoram. This marriage will lead to the downfall of Judah because the marriage brings with it the worship of Baal.

8 "And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom. 9 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. 10 And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!

11 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. 12 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. 13 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."

We notice that there are three kings going to battle against Moab: the king of Judah, the king of Israel, and the king of Edom. Apparently, there was an affinity between Israel and Edom. We see that their approach to Moab is through the land of Edom. Apparently, Jehoram planned to go through Edom to get the assistance of the Edomites.

They travel for seven days, and there is no water for the armies nor their cattle. Jehoram declares that the LORD has called these three kings together to give them into the hands of the Moabites.

True to his nature, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, inquires for a prophet of the LORD, and is told that Elisha, who has taken Elijah's place, is nearby. When they approached Elisha, he immediately disclaims anything to do with Jehoram, king of Israel, telling him to go inquire of the prophets of his father and mother, Ahab and Jezebel. Jehoram tells Elisha, nay, God the LORD has called us here to deliver us to Moab.

14 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. 15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. 16 And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. 17 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. 18 And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. 19 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."

Elisha answers to Jehoram, if it were not for the presence of Jehoshaphat, I would not even entertain having you come into my presence. But because Jehoshaphat is here, bring me a minstrel. When the minstrel played, the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha, and he gave the three kings the message of the LORD.

The LORD says for you to make the valley full of ditches, and that you will not see wind or rain, but the LORD will fill the valley with water for both man and beast to drink. He continues and declares that the LORD will deliver Moab into their hands and instructs them to smite every fenced city, every choice city, fell every good tree, stop all the wells of water, and mar every good piece of land by covering it with stones.

20 ¶ "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. 21 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. 22 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: 23 And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil."

We see and understand now why Elisha has regard for Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Notice that they offer the morning sacrifice to the LORD, and the LORD sends water from Edom and fills the country. This is the first time we have heard of any king making sacrifices to the LORD in a long time. Man, and beasts are watered, and the valley is still filled with water.

The Moabites heard that war is coming to them through Edom, and they gather to meet the battle. Notice the peculiarity of the water. To Israel, Judah, and Edom, it was life giving. To the Moabites it looked like blood, and they foolishly believed that the host of the army was slain and they were looking upon their blood. They did not see water. They set out to gather the spoil of the three kings.

Think about this peculiarity and see how it still applies today. The unregenerate look upon the water of life, Jesus Christ, and see his blood poured out and seek to take their spoils in this life. The people of God look upon

the water and see Jesus Christ, the water of life, and they drink and live. The people of God drink their fill, and there is still an abundance of water left over.

24 "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. 25 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."

When the Moabites came into the camp of Israel, the three armies rose up and smote the Moabites, who fled before them. They followed into the land of Moab and did as the LORD commanded, with the small exception noted. Kirharaseth was the royal city of Moab and was very strongly fortified. Although, the city was smitten, Israel did not tear down all the walls, just portions of them, which they used to get into the city and destroy it.

It is amazing that every time God tells Israel to completely destroy something of their enemies, they somehow fail to carry out at least one detail. Isn't it amazing, that in the life of the children of God; we can never fully carry out all the commandments of God, which would give us total victory over our enemy the devil? Hence, Jesus gave the ordinance of foot washing, knowing that we would fail in our daily walks before God.

26 "And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. 27 Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land."

When the king of Moab saw that all was lost, he took seven hundred men and tried to break out to go to the king of Edom, but failed, because he was fighting against the LORD. When he could not escape, he took his eldest son and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall of the city.

Scripture says there was great indignation against Israel because they had driven Mesha, the king of Moab, to such desperate measures. **Adam Clarke's Commentary** gives us the following: *The rabbins account for this horrible sacrifice in the following way: When the king of Moab found himself so harassed, and the royal city on the point of being taken, he called a council of his servants, and asked them how it was these Israelites could perform such prodigies, and that such miracles were wrought for them? His servants answered, that it was owing to their progenitor Abraham, who, having an only son, was commanded by Jehovah to offer him in sacrifice. Abraham instantly obeyed, and offered his only son for a burnt-offering; and the Israelites being his descendants, through his merits the holy blessed God wrought such miracles in their behalf. The king of Moab answered, I also have an only son, and I will go and offer him to my God. Then he offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall.*

There is a great difference in the sacrifice of Abraham's son, commanded by God, and the sacrifice of Mesha's son, which was manmade, and an imitation of the sacrifice of Abraham's son. Abraham had an eternal covenant promise from God concerning his progenitors, whereas, Mesha had no promise from God, nor a promise from his own god, Chemosh. Abraham's sacrifice of his only son to God was a prophetic picture of what God the Father would do through the only Son of God, to bring eternal remission of sins to God's chosen people.

Mesha offering his only son upon the wall of the city, in the sight of everyone, was an act of murder in the worst possible way, which caused much indignation in the Moabites, and it also seems to have caused much distress to the Israelites, that a man would do such a horrible thing. We believe this is why the walls of the royal city were not completely destroyed. Seeing this hideous act, Israel ends the fight and goes home.

Why would there be great indignation against Israel for this war? Although Moab rejected the appointed governor of the land, and set up Mesha as king, it was Israel that started the war, without direction from God to do so. It was an act of man's will and love for money.

In the next chapter, we will pick up the narrative of the prophet Elisha and things he did.