

- The water served a two-fold purpose – (i) the thirst of men and animals of the coalition was relieved; (ii) it was also the means of confusion and defeat to the Moabites. As the Moabites came to fight against Israel, the early morning sun shining on the water made it appear as red as blood. The Moabites thought it was blood, and they assumed from the three kings fighting and killing each other (cf Judg 7:22; 1 Sam 14:20). But in reality, it was a trick of the eyes. It was the rising sun reflecting on the pools that made them appear blood red. Thus, expecting no opposition, the Moabites left the safety of their fortresses on the high ground. The Moabites were exposed on the open plains and the allied armies of Israel, Judah and Edom routed the Moabites as Elisha had predicted. God used the ditches in a completely unexpected way to supply their need and to defeat their enemies.
- After defeating the Moabites, Israel entered the land of Moab and destroyed their cities so that the Moabites would not prosper in this area anymore. Likewise, there needs to be a complete driving out of sin, leaving no opportunity for sin to be raised up in our lives again (Matt 18:8-9). But there was a difference in one place: Kir-haraseth. Kir-haraseth stood on an easily defended hill and the allied armies could not easily reduce it (Isa 16:7-11; Jer 48:36). This is so true of us - it is difficult to drive out sin in our lives. But be sure that anything not destroyed will eventually rear its ugly head again.
- In v26-27 we see two attempts by the king of Moab to escape total defeat.
 - Mesha attempted to break through to the king of Edom. Apparently Mesha either assumed he could induce Edom to turn against Israel and Judah or he assumed this was the weakest link in the three-nation alliance. He was badly mistaken and his attempt failed.
 - The Moabite king offered his firstborn son, the heir to his throne, as a human sacrifice to his god Chemosh on top of the city wall, with the hope that his god would save the Moabites.
- The King of Moab did this to appease his pagan god and to show to his own people his determination to prevent defeat. Such a practice was forbidden in the Law (Lev 18:21). On the Moabite stone, Mesha claimed to have been delivered from the Israelites by his god Chemosh on this day. Sadly it did appear to be effective, but only because of the incomplete obedience of the 3 kings. *And there was a great indignation against Israel....*
 - Apparently, the Israelites became so terrified of what they saw and so convinced that Moab's god might take vengeance on them that they gave up the siege.
 - It is most likely that the armies of Israel and Judah were so disgusted and sickened with this senseless human sacrifice, that they decided to lift the siege and returned to their homes.
- Later the Moabites would attack Judah & Israel (13:20; 24:2). Had Elisha's instructions been carried out, these later attacks may have been avoided.

2 Kings 3 – Victory Over Moab

- The Moabite Stone (Mesha Stele) provides the historical background and confirms many events and details of 2 Kings 3.

1. Jehoram's Evil Reign (3:1-3)

- Ahaziah died due to a freak fall, and since he had no sons, Jehoram the second son of Ahab or Ahaziah's brother came to the throne. Jehoram was the 9th consecutive evil king over the northern kingdom, which never had a godly king. Like Ahab his father, Jehoram was also evil.
 - Jehoram was not as bad as his father and mother had been. He put away the sacred pillar of Baal & abolished its worship.
 - But Jehoram clung to the sins of Jeroboam in perpetuating the false worship of Yahweh under the calf images.
 Elisha clearly wasn't impressed with Jehoram.

2. The Moabite Rebellion (3:4-10)

- Taking advantage of the temporary military weakness following Israel's defeat at Ramoth Gilead and the nation's distraction over the death of King Ahab, Moab under King Mesha rebelled against Israel, evidently refusing to render the yearly tribute to Israel. Jehoram therefore prepared to attack Moab. Like Ahaziah, Jehoram did not seek the Lord's mind on this matter. Instead, he trusted in his own military alliances. Jehoram was seeking victory through strategic planning and military might, not by trusting in the Lord. His theory was that God fights on the side which has the largest artillery, so he did not need God. Ps 33:16-18; Jer 10:23 - in all of our plans and preparations, we should always seek the Lord.
- As his father before him had done, Jehoram enlisted the assistance of Jehoshaphat against a common enemy. Moab was also a threat to the kingdom of Judah (2 Chron 20:1). Jehoshaphat was the godly king of Judah (1 Kings 22:41-43). Jehoshaphat's son (also Jehoram) was married to Jehoram of Israel's sister, Athaliah (2 Chron 18:1; 2 Kings 8:18). Jehoshaphat assured Jehoram that all his forces were at his disposal. It was an unwise decision (cf 2 Chron 19:2). An alliance with ungodliness always leads to trouble.
- There are only 2 ways to invade Moab: cross the Jordan above the Dead Sea to enter from the north, or go around the southern end of the Dead Sea and advance through the desert of Edom to enter from the south. The 2nd route was longer and more difficult, but the allied kings decided on this strategy. That accounts for part of Jehoram's need to secure Jehoshaphat's help, as "*the way through the wilderness of Edom*" required Israel's army to march through Judah. Further, Edom at this time, was Judah's vassal (1 Kings 22:47; 2 Sam 8:14).

- The combined armies of Judah, Israel and Edom had to travel a considerable distance to attack Moab from the south. But it appears their journey was ill planned, as they exhausted their water supply and the oases where they had expected to find water were dry. The situation became so desperate that Jehoram the king of Israel blamed the Lord for the disaster. The three kings had made their battle plans without consulting the Lord, and got themselves into a bad situation. And yet Jehoram had the nerve to blame God for their predicament! What do you do when you experience a “no water” situation?
 - Blame God and act in unbelief. This is the typical response of the man who ignores God before trouble comes and then blames Him once it does come.
 - Turn to God in prayer and commit your ways to Him - Phil 4:6-7.
 Problems can either make you bitter or better. It all depends upon your attitude towards the Lord.

3. Elisha’s Rebuke & Prophecy of Victory (3:11-19)

- In their dire predicament, Jehoshaphat’s counsel was to find a prophet of God to discern the will of God (cf 1 Kings 22:7). In spite of all their troops, these three kings with their military muscles and strategy were brought to nothing and finally turned to God’s prophet that they might find God’s answer. Always ask God before you take action.
- The very fact that Elisha was present in the wilderness with these armies is indicative of God’s faithfulness & sovereignty. God had provided for the needs of His people BEFORE they even had needs for which to pray (Mt 6:8). Man plans, but it is the Lord who prepares and establishes our steps (Prov 16:9). Significantly, Elisha was known for two simple but profoundly important characteristics that marked him off as a man of God.
 - He was known as one who “*poured water on the hands of Elijah*”. This is a wonderful title for any servant of God. Elisha was the humble servant of Elijah.
 - He had the gift of prophecy, “*The word of the LORD is with him.*” Jehoshaphat knew that Elisha was a man who meant business with God and could be counted on to give God’s Word, the truth.
- So the 3 kings went to see Elisha. Jehoram’s humility in seeking instead of summoning Elisha did not save him from rebuke.
 - “*What have I to do with thee?*” Elisha was saying, what do we have in common, why have you, an idolater, a rejecter of the commandments of God come to me?
 - “*Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother*” is a reference to Jehoram’s parents, Ahab and Jezebel. Elisha was telling Jehoram to be consistent. They had been rejecting God & following after their idols, so why run to God now that they were in big trouble?

- Truly the spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha. Elisha’s allegiance was to the Lord regardless of a person’s position, power, or wealth. Because he took God seriously and was willing to trust the Lord regardless of the outcome, he could stand fearlessly and declare the truth (Prov 28:1). Nevertheless, Elisha conceded to help for the sake of Jehoshaphat, the godly king of Judah. He sternly rebuked Jehoram while tacitly rebuking Jehoshaphat.
 - To Jehoram, Elisha was expressing the biblical concept of Isaiah 59:1-2.
 - To Jehoshaphat, there is the implied rebuke. Jehoshaphat’s very presence in this alliance was presumptive disobedience. Because Jehoshaphat was a godly king who sought the Lord, the Lord spared him in this alliance with Jehoram. This is pure grace (Psalm 143:1-2). God in His grace sometimes allows His blessings for obedience to spill over to those who are less worthy (cf 1 Cor 7:14).
- Elisha called for a minstrel or musician before giving his prophetic word. It may be that the purpose of music was to help Elisha collect his thoughts, that he might be quieted before God and thus to be brought to a mood conducive for God to reveal to him His will (cf 1 Sam 16:16). When the minstrel played, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha, and instructed him in what to say.
 - The allied armies were to dig ditches or trenches in the valley and God would miraculously fill them with water for them and their cattle. Water would be provided, but without the sound of wind or the presence of rain. God would provide water for these three kings and their armies in a very unusual way in order to emphasize His ability to give them the victory over the Moabites. God promised to send water to the valley, but they had to dig the ditches to catch what God would provide. They have to dig the trenches BEFORE the water comes. This will be an act of faith. God often gives us a promise and then He calls upon us to act on that promise BEFORE we are able to see the fulfillment of the promise.
 - God would give the allied armies victory over the Moabites. They were also to destroy every Moab city and virtually cripple the nation of Moab.

4. Victory over Moab (3:20-27)

- The prophecy was fulfilled exactly as Elijah had prophesied. We are not told the source of the water — only that it came *by way of Edom*. It seems that God sent an intense downpour in the nearby mountains, and this caused a flash flood through the desert of Edom. The result was that the ditches which had been dug by the armies of Israel and Judah were filled with water. The message was clear – God’s reigns and Elisha is His prophet! The water was available only because they were obedient to dig the ditches. If Israel and Judah had disobeyed God’s word and failed to dig the ditches, then God’s blessing would have passed them by. The measure of water available to these thirsty men was directly connected to how faithful they were to dig the ditches.