

2 Kings 3-4 Chapter Study

INTRO

I. Ahaziah (Israel) Chs. 1-2

Ahaziah, the son of Ahab & Jezebel, only reigned for 2 years.

He died from complications he suffered in a fall.

Since he had no son, his brother Jehoram/Joram took his place.

II. Jehoram/Joram (Israel) 3:1-8:15

A. Moab Rebels 3:1-27

¹ Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned 12 years. ² And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not like his father and mother; for he put away the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had made. ³ Nevertheless he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.

Jehoram removed the Phoenician gods his mother Jezebel had brought & went back to the idols Jeroboam, the 1st king of Israel had established.

Remember, Jeroboam feared that if his people continued to travel to the temple in Jerusalem to worship Yahweh, after a couple generations, they'd regret having broken away from Judah and would want to reunite under David's dynasty.

So he made 2 golden calves & said they were representatives of Yahweh. He set one in Bethel at the southern end of Israel, and the other in the north at Dan.

Then he set up a new priesthood. His aim was to make the religious devotion of the people *easier*.

It worked, and the people of Israel began to worship the golden calves.

This is what Jehoram returned the nation to by sweeping away the new idols of Baal & Asherah his mother had brought with her from Phoenicia.

⁴ Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheepbreeder, and he regularly paid the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. ⁵ But it happened, when Ahab died, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

Jehoram's grandfather Omri had conquered the Moabites & made them into a vassal state.

Each year they had to send a massive amount of tribute to Israel.

But 1:1 tells us during the reign of Ahaziah, Moab rebelled.

But Ahaziah was too weak to do anything about it.

Jehoram decided to re-assert control over the rebellious Moabites

⁶ So King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel. ⁷ Then he went and sent to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, saying, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?" And he said, "I will go up; I am as you are, my

people as your people, my horses as your horses.”⁸ Then he said, “Which way shall we go up?” And he answered, “By way of the Wilderness of Edom.”

Just as *Moab* was a vassal of *Israel*, *Edom* was the vassal of *Judah*.

Jehoram knew Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah would be concerned that the Moabite rebellion might encourage the Edomites to follow their example. So he asked Jehoshaphat to join him in putting down the revolt. Their route of attack would be from the South, *through* the region of Edom. As they made their way North, Jehoshaphat *conscripted* the Edomites to join the expedition.

What’s sad, is to see how even though Jehoshaphat was a good king & godly man, he *kept getting* sucked into alliances with ungodly rulers.

He’d already gone to war with Ahab against the Syrians ---
And he entered into an economic treaty with Ahaziah.

When rebuked by one of the prophets, he terminated the agreement.
But here he is entering *yet another* alliance with Jehoram!

Let’s learn from Jehoshaphat here. → Be careful who you enter into agreements with.

We live in the midst of a fallen world, so we’re going to by necessity rub shoulders with the lost & wicked – but we don’t have to link arms with them!

We ought to be kind to & gentle with the lost, but that doesn’t mean we ought to join with them in binding agreements.

Paul makes it clear in writing to the Corinthians when he says we ought not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

He’s referring to legal & ethical entanglements that tie our fortunes & reputation to those who do not share our worldview & values.

Jehoshaphat was a godly king, but he was *confused* on how his dependence on God ought to affect his politics.

That seems to be a perennial problem for believers.

⁹ So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom, and they marched on that roundabout route 7 days; and there was no water for the army, nor for the animals that followed them. ¹⁰ And the king of Israel said, “Alas! For the LORD has called these 3 kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.”

The region they passed through is desert & after a week, they ran out of water.

¹¹ But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by 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.” 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.

Years before when Jehoshaphat had joined Ahab in his campaign against the Syrians, he did the same thing – he asked for a prophet to counsel them on whether or not God was with them.

He wanted to know: *Was this a venture of faith or presumption?*
But it would have been wiser if they'd done this *a week earlier* – before they got out in the middle of no where & were in danger of dying of thirst.

It turns out that Elijah's replacement Elisha was along on the march.

13 Then Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What have I to do with you? 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 has called these 3 kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab."

Elisha told Jehoram he had nothing to say *to him*.

If the king wanted to know something let him take it to the *false prophets* of his parents.

Wait a minute - hadn't Jehoram *removed* the idols of Baal & Asherah?

Yes, but as was their habit, their priests & prophets had simply followed the winds of political fortune & conveniently converted to become the priests & prophets of the Golden Calf.

Notice that Jehoram used *Yahweh's name* here, as though the god he honored was Elisha's.

And now that their combined force stands in peril of dying of thirst or being so weak they're defeated in battle, Jehoram has the audacity to blame it all on God!

How typical for the nominally religious!

They claim to believe in God, but the God they believe in is one of their own imagination.

He's a deity who exists to facilitate what they want.

They make their grand plans & launch out & when it all goes south, they blame God for their misfortune.

Can I share a frustration with you? As a pastor for a few years now, I've talked to a lot of people who've endured a personal set back or loss.

They're not members, but they visited once or twice sometime in the past.

This is the only church they really know, so they call asking for counsel to deal with their sorrow.

Many of these people express their *anger* at God for allowing this to happen to them, whatever it is.

Now, I try my best to help them find comfort in a renewed faith in God, but I have to admit inwardly it really bothers me that people who have shown not an ounce of interest in God, in following Him suddenly want to blame Him for what's happened.

It just seems like the height of hypocrisy to me.

They blame Him for their grief because *they want Him to be in control of everything, except them!* They want to be free, but want God to take care of everything & everyone else.

And they get mad when He doesn't seem to be doing His job.

14 And 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. 15 But now bring me a musician." Then it happened, when the musician played, that the

hand of the LORD came upon him.

Why Elisha called for a musician is not made clear, but I wonder if it wasn't to calm him after the *outrage* Jehoram's words caused.

Music is a powerful medium in touching the emotions.

16 And he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'Make this valley full of ditches.' 17 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.' 18 And this is a simple matter in the sight of the LORD; He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand. 19 Also you shall attack every fortified city and every choice city, and shall cut down every good tree, and stop up every spring of water, and ruin every good piece of land with stones."

Elisha foretells both abundance of water & victory over Moab.

20 Now it happened in the morning, when the grain offering was offered, that suddenly water came by way of Edom, and the land was filled with water.

Drenching rains in the highlands of Edom to the south sent streams of water racing through the wadis of the plain where the army was camped.

21 And when all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, all who were able to bear arms and older were gathered; and they stood at the border.

In the early years of the revolt, Mesha had prepared defenses along Moab's *northern* border, expecting an invasion from that direction.

His southern border seemed secure because it faced a long expanse of desert.

This invasion from the south was unexpected.

There was only one way to meet it → Arm as many men as possible & rush south to face the threat – but without the defenses of fortified cities.

22 Then they rose up early in the morning, and the sun was shining on 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 have surely struck swords and have killed one another; now therefore, Moab, to the spoil!"

The water that replenished Israel stood in pools in the space between the 2 armies.

The rising sun reflected off the water & appeared as blood.

Thinking the Jewish & Edomite collusion had fallen apart & they had set to fighting one another, the Moabites assumed mopping up the survivors would be easy, the spoils of war *waiting* – so without command or direction, they charged.

24 So when they came to the camp of Israel, Israel rose up and attacked the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they entered their land, killing the Moabites. 25 Then they destroyed the cities, and each man threw a stone on every good piece of land and filled it; and they stopped up all the springs of water and cut down all the good trees. But they left the stones of Kir Haraseth intact. However the

slingers surrounded and attacked it.

This was the chief city of Moab.

The Israelites weren't able to subdue it, though they did inflict great damage to it.

26 And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him 700 men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not.

This was a ploy to capture one of the leaders of the coalition, then use him to barter for peace.

The ploy didn't work.

27 Then he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall; and there was great indignation against Israel. So they departed from him and returned to their own land.

Mesha grew so frantic in his attempts to defend Kir Haraseth, he made a public offering of his son.

It infuriated the Moabites & they blamed Israel for driving their king to this point that the crown prince would be done in this way.

The *Israelites* realized this kind of fanaticism would be hard to defeat & costly in terms of lives, so they withdrew.

As the final months of WWII stretched on in the Pacific, the US command grew increasingly concerned about the cost of defeating Japan.

They just would **NOT** give up; their warrior culture didn't permit surrender.

It was thought that we'd have to invade the Japanese mainland.

And if *Iwo Jima* was any indication of how fiercely the Japanese would fight, the cost in human lives was staggering!

American bombers had already fire-bombed Japan & hundreds of thousands had died the most agonizing, torturous deaths! But Japan refused to surrender.

That's why the president finally decided to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima & Nagasaki.

The Japanese leadership had to realize they could not win & there was nothing to gain by refusing to surrender.

As hideous as the atomic holocaust was, historians are agreed far fewer died than *would have* if we'd invaded Japan, on **BOTH** sides!

Jehoram & Jehoshaphat broke off the siege of Moab when they realized the cost of bringing Mesha to heel would be too great.

Besides, they'd reduced the countryside to ruins.

It would take all of the Moabites energy just to rebuild.

B. Elisha 4:1-8:15

Now we get some stories from the life of the prophet Elisha who'd taken on Elijah's mantle as the premier prophet in Israel.

1. Elisha & the widow 4:1-7

1 A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know

that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves.”

The life of a widow was always a precarious situation in the ancient world.

She depended on her children for support & if she had none, she was reduced to begging.

This woman was the widow of one of the prophets. She took her need to Elisha because he was recognized as being their spiritual leader.

When the man died, he left his family in debt.

And as the law of Moses said, when someone fell into debt, they could be taken into temporary servitude until the debt was paid off.

But that service could last for no more than 7 years.

This widow's debt was enough that it would mean her 2 sons would be taken into the service of the creditor, leaving her in an even worse situation!

² So Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” And she said, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil.” ³ Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; do not gather just a few. ⁴ And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones.” ⁵ So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought *the vessels* to her; and she poured *it* out. ⁶ Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.” And he said to her, “*There is not another vessel.*” So the oil ceased. ⁷ Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you *and your sons live on the rest.*”

A simple, practical miracle of provision.

Elisha asked her, “What do you have?”

Being in the plight she was, it would have been easy for her to only remark on what she *didn't* have.

That's what we tend to do when things are looking bleak.

We're so concerned about the problem or the need we don't see the potential.

And that's where she begins –

“Your maidservant has nothing in the house . . . but a jar of oil.”

Elisha then told her to gather as many empty vessels as she could, even borrowing them from neighbors.

As many as she would gather, God would fill with oil from what she had.

Olive oil was a staple of their diet & an important part of daily life.

It was used in many ways, from cooking to lamps & medicine.

Not only was this little family provided for, but so were all those who bought from them.

→ This is such a great picture of how God wants to use us.

We don't have to have some special skill or great gift to be used by God in a great way.

We just bring Him what we have and offer that to Him.
As we pour ourselves out, He blesses it & turns it into blessing, both for us & others.
And here's the thing – as long as we keep pouring, He'll keep blessing.

2. Elisha raises a dead son 4:8-37

⁸ Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food. So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food.

Shunem was near the city of Jezreel. This was Elijah's old stomping grounds.

And what we're about to read sounds very much like something that happened *during* Elijah's time.

⁹ And she said to her husband, "Look now, I know that this *is* a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly. ¹⁰ Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there."

There were not hotels, travelers depended on the hospitality of strangers.

This woman persuaded her husband to set aside a guest room for Elisha so that whenever he was in the area, he could have a place to stay.

¹¹ And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there. ¹² Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite woman." When he had called her, she stood before him. ¹³ And he said to him, "Say now to her, 'Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What *can I* do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?' " She answered, "I dwell among my own people." ¹⁴ So he said, "What then *is* to be done for her?" And Gehazi answered, "Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old."

Elisha wanted to know if the remarkable hospitality she'd shown was really an appeal for help; like maybe she was ambitious to move higher up in society?? She replied she had no such desire.

All of this dialog was carried on through Elisha's servant Gehazi who acted as a go-between.

Elisha was a single man, staying in a room in her home.

He didn't want to give anyone a cause to think there was anything inappropriate going on between them so he had his servant act as messenger.

Aside: This is a solid principle for God's servants & specially leaders.

Be careful about doing anything that would give room for people jumping to conclusions.

When the woman didn't suggest something Elisha could do for her, he asked

Gehazi what *he* thought – what could they do to show her their appreciation?

Gehazi then told Elisha she & her husband had no son.

15 So he said, “Call her.” When he had called her, she stood in the doorway.

Again, care is taken to not give a wrong appearance. She didn't enter the room; she stood in the doorway where the neighbors could easily see her.

16 Then he said, “About this time next year you shall embrace a son.” And she said, “No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!”

This was such a great but stalled desire, when Elisha said it, she told him it wasn't nice to jest like this.

But he wasn't jesting.

17 But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her. 18 And the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. 19 And he said to his father, “My head, my head!” So he said to a servant, “Carry him to his mother.” 20 When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

This is so sad! They have a son long after they'd given up hope, then he died when still a lad.

It sounds like it was a brain tumor.

21 And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out. 22 Then she called to her husband, and said, “Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back.” 23 So he said, “Why are you going to him today? *It is* neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath.” And she said, “*It is well.*”

She didn't tell her husband their son had died.

24 Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, “Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you.” 25 And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

Carmel was 15 miles from Shunem.

So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, “Look, the Shunammite woman! 26 Please run now to meet her, and say to her, ‘*Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?*’ ” And she answered, “*It is well.*”

She's *upset* but hides it from Elisha's servant because she doesn't want to be *intercepted* by him.

27 Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away. But the man of God said, “Let her alone; for her soul *is* in deep distress, and the LORD has hidden *it* from me, and has not told me.”

Gehazi knew Elisha was ultra cautious about any appearance of impropriety, so when this woman threw herself at his feet and began pawing at him like this, he tried to break it up.

It was just not acceptable behavior for a woman & man who were not married to touch like this.

Even married couples did not touch in such a familiar way in public. But Elisha knew this woman, she was a wealthy sophisticated lady.

She must be in deep distress if she would behave so, so he told Gehazi to back off.

28 So she said, “Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me’?”

See – she’s upset! It’s not hard to understand her.

Better to remain barren & have no son, than to have one & for him to be taken while still a child!

The pain a parent has at the death of a young child is beyond words.

29 Then he said to Gehazi, “Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child.”³⁰ And the mother of the child said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So he arose and followed her.

Elisha sent Gehazi on an urgent mission; take his staff & go revive the child.

But the mother said that wasn’t good enough –she wanted Elisha to go.

31 Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but *there* was neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him, saying, “The child has not awakened.”³² When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed.³³ He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD.³⁴ And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm.³⁵ He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.³⁶ And he called Gehazi and said, “Call this Shunammite woman.” So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, “Pick up your son.”³⁷ So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out.

This story is similar to what happened with Elijah & the widow of Zarephath.

When her son died, he laid him on his bed and then laid on him until he recovered.

God may have allowed all of this to happen to Elisha so that he’d realize his request to have a double portion of Elijah’s anointing had been answered.

For both Elijah & Elisha; most of the miracles are done quickly & seemingly easily – except in both cases, the raising of these dead sons. Why is this miracle so difficult?

Because the recovery of life is *not like* other miracles.

Both Elijah & Elisha, the most powerful of the prophets, *labored* at it.
But when Jesus raised the dead it was at a word.
The point was that Jesus was *more* than a great prophet; He was Messiah - *The Lord of life*.

3. Purifying poisonous stew 4:38-41

³⁸ And Elisha returned to Gilgal, and *there was* a famine in the land. Now the sons of the prophets *were sitting before him*; and he said to his servant, “Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.” ³⁹ So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and sliced *them* into the pot of stew, though they did not know *what they were*. ⁴⁰ Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, “Man of God, *there is death in the pot!*” And they could not eat *it*. ⁴¹ So he said, “Then bring some flour.” And he put *it* into the pot, and said, “Serve *it* to the people, that they may eat.” And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

The lesson here is – Stay away from wild gourd soup.

4. Feeding a hundred 4:42-44

⁴² Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, 20 loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, “Give *it* to the people, that they may eat.” ⁴³ But his servant said, “What? Shall I set this before 100 men?” He said again, “Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: ‘They shall eat and have *some left over*.’ ” ⁴⁴ So he set *it* before them; and they ate and had *some left over*, according to the word of the LORD.

This was a time of famine and food was scarce.

Yet this man from Baal Shalisha gave his first fruits to God as he was supposed to.

He could have sold this bread & grain and made a killing but he gave it to God because doing what was right was more important to him than making some extra cash.

Notice that he didn't take his offering to Bethel or Dan & offer it to the Golden calf.

He brought it to the one man he knew served God – Elisha.

And Elisha told Gehazi to distribute it to the hungry.

There were a hundred guys Elisha was responsible for and there was no way 20 loaves could feed them.

But it's what God had provided and Elisha trusted God knew what he was doing, so he told Gehazi to stop arguing and get busy.

Sure enough – the bread became enough to feed them all.

This is another lesson for us to offer what we have to God, even when it doesn't seem like much.

He takes the little we have, and turns it into incredible blessing.

[Mr. Callas – my 7th grade Sunday School teacher.]