

Kings and Prophets 14-01-10b

We pick up our study now, we're in 2 Kings chapter 3, we're looking at the grand expedition organized by Jehoram, the king of northern Israel, who has recruited Jehoshaphat from Judah and the king of Edom to join him in smacking down the king of Moab, Misha, who has rebelled and is refusing to pay tribute, the tribute that was laid upon that nation way back in the days of David. We're at verse 9, after recruiting these kings, which conveniently gives him a path to hook around and attack Moab from the south instead of where they would normally expect it in the north, and you would think that Misha has probably fortified the northern border, realizing that it's unlikely that any of the kings of the north are going to take this rebellion lying down, but if they try to come attack him, he's ready. So he's got all of his troops and fortifications prepared up there.

So Jehoram says, well, I'll fool them, I'll hook around. So I've got Judah and Edom on my side. So verse 9, 2 Kings 3, 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, nor for the animals that followed them. This is water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink situation like when people are stranded in the Atlantic or the Pacific. It's so frustrating because you're looking at water and people will actually try to go ahead and drink that water, but you cannot drink the water of the Dead Sea.

That stuff is caustic and nasty. There is no way to drink it. So they're marching along the shore because it's flat there, but they can't drink, and there is no water for the troops or the animals.

And the king of Edom has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab. So now it's the Lord's fault. He's the one that put this coalition together.

It was his idea to go attack. He chose the route, and now that there's no water, it's the Lord's fault. And he's convinced that God is just going to use this occasion to judge them.

Jehoshaphat, and you remember Jehoshaphat has some good things going for him. He says, Is there no prophet of the Lord here that we may inquire of the Lord by him? Instead of just assuming that the Lord is going to destroy us, why don't we ask 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. What's the problem? What's the problem that these kings are facing? They have no what? Water.

What is it that characterizes Elisha? What's his claim to fame? He poured what on the hands of Elijah? Water. He poured water on the hands of Elijah. Maybe there's some mystical connection between Elisha and water.

Why don't we ask him? Now, here's what I find interesting. Now the king of Edom didn't have to march seven days to get to Edom, which is where they are. Seven days is the marching time for

who? Jehoram.

It's probably somewhat less than that for the armies of Judah. They didn't march up to Israel and march back down. Edom didn't march up to Samaria, march back to Edom.

Jehoram has collected these guys on the way. He's been marching for seven days. His guys are the thirstiest.

But they're now in Edom and the totality of the march time is a week. And instead of victory like Joshua after marching for a week, they have crisis. And God just wants us to die.

That's Jehoram's attitude. Now what does this remind you of? You don't have to turn there, but if you go back to the earlier chapters of Exodus, from the time that they come out of Egypt, and they're delivered through the waters of the Yam Suph, and the horse and rider are drowned in the sea, and the song of Miriam, and everybody's celebrating, hooray, hooray, hooray. They march a couple of days, and then what happens? Chapter 16 of Exodus, they journeyed from Elim.

Actually, after Miriam sings to the Lord for His triumph gloriously, the horse and rider is thrown into the sea. In 1522 of Exodus, Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea. They went out into the wilderness of Shur, and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

Three days in the wilderness, no water. Now let's use the conservative estimate and assume that he's got roughly 20,000 people that need water. There's no water.

How do you provide water for 20,000 people plus their flocks and herds, their animals? This is no small problem. We have our hands full making sure there's snacks enough for everybody for a Bible class. You think 20,000 people, they all want a drink? All of their cattle, sheep, and oxen want drinks? When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah.

They can see the water, but they can't drink it. Why? What does Marah mean? What did Naomi call herself when she came back with Ruth? Don't call me Naomi. Call me Marah, which means bitter.

They found water, but it's bitter water, and they can't drink it. So there's a historical precedent for a big bunch of people marching and hitting the desert and running out of water. They can see water, but it's bitter.

Therefore, the name of it is called Marah because the water is bitter. So the people complained against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? He cried out to the Lord. The Lord showed him a tree.

When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there he tested them. He tested them.

Lack of water was a test. This lack of water is a test. What is water, categorically speaking? Is it a

luxury? It's pretty much a necessity.

Bread and water are your minimum staples of life. This is basic provision. If basic provision is missing for a believer, what's going on? If basic provision suddenly goes missing for a believer, what's going on? Say the word.

Four letters starts and ends with T. Test. Test. I have never seen the righteous go hungry or his seed begging bread.

If your basic provision is missing, it is a test. There are two reasons for testing. One, to take someone who is doing what they are supposed to do and demonstrating how well they are doing it.

What's the function of a test in a class? People who have studied, people who have paid attention, people who took good notes, people who are prepared, people who are involved, people who are committed, people who are motivated, people who know what the purpose of the class is and they have embraced it and thrown themselves into it. When a test comes along, what does the test do? It showcases, it reveals, it exercises everything that they have learned and it's a great thing. You come back with an A and you say, that was great.

I liked that experience. All of my work has been shown to be valid and to be fruitful. I love that.

Anybody doesn't like getting an A? I've never heard of it. You get a test, you pass it with flying colors and you get an A. Everybody loves that. Now, what if you're an unprepared person and the test comes along? What is the purpose of that test? What does the test do for someone who is unprepared, who isn't ready? It reveals the unpreparedness and unreadiness.

It shows specifically the areas that need work. The purpose of the test in any decent educational environment is not to shame, to embarrass, to cause pain and heartache. What is the purpose of the test? For people who are doing what they're supposed to, it validates that they're doing well.

For people who aren't doing what they're supposed to or have a deficiency for whatever reason, it reveals that so that it can be corrected, because the purpose of instruction is not to destroy, it is not to diminish, it is not to beat down. It is to improve and to instruct and to prepare and to equip someone. And tests provide this dual function.

I say again, in the life of a believer, if basic provision goes missing, it is a test. It is an opportunity to determine where do I stand? Am I doing what I'm supposed to? And this test is going to reveal it. I have confidence.

I know exactly what to do. I know how to do it. Or do I need to review and reflect on how I am operating and make some changes so that when this sort of test comes I can pass it.

It is a test. The Lord tested them there. This is Exodus 15.25. In the next verse, God says, If you

diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you.

Interesting context in which to make this promise, is it not? He tested them there and He said, If you diligently heed the voice. So let's say we find ourselves in a test. My provision has gone missing.

Something I was counting on and I think is sort of the basic logistical support that I expect from the Lord is suddenly not here. This can happen. We lose a job.

We get a cut in pay. An opportunity dries up. We suddenly find ourselves without what we were counting on in whatever area.

Here is one thing we can productively do. Instead of immediately doing elbows and knees, flying around doing what the world does, what is the first thing we should do? Identify it as a test. What is the second thing we should do? What did God say when He tested His people with a missing provision? Ask ourselves the question in Exodus 15.26. Am I diligently heeding the voice of the Lord my God? Am I doing what is right in His sight? Am I giving ear to His commandments? Am I keeping all His statutes? Because if I am, then this test is an opportunity for me to demonstrate that fact.

If the answer to any of those things is no, this is what the test has come. To reveal this so that I can correct it, so that I can return to the place where God can richly bless and provide. So that is what is going on.

Here are these people off on what they consider to be a righteous mission in 2 Kings 3. Our father David spared these guys, measured them out with a rod, laid tribute on them, and now they have stopped paying the tribute. They owe it to us and they are not paying it. We are going to go make it right.

Well, as they are on the march, God, who is in control of the weather and the environment, puts them in a position where after a week of marching there is no water for the men or the animals. What is the four letter word to describe this situation? Test. Now, what does the test reveal? That these men are mighty in the Lord and they can call upon the Lord and Elisha is going to throw a stick in the Dead Sea and it is going to come fresh and everybody is going to drink? No, it is going to reveal that they are not heeding the statutes and commandments of the Lord.

They are not honoring the covenant. They are not doing the things that they were supposed to do. That is why the test has come.

You cannot go and expect victory and it is instinct that God has brought them together to be defeated is rooted in a consciousness of guilt. So, we proceed. Elisha the son of Shaphat, verse 11, 2 Kings 3, is here.

How long have they been marching from Samaria? How long have they been marching from Samaria? Seven days. Where does Elisha live? Where did he return by way of Mount Carmel after the last chapter? Samaria. So, if these guys have been marching for seven days and they say Elisha is here, what do we know about Elisha? Where is he? He is not in Samaria.

He is with the army, right? He is with the army and they are in Edom. Elisha has been with them for how long now? Seven days. They are just now getting around to consulting the only guy who has the critical information about whether what they are doing is right and whether or not God is going to bless it.

And it is not until the provision dries up that somebody says, oh, by the way, Elisha is here. Isn't this what happens to us? We are tooling along, making plans, pursuing objectives. All of a sudden something goes horribly wrong and we say, you know, maybe I ought to consult the Lord.

Maybe I ought to look and see if what I am doing is in line with any kind of spiritual objectives and priorities. And we are a week down the road. So if they had not run out of water, would anybody have called Elisha? No.

So what is the purpose of running out of water? Point you to the man of God. This is really interesting. This is where it gets fascinating, as Popeye says.

So, Elisha, in verse 12, Jehoshaphat says, the word of the Lord is with him. Whose prophet is Elisha? What country does he belong to? He is in Israel. He is in the northern kingdom.

Who is his king, nominally speaking? Jehoram. Who knows that he is a true prophet of God? Who is the first to jump up and say, the word of the Lord is with this guy? Jehoshaphat. Why? Because he is doing a lot better in that realm than Jehoram is.

The word of the Lord is with him. Jehoshaphat knows who Elisha is. This word has trickled down to the southern kingdom.

And he knows, just based on the relatively short history, he certainly knows what happened in Jericho. He has heard about the bears. And he knows from that incident on his northern border that the word of the Lord is with Elisha.

So, the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, and the king to meet him, went down to him. Now, went down means they found him in the camp. The king is kind of like Jerusalem.

You go down from Jerusalem everywhere because it is God's throne. Well, kings, if they are going to leave their lofty seat and consult with somebody, they go down. It doesn't mean they traveled anywhere.

They didn't make a week's journey back to Samaria. They went down from their mobile throne room to find Elisha who is out with the troops. They went down to him.

So Elisha says to the king of Israel, what have I to do with you? He doesn't say it to all three kings. He says it to Jehoram. What have I to do with you, singular? You, singular, go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother.

Who are the prophets of Ahab? Baal. Who are the prophets of Jezebel? Asherah. Remember the prophets of Asherah that ate at Jezebel's table? And Jezebel.

So some of these guys have come along as well. They are with the retinue. Because he didn't say go home and dig them up.

These guys have been brought along for the ride. But they are not consulting the prophets of Baal and they are not consulting the prophets of Asherah. And you notice Jehoram didn't say Baal has ordained that we be defeated and die of thirst down here.

Because he knows who the real God is. 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, this is Yahweh Elohim, this is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he believes, has called these three kings to deliver them into the hand of Moab. It's the Lord that has done this. Baal would never do this to me.

Asherah would never do this to me. It's the Lord God of my fathers, my distant fathers, who would do this. He's against me.

That's why I don't worship him anymore, apparently. 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. There is a identification friend or foe signal that passes between Elisha and Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat is one of the more godly kings. And he knows when the word of the Lord is with somebody. Elisha recognizes Jehoshaphat as such and is willing to deal with him.

Why? Because there's hope. Hear me closely now. Elisha would not so much as see Jehoram if he was by himself, much less the king of Edom.

Why is everything that's about to transpire in this chapter going to take place in terms of blessing and victory? Because of Jehoshaphat. It is classic BBA, blessing by association with Jehoshaphat. God is going to do this for Jehoshaphat's sake, not Jehoram, certainly not the king of Edom.

And it's not even clear that Jehoshaphat ought to be here, ought to be doing this, but God will bless and God will provide because Jehoshaphat is there. It only takes one reasonably well-oriented believer to bless this entire army, this entire group. And it only takes one prophet of God to do more than all the prophets of Baal and of Asherah combined would be able to do.

Now, this is where it gets really fascinating. Verse 15, if it wasn't for Jehoshaphat, I would not

look at you nor see you. Now, you know the whole thing about oriental kings and if you insult me off with his head, who is the dominant figure and who is the submissive figure here? Who is it that decides who is going to be seen and not seen? The king says, I tip the scepter, Esther, and you can come in and if I don't tip the scepter, you're executed.

Right? This is the way of the ancient Near Eastern kings. But Elisha speaks with the authority of the Lord God and he says, look, it's not a matter of you calling to me. And by the way, they didn't call for Elisha and have him come up.

And if they did, he didn't come. The kings came down to Elisha and Elisha said, I would not give you an audience in my presence if it were not for Jehoshaphat. He's the only reason you got in.

So this is significant. When the Lord is on your side and you are representing him, he is with you. And it is his presence that dictates who's seeing whom.

But now, bring me a musician. I love this. Bring me, this is not just any old musician.

This is not a flautist. This is not the little drummer boy. This is not a horn blower.

This word specifically means a player of stringed instruments. Bring me a harpist. Bring me a guitar player.

Bring me somebody who can play an instrument of strings. What? What? Is this, are they right that, you know, playing a stringed instrument of stringed instruments, you know, prophets had to get into some kind of a trance and mystical, you know, music, you know, helps him get in the mood. And he's going to, you know, wander off somewhere mentally with this music playing.

And he can't really figure out what God is saying unless he's got a musician playing. What's going on here? Here's what's going on. I will refer you back without going there to the days of Saul when he was troubled and he was in a trance.

He was in a trance. The music of strings would come in. He would be refreshed and restored.

You remember that? This, why did it refresh and restore him? Was it just pleasant noises? Well, hold that, hold the answer to that question for just a moment. That of course is back in 1 Samuel chapter 16. The advice given to Saul was, seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp.

It shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you and you shall be well. And later on in the chapter, so it was whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul. When Saul was being tested, when Saul was being challenged by God to change his ways and it distressed him, this is a spirit from God.

And he's in distress because he's in conflict with God. When you're not in conflict with God, the spirit of God enables and empowers and encourages and strengthens you. When you are contrary to God, that same spirit creates distress.

God sends the spirit, which is the gift to the kings of Israel, and every time the spirit comes, Saul goes into distress because his heart is not in harmony with God. What is designed to be a blessing becomes a curse when you are contrary to God. Here's what's real interesting, and write this reference down.

1 Chronicles 25 verse 1. David and the captains of the army separated for service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, to prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. 1 Chronicles 25.1. David, the same David that laid this tribute on the king of Moab, also provided for Bible class via musicians. The sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun were detailed to prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and percussion, to prophesy.

Now, bring me a musician, Elisha says. Then it happened, after the musician played, I think your text says when the musician played, the hand of the Lord came upon him, and he said. It happened when the musician played.

Now, what would he play? Bring me a banjo picker. Bring me a harpist. Bring me a stringed instrument player.

He's going to be one of the sons of Heman, or Asaph, or Jeduthun. What's in his repertoire? As he's looking around at people that haven't had water for seven days, what song should I pick? How Dry I Am, perhaps? What would he pick? Turn in your Bible quickly to Psalm 107. Psalm 107.

I don't know this for a fact, but I'm pretty sure this is the tune. This is the lyric. This is the song that could have been played.

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

Have these armies not been gathered? And are they not hoping for redemption and victory, and the Lord to be with them? They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way. They found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city for a dwelling place. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.

For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness. Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and irons, because they rebelled against the words of the Lord, and despised the counsel of the Most High, He brought down their heart with labor. They fell down, and there was none to help.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distress. He

brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their chains in pieces. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.

While they're waiting for the answer from Elisha, what do they have to listen to? I would submit Elisha called this guy, play me a little Psalm 107. So the guy's playing David's tune, and he's singing these words that are perhaps from David himself, perhaps from another psalmist, it's not a dedicated psalm. But all of these kings are standing there listening to the prophecy via stringed instrument music, and they've got to wait.

They're not going to get the answer until the tune finishes. Verse 17, fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities were afflicted. Their souls abhorred all manner of provision, and they drew near to the gates of death.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them and delivered them from their destruction. What did Jehoshaphat just say? Who's got the word of the Lord? Elisha.

All that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and His wonderful works to the children of men. Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing. Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on the great waters, they see the works of the Lord, His wonders in the deep.

His command raises the stormy wind, which lifts the waves of the sea. They mount up to heavens. They go down again to the depths.

Their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, stagger like a drunken man at their wit's end. They cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses.

He calms the storm so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet, so He guides them to their desired haven. All that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.

Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the company of the leaders, the elders." Now watch. I'm in Psalm 107, verse 33. He turns rivers into a wilderness, and water springs into dry ground, a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

He turns a wilderness into pools of water, and dry land into water springs. There He makes the hungry dwell, that they may establish a city for a dwelling place, and sow fields and plant vineyards, that they may yield a fruitful harvest. He blesses them, and they multiply greatly, and He does not let their cattle decrease.

When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow, He pours contempt on princes, and causes them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no

way. Yet He sets the poor on high. Who has dictated the terms of meeting here? Who has decided that He will see whom? It's the poor prophet.

Not the honored royal prophet, but the one who happens to be in the baggage train down there, that they had to go down and find. He sets the poor on high, far from affliction, and makes their families like a flock. The righteous see it and rejoice.

Jehoshaphat recognized Elisha, and was glad to see him. Iniquity stops its mouth. Whoever is wise will observe these things, and they will understand the loving kindness of the Lord.

Wouldn't this be a great song for this occasion? I'm going to say this is the one the guy sang. And they have to listen to the whole thing, every stanza. Water in the wilderness, for those who acknowledge the Lord.

Wilderness instead of water, for those who don't. Now, back in 2 Kings 3, what happens? Bring me a musician. Then it happened, when the musicians played, the hand of the Lord came upon him, and he said, Thus says the Lord, make this valley full of ditches, full of cisterns, full of holes that can hold water.

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. God is going to make water in the wilderness. Now, who's the last guy to do this? And this is where we're going to close for tonight.

Who's the last guy to solve a big lack of water issue? Elisha has just done this in Jericho, right? On a large scale, who's the last guy to do it? Elijah. In the days of Ahab, there shall be no rain, except by my word. And after a while he gave the word, and there was rain, right? And everybody saw the rain.

The rain came down, washed in the gullies, and filled the wadis, and pools, and everybody was happy, the drought is over, right? Elisha says God's going to do this, but this time you're not going to see the rain, and you're not going to feel the wind. The water is just going to appear from a seemingly invisible source. What's the difference in the provision, and the action, and the miraculous intervention of God in the Old Testament, and God's provision, and influence, and presence in our day? We talked about Elijah versus Elisha.

We talked about before Christ and after Christ. We talked about the law and grace, right? Elisha is the prophet that foreshadows all of the good things that come through Jesus Christ, and we live in that time. And when the freshen of grace from above fills our valley with water, the means are not visible.

The influence, and presence, and power of the Holy Spirit is invisible. We're not marked out by the Shekinah. We're not marked out by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire.

We don't have these overt, miraculous interventions of God that you have in the Old Testament

day under the law. What do we have? It's the same level of provision, but it's sources, and it's origins, and it's means, and mechanism are invisible. And so Elisha says, by way of typology for us, you shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain, yet the valley will be filled with water.

God moves in much more subtle and invisible ways in our age, but the end result is just as powerful, just as meaningful. You, your cattle, and your animals may drink. This is a simple matter in the sight of the Lord.

And, oh, coincidentally, He'll also deliver the Moabites into your hand, which is the whole purpose of the expedition. You didn't even ask about it. You've got an immediate problem.

You can't even see your goal. But not only is God going to water you, and your flocks, and your men, rather, but you're going to win this battle. You're going to win this war.

Well, we have a lot more to say about this, but what is the purpose of stopping these people short of their objective and short of their goal? To turn eyes and attention to the Word of the Lord. The Word of the Lord comes from the man of God, who Jehoshaphat says has that Word, and he in turn brings in a musician. Notice Elisha doesn't preach a long sermon here.

He brings in a musician, and this is a more subtle way of making the point. This son of Asaph, this son of Jedathan or of Heman, with his repertoire, music in Israel wasn't elevator accompaniment. It was the psalter.

It was the words of David and the other psalmists set to music, which is the spoonful of sugar that helps the medicine to go down. And it forces them to pause. It forces them to reflect.

It forces them to listen. It gives them an occasion to accept a message that they might immediately reject were it delivered, preached by the prophet. Instead, it is sung by the musician.

But the message is there nevertheless. And look at what Elisha says immediately afterward. God is going to make water in the wilderness for you.

Why? Only because of Jehoshaphat. I wouldn't even be talking to you if he wasn't here. But Jehoshaphat's participation is going to bless the whole endeavor.

Not just the provision, but accomplishing the objective. It's really something, isn't it? How far will the Lord go to provide for us and bless us when we are in harmony with his will and sensitive to his word? It's a long, long way. And its effects and its blessings and benefits radiate outward from us even to the wholly undeserving.

That's how powerful the presence of Christ is in your life and in my life in this age today. The days of Elisha illustrate and manifest this truth in ways that you don't see in Elijah's ministry. Elijah's ministry reflects what God was doing in Israel.

Elisha, in so many ways, reflects what God is doing with us in the preview form of the kingdom.

It's something he will someday do for Israel in the millennial kingdom. Well, we've got to break off here.

We'll close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of the word and how powerfully it communicates to us. We thank you for the gift of music and the wonderful lyrics that you have given to so many wonderful hymn writers and poets whose sentiments have been expressed in our hymnal.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress your truth on our hearts, that we will be ever sensitive to our opportunities, that we will be ready when testing comes, as we know it will, that we can pass those tests. And if there is any wicked way in us, we want those things to be exposed where we can deal with them. And by your grace and through your power, remedy them so that our lives reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus.

And we pray these things in his name. Amen.