

of Elijah.”

ELISHA

religious system that combined reverence for Jehovah and certain aspects of the true religion with elements of the false religions that surrounded Israel (including the worship of images) and a lowering of religious and moral standards. This apostasy continued through King Ahab who introduced

One of the great prophets and miracle-workers of the Bible was Elisha. His ministry after the translation of his master Elijah covered over fifty years, and was marked by mighty evidences of the power of faith in God. Let us let our faith grow as we study what Elisha did.

Lesson #3:
A Miraculous Victory

Scripture:
II Kings 3

Key Verse:
II Kings 3:11
“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

The Great Things That

Hath Done

Elisha had many dealings with kings. II Kings 3 begins by informing us that Jehoram the son of the notorious Ahab was king of Israel at the time of Elisha’s enduement with Holy Spirit power. King Jehoram’s brother Ahaziah had assumed the throne when their father died (I Kings 22), but reigned only a short time (II Kings 1). King Ahaziah was a Baal-worshipper like his father and mother, and he “*provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel*” (I Kings 22:53). His untimely death came as a judgment from God (II Kings 1:16). Jehoram took the throne when Ahaziah died, and he did curb the idolatry of Ahab’s royal family somewhat.

“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.” (II Kings 3:2)

Notice that he did not *destroy* his family’s idol, but only put it away. Notice in verse 3 that the worship of golden calves that King Jeroboam had instituted in Israel some 75 years before (I Kings 12) was continued by Jehoram. Perhaps the judgment of God on his father and brother for Baal-worship had given the new king some concerns about continuing in their path about this one matter, but Jehoram was an idol-worshipper nevertheless.

I. Problems (II Kings 3:1-14)

- A. Apostasy.
The dictionary defines “apostasy” as “total desertion of, or departure from, one’s principles.” In religion it means falling away from the true faith. The kings of Israel had led their nation into apostasy from the very first one after the division of the kingdom. After the death of King Solomon, the kingdom was divided between “*Israel*” in the north and “*Judah*” in the south (See I Kings 12). The first king of the northern kingdom, Jeroboam, organized a new

II Kings 8:4

Baal-worship to the unsavory mix. God’s people had departed from the truth. King Jehoram, although not as radical as his father and brother, was an apostate king.
B. Compromise.
During Ahaziah’s reign, the Moabites had rebelled against Israelite control (vs. 4-6). Now Jehoram decided to fix this problem and bring them back into line. His plan included getting Judah to join in the effort so that Moab could be invaded from the southwest instead of from the north in a surprise move (vs. 7-8). King Jehoshaphat of Judah was a good man devoted to the true God, but he already had a long record of helping his apostate neighbors to the north. When King Ahab (who “*did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him*”—I Kings 16:30) asked Jehoshaphat to help him take Ramoth-gilead back from the Syrians, the king of Judah replied, “*I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses*” (See I Kings 22). But Jehoshaphat was *not* as Ahab was. Ahab was an apostate, and Jehoshaphat was a true believer in the true God, and a man committed to the truth of God’s Word. Nevertheless he joined with Ahab in this venture, and was rebuked by the prophets for doing so (See II Chronicles 19:1-2). Believers are not supposed to be “*unequally yoked together*” with unbelievers (Read II Corinthians 6:14-18). It is wicked spiritual compromise for an orthodox Christian to call an apostate religious teacher a brother in Christ (See John 8:34-47). After Ahab’s death, Jehoshaphat joined with Ahaziah in another venture that was rebuked by prophets and judged by God (See II Chronicles 20:35-37). King Jehoshaphat’s coziness with the apostate ruling family of Israel went farther than public acts. His son Jehoram (possibly

named after
Ahab's son by
the same name
or vice versa)
married
Athaliah the
daughter of
Ahab, and they
had a son they
named
Ahaziah after
her brother
(See II Kings
8:25-27).
Religious
compromise is
bad news both
in the church
and in the
family.

C. Rebuke.
An alliance
was formed
between
Jehoram of
Israel,
Jehoshaphat of
Judah, and the
king of Edom
who was a
vassal

Notes:

of the king of Judah and whose territory was needed for the invasion. But things didn't go very well. The army ran out of water after seven days of marching toward Moab (v. 9). The apostate was quick to blame God for the situation (v. 10). The compromiser however wanted to consult with a prophet (v. 11). For some reason, Elisha was with the army and a servant of Jehoram suggested that they find him (vs. 11-12). Notice that Elisha was still known merely as Elijah's personal servant. This was very early in his ministry and he was far from famous at this time. Although not famous, Elisha was the Lord's servant and he had gone with the army because God apparently was telling him he would be needed. Read the sharp rebuke Elisha gave the apostate in verse 13, and see this wicked man's arrogant response. A true man of God who is doing what he ought to do will not give his endorsement to an apostate. Instead he will rebuke him.

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”
(Ephesians 5:11)

An obedient servant of God will not join a church or denomination that wavers from the doctrines of the Gospel. A preacher who is doing right will not join in an evangelistic crusade with apostate pastors (as is often done today). A man who is true to God will not join any movement that recognizes apostates as Christian brothers. Notice however that Elisha did express kinship with Jehoshaphat, the compromiser (v. 14). You don't treat a compromiser as an apostate. Jehoshaphat should not have yoked up with Jehoram, but Elisha could still fellowship and help Jehoshaphat. Sometimes the influence of a spiritually separated believer can turn a compromiser from his error. But an apostate or an unbeliever is to be treated as a subject for evangelism, not as a fellow Christian. The truth is so important that we are to govern our expressions of love by the dictates of the truth (Read II John with this thought in mind).

**II. Faith
(II Kings 3:15-20)**

Perhaps Elisha was so incensed at the presence of Jehoram in this situation that he needed to be calmed down in order to receive a message from God. For this or some other reason, music was played for the prophet until the Lord's hand came upon him (v. 15). Then Elisha talked of miracles:

a miraculous supply of water and a miraculous defeat of the enemy. Actually the victory they wanted was to come at least partly *because* of the difficulty they had encountered. It is very exciting to work with God. He regularly shows us that He is in control of everything, and He often surprises us with what He does. The key to seeing God work is faith. Notice that water was going to come in a mysterious and miraculous way, but the kings were supposed to do something to prepare for the miracle (vs. 16-20). They were to dig ditches to hold the water, and then God would send water down through the valley to fill the ditches. Often God wants us to do something before He will do something (See II Kings 4:1-7, which we will study next). Doing our part is a way of exercising faith. If you find a promise in the Bible that applies to your problem, believe it and act on it. Even if you doubt almost as much as you believe, still act as if you believed (Read Mark 9:23-24). God *will* keep His promises. Usually our part in a conditional promise is to believe it and act as if we do.

When the water came into the ditches, the Moabites saw the red rising sun reflected in the pools and thought that it was blood. This mistake prompted them to run unguardedly into the valley to be slaughtered. The victory came just as God through Elisha said it would, but with some sadness. The results of this victory were two:

- A. God's faithfulness was again proven. It happened just as He had said it would. Compare vs. 17-19 with vs. 20-25.
- B. God's way was again vindicated. The unhappy ending to the story came as a result of the compromise committed (vs. 26-27). How could idol-worshipping Jehoram have God's blessing in a battle against idol-worshipping Mesha? How could a king who compromised his stand against false religion have God's blessing against those who trusted in a false religion? The reason for the victory was faith, because faith pleases God (Hebrews 11:1-6). The reason for the sad ending was disobedience, because God's best never results from our doing things our own way.

III. Results (II Kings 3:21-27)