

# INCIDENTS IN THE EARLY MINISTRY OF ELISHA

**BIBLE TEXT** : II Kings 2:19-25; 3:1-27

LESSON 309 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring" (Isaiah 44:3).

## **BIBLE TEXT** in King James Version

### **2 Kings 2:19-25**

<sup>19</sup> And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city *is* pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water *is* naught, and the ground barren.

<sup>20</sup> And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought *it* to him.

<sup>21</sup> And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren *land*.

<sup>22</sup> So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

<sup>23</sup> And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.

<sup>24</sup> And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

<sup>25</sup> And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

### **2 Kings 3:1-27**

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **I Incidents of Mercy and Judgment**

1. The mercy of God was extended to those who sought that mercy, II Kings 2:19-22;

#### **Exodus 34:6-7**

<sup>6</sup> And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

<sup>7</sup> Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

#### **2 Chronicles 30:9**

<sup>9</sup> For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children *shall find* compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God *is* gracious and merciful, and will not turn away *his face* from you, if ye return unto him.

#### **Psalms 103:17**

<sup>17</sup> But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

#### **Psalms 106:1**

<sup>1</sup> Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2. The judgment of God was sent to those who blasphemed and refused to honour God, II Kings 2:23-25;

#### **Leviticus 26:21-39**

<sup>21</sup> And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins.

<sup>22</sup> I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your *high ways* shall be desolate.

<sup>23</sup> And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me;

<sup>24</sup> Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins.

<sup>25</sup> And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of *my covenant*: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

<sup>26</sup> And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver *you* your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.

<sup>27</sup> And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me;

<sup>28</sup> Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.

<sup>29</sup> And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.

<sup>30</sup> And I will destroy your *high places*, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.

<sup>31</sup> And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

<sup>6</sup> And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!

<sup>11</sup> But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD

<sup>32</sup> And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.

<sup>33</sup> And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

<sup>34</sup> Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye *be* in your enemies' land; *even* then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.

<sup>35</sup> As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.

<sup>36</sup> And upon them that are left *alive* of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth.

<sup>37</sup> And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies.

<sup>38</sup> And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.

<sup>39</sup> And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.

**Psalm 9:16**

<sup>16</sup> The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.

**Zephaniah 3:5**

<sup>5</sup> The just LORD *is* in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.

**Romans 2:2**

<sup>2</sup> But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

## **II Elisha and the Kings of Israel and Judah**

1. Jehoram, king of Israel, made a partial, but not sufficient, reform, II Kings 3:1-3.
2. Israel's state was not a prosperous one, nor a peaceful one, II Kings 3:4, 5;

**Joshua 1:1-9**

<sup>1</sup> Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

<sup>2</sup> Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, *even* to the children of Israel.

<sup>3</sup> Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

<sup>4</sup> From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

<sup>5</sup> There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

<sup>6</sup> Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.

<sup>7</sup> Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it *to* the right hand or *to* the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

<sup>8</sup> This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then

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.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

<sup>16</sup> And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> And this is *but* a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

<sup>9</sup> Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest.

#### Leviticus 20:22-24

<sup>22</sup> Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out.

<sup>23</sup> And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them.

<sup>24</sup> But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I *am* the LORD your God, which have separated you from *other* people.

#### Deuteronomy 6:10-15

<sup>10</sup> And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

<sup>11</sup> And houses full of all good *things*, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;

<sup>12</sup> Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

<sup>13</sup> Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

<sup>14</sup> Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you;

<sup>15</sup> (For the LORD thy God *is* a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

#### Deuteronomy 31:20-21

<sup>20</sup> For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant.

<sup>21</sup> And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear.

#### Judges 2:1-3

<sup>1</sup> And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

<sup>2</sup> And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

<sup>3</sup> Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

#### Judges 2:11-15

<sup>11</sup> And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

<sup>12</sup> And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

<sup>13</sup> And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> 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*:

<sup>23</sup> And they said, This *is* blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.

<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> 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

<sup>14</sup> And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

<sup>15</sup> Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

3. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, compromised with Jehoram and all were brought to trouble, II Kings 3:6-10;

#### 1 Kings 15:16-20

<sup>16</sup> And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

<sup>17</sup> And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

<sup>18</sup> Then Asa took all the silver and the gold *that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants: and king Asa sent them to Benhadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,*

<sup>19</sup> *There is a league between me and thee, and between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; come and break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.*

<sup>20</sup> So Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelbethmaachah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali.

#### 2 Chronicles 18:1-34

<sup>1</sup> Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

<sup>2</sup> And after *certain* years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that *he had with him*, and persuaded him to go up *with him to Ramothgilead*.

<sup>3</sup> And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I *am* as thou *art*, and my people as thy people; and *we will be with thee in the war*.

<sup>4</sup> And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for God will deliver *it into the king's hand*.

<sup>6</sup> But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?*

<sup>7</sup> And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is yet one man, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.*

<sup>8</sup> And the king of Israel called for one *of his* officers, and said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla.

<sup>9</sup> And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah sat either of them on his throne, clothed in *their* robes, and they sat in a void place at the entering in of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

<sup>10</sup> And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the LORD, With these thou shalt push Syria until they be consumed.

<sup>11</sup> And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it into the hand of the king*.

<sup>12</sup> And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spake to him,

from him, and returned to *their own* land.

saying, Behold, the words of the prophets *declare* good to the king with one assent; let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good.

<sup>13</sup> And Micaiah said, *As* the LORD liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.

<sup>14</sup> And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand.

<sup>15</sup> And the king said to him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the LORD?

<sup>16</sup> Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master; let them return *therefore* every man to his house in peace.

<sup>17</sup> And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee *that* he would not prophesy good unto me, but evil?

<sup>18</sup> Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the LORD; I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and *on* his left.

<sup>19</sup> And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner.

<sup>20</sup> Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith?

<sup>21</sup> And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And *the* LORD said, Thou shalt entice *him*, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do *even* so.

<sup>22</sup> Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil against thee.

<sup>23</sup> Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

<sup>24</sup> And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

<sup>25</sup> Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

<sup>26</sup> And say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fellow* in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace.

<sup>27</sup> And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, *then* hath not the LORD spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, all ye people.

<sup>28</sup> So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramothgilead.

<sup>29</sup> And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went to the battle.

<sup>30</sup> Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that *were* with him, saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel.

<sup>31</sup> And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It *is* the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; and God moved them *to depart* from him.

<sup>32</sup> For it came to pass, that, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him.

<sup>33</sup> And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: therefore he

said to his chariot man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

<sup>34</sup> And the battle increased that day: howbeit the king of Israel stayed *himself* up in *his* chariot against the Syrians until the even: and about the time of the sun going down he died.

**2 Chronicles 19:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore *is* wrath upon thee from before the LORD.

**Isaiah 30:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin:

<sup>2</sup> That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!

**Isaiah 31:1**

<sup>1</sup> Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are* many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

4. Jehoshaphat turned to God when in trouble, II Kings 3:11, 12.

5. Elisha announced that he would not compromise with Jehoram, II Kings 3:13, 14.

6. Music is often successfully used when one seeks for and carries out God's will, II Kings 3:15;

**Judges 5:1**

<sup>1</sup> Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

**1 Samuel 16:23**

<sup>23</sup> And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

**2 Chronicles 20:20-22**

<sup>20</sup> And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

<sup>21</sup> And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

<sup>22</sup> And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

7. Deliverance was given by God in a way that proved beyond a doubt that He had sent it, II Kings 3:16-20;

**Judges 7:2**

<sup>2</sup> And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

8. God's deliverance for His people became a snare for the ungodly, II Kings 3:21-27;

**2 Corinthians 2:16**

<sup>16</sup> To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?

**Exodus 14:19**

<sup>19</sup> And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel,

removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

**Exodus 14:20**

<sup>20</sup> And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

**NOTES:**

**God's Mercy and Goodness Our Example**

Elisha had received a doubled portion of the power that had rested upon Elijah, and then had returned to Jericho. At Jericho he faced those who had been witness to the determination he had that would allow nothing to stop him from receiving God's power; and there Elisha had heard their request that a search be made for Elijah. These unbelievers should have known that Elijah was with God in Heaven and not abandoned by Him on some mountaintop or in some valley. They lived in a place of pleasant situation, but they failed to go on to the realm of spiritual privilege that was open before them. They were supposed to be godly, but they were full of doubts and of a disposition that would not seek for the best of God's blessings. Elisha believed and received; he sought after the power of God and came back with it. While it is granted that the call given to these sons of the prophets was not the same as Elisha's, nevertheless, they could have attained to a greater degree of godliness had they had a mind to strive for it. Now, in one of the first tests of Elisha's power, God showed, through His prophet, that He is vitally interested in man's entire welfare.

When Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount, He taught the multitudes that they should love their enemies, do good to those who hated them, bless those who cursed them and pray for the very ones who persecuted them and abused them. This they should do if they would be children of their Father in Heaven, because God the Father is a God of mercy, love, and goodness. These attributes or virtues are extended to, or poured out upon, all mankind in one way or another by God. All who bear the image of their heavenly Father must be like Him, by and through His grace and regenerating power, in these attributes that affect and influence those with whom they associate.

When Elisha arrived at Jericho he found the situation of the city pleasant, but the water supply was poor and the land barren. There are many people in the world who are endowed with talent and intellect who could well be used to bless and benefit the less fortunate of the earth but who fail in this admirable work and calling because they do not possess virtues necessary for success. We all must have the godly virtues of mercy, love, and goodness, to be successful for God and eternity. If one is to retain God's salvation, he must bear these essential fruits of the Spirit. And if one of God's children should fail, he should go to the source of his trouble in order that he might be brought back into conformity with God's will for him. To do this he will turn his eyes inward, to his own heart; and after diligent and prayerful search, he will proceed to tear out any "root of bitterness." Seed of hatred, parasitic growth of iniquity, or stones of unmercifulness that might be newly planted there by the enemy of his soul.

**A Warning of God's Sure Judgment**

But as surely as God's mercy, love, and goodness are manifested toward those upon whom He will have mercy, just so surely will His judgments be poured out on those who refuse that mercy. We do not have a promise that God's judgment will be delayed or postponed, allowing us to continue on in our sin and

rebellion until we reach a mature age. One violation of the infinite law merits eternal punishment. God is just, and all His ways are equal and right; and His utmost desire is that the wicked should come to Him in order that He might give them His mercy, love, and goodness in full measure.

But if the wicked continue in their wickedness, they can expect nothing but God's judgment — a just penalty for their sin and rebellion. And if God, who knows all things and who saw the end at the very beginning, cuts off a sinner in the start of his sinful life, that judgment is just. God knows whether or not the sin of an individual will ever be repented of; and, in the case of the young men who mocked and cursed Him by doing so to His representative, He did not hesitate to send sudden judgment upon them. (**Ecclesiastes 8:11-13** <sup>11</sup> **Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.** <sup>12</sup> **Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:** <sup>13</sup> **But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.**)

### **The Folly of Compromise and Alliances with Sinners**

The next portion of our lesson deals with three kings and their actions, which were, for the most part, unwise. Jehoram was king of Israel, now a backslidden, idolatrous nation. The best that could be said of him was that "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." He renounced the idolatry of those who had preceded him, but he kept the sin that the idolatry had allowed. His putting away of the idols was good, but it was not enough.

Some who hear the call of God tell that it is sufficient if they put away the idols they once served and take the name of Christian. They feel that in doing so they are fitting themselves for Heaven. But this is not enough. Idolatry is the worship of something other than the true God, and there are many in the world who are idolaters because they worship the works of their own hands, intellects, or sagacity. If they love something more than God, that thing becomes an idol. To be free from idolatry, then, means that we must love the Lord more than anything.

It is no small thing for one who has been an idolater, in the actual sense of the word, to throw down his images, lay aside his former creeds and beliefs, and become affiliated with Christian people. Many times such have had to face the persecutor's wrath because of the stand they have taken. Many times they overcome, by sheer will power and persuasion of their own selves, the fears and struggles that surge within their breasts. What they do in their renouncing of idolatry, when they have known nothing but that form of worship their entire lives, is more than many people do who merely accept Christ as their personal Saviour and who make no great change in their form or mode of living.

But as commendable as this great step of renunciation of the fears and loyalties to heathen gods is, it is not enough. Everyone has sinned and therefore everyone must seek for the forgiveness of sin and for power over sin, which God will give to every sincere seeker after righteousness. Unless that pardon is secured, and the individual is truly born again, his efforts are of no avail. He is yet in his sins and he will feel the judgment of God upon him for those sins. Jehoram put away the idols, but he continued on in his sins.

Not much is said in this particular place about the king of Edom but we can safely assume that his character would not commend



him to God. He had no trust in God but put his whole trust in the might of armies and the wisdom of man. His very presence as an ally of a sinful king is enough to let us know his sinful condition.

But against Jehoshaphat a great measure of condemnation can be levelled. Jehoshaphat seemed to have a weakness for making alliances with the ungodly, for at two previous times he had done so with those who were out of favour with God, and he had felt the judgment of God against him for his action both times (II Chronicles 18:1-34; 20:35-37). But in spite of all that he knew and all that he had experienced, he accepted the invitation of the king of Israel to make an alliance for the purpose of quelling the rebellion of Moab against Israel.

There was no apparent reason for Judah to be interested in the economic plight of Israel. None of the tax that had formerly been received from Moab had found its way into the treasury of Judah. Judah was not being deprived of anything by the Moabites' refusal to pay tribute to Israel. It is difficult to find a reason for the alliance, as far as Judah is concerned, and still see Jehoshaphat as a sincerely pious man. He had a fear of God, it is true; and he had a respect for God and a desire for His protection. He had a certain recognition of God's prophets (**1 Kings 22:7** *And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?*), but he did not always follow the word that the prophet brought from the Lord, especially if that word was opposite to his own ideas.

In this case, Jehoshaphat did not inquire of the Lord as to the wisdom of the decision that was made, neither did he do that which should have been evident to him as the wise thing to do, if a person's past experience is of any value to him. He went ahead and made the alliance with the ungodly kings and sealed it with the statement: "I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses." If this statement was a true one, there is not much good that can be said about the people of Judah. But if it was merely an insincere, political statement, then the leader of the people of Judah surely was far from what he should have been for saying it.

But the sad part of the whole compromise incident is that after they had made their own decisions, and gone their own ways, without consulting the God of their fathers, they were quick to blame that God for the failure of their expedition. When the first difficulty came — before the enemy was even sighted — they accused God of leading them into a trap. The route was their, and not God's. The plan was theirs, and not God's. The alliance was theirs, and not God's. But according to them, the blame and responsibility for the failure was His!

One does not have to go back nine centuries before the coming of Christ as the Babe of Bethlehem to see other exhibitions of such inconsistency. There are many who do the same thing today. Many people choose the way of evil, and then blame God for the ultimate consequence of that way. They sow seeds of iniquity, and then blame God for the harvest. They leave God out of their plans, and then blame Him for not making their plans successful. They fail to seek God's leadership, and then blame Him if they find their way is not right.

### **The Humble Servant of God and the Minstrel**

But there are some encouraging places in the narrative, and some incidents and individuals from which we can take example. Elisha was known to one of the king's servants as a humble servant of the former man of God; and Jehoshaphat proved beyond doubt his neglect and guilt in not asking Elisha for the will of God by

## **QUESTIONS**

1. What lesson did you learn from the incident of Elisha curing the waters?
2. Why can we say God's judgment was just, when He sent it against the young men who mocked Elisha?
3. What is the best that the Bible says concerning Jehoram, king of Israel?
4. On what occasions had Jehoshaphat made alliances similar to this one?
5. What did Jehoshaphat do, and what did he say, when he made the alliance with Jehoram?
6. Why was Jehoram eager to make the alliance with Jehoshaphat? and what advantage would this alliance give Jehoshaphat and Judah?
7. What stand did Elisha take when he was sent for?
8. What statement did Jehoshaphat make, when Elisha was called, that is a condemnation for his neglect in not calling the prophet earlier?
9. What part did music have in these proceedings?
10. Tell why the familiar hymn, "Trust and Obey." Is particularly fitting to this lesson.

admitting that the word of the Lord was with Elisha. There was some good in the past life of Jehoshaphat, and the man of God remembered it; so he interceded for the men out of respect to the king of Judah. He asked for a minstrel; and when the strains of music began to be heard, the Spirit of God came on the man of God.

God uses many means to reach the hearts of man. But one of the means He has used, in addition to the preaching of the Word of God, which is always the most important method of spreading the Good News, is the medium of good music and song. Battles have been won through singing — not only spiritual battles but physical ones also. Music has quieted those who were tormented by Satan and enabled them to hear the still, small voice of God. Music and song have prepared the way for the preaching of the Gospel many times, when inspired by, and anointed with, the Spirit of God. And music and song have often been used by God, in this and in former dispensations, as an actual sermon to reprove men of their sin and show them their true condition before God.

### **Effort Demanded for God's Deliverance**

The directions that the man of God gave for the deliverance of the armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom, were strange. One might have asked why ditches were to be dug in the wilderness. Why not dig holes instead, if digging for water was necessary? But when God commands, it is best that we obey His commands.

There is no victory to be gained in continuing on in our own ways when they have already led us to disaster. The only victory to be gained is in following the way of our Leader and obeying His commands. It will require digging. An effort will have to be made. The blind man of Jesus' day had to wash the mud from his eyes; the impotent man had to take up his bed and walk; the woman at the well had to draw water from the well and give to Him who was a Jew. It was not what these who obeyed Jesus did that brought the healing or salvation; it was the fact that they obeyed what He said that brought the results. The armies dug the ditches, and the Lord did the rest. And the wonderful thing about it is that the water came for their deliverance from the most unexpected place. It came from out the desert.

How different God's ways are from ours! How much trouble we could save ourselves if we always kept an ear open for the commands of God and then, having heard them, quickly obeyed them. We need not understand how God is going to deliver us. We need not be able to reason how He can bring water out of a wilderness to slake our thirst. Our only obligation is to do what He commands and let Him have His way in our lives. Where He rules there will be peace. And where He leads there will be victory.