

The All-Powerful & Trustworthy Word

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[0 : 00] But please do pick up your Bibles and open them in the Old Testament in the second book of Kings at chapter 3.!

So much better and we're delighted that he is digging back into second Kings and is going to carry on with a series in this book for the next few weeks.

So he will, I'm sure, recap a little bit in the story when we get to it. But we're going to read together the whole of second Kings chapter 3. And it begins at verse 1 like this.

In the 18th year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, Jehoram, the son of Ahab, became king over Israel in Samaria. That's the northern kingdom.

And he reigned 12 years. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Now not like his father and mother, for he had put away the pillar of Baal that his father had made.

[1 : 19] Nevertheless, he clung to the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin. He did not depart from it. Now Mesha, king of Moab, was a sheep breeder.

And he had to deliver to the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

So king Jehoram marched out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel. And he went and sent word to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. The king of Moab has rebelled against me.

Will you go with me to battle against Moab? And he said, I will go. I am as you are. My people are as your people. My horses as your horses. Then he said, by which way shall we march?

Jehoram answered, by the way of the wilderness of Edom. So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. And when they had made a circuitous march of seven days, there was no water for the army or for the animals that followed them.

[2 : 30] Then the king of Israel said, alas, the Lord has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab. But Jehoshaphat said, is there no prophet of the Lord here through whom we may inquire of the Lord?

And one of the king of Israel's servants answered, Elisha, the son of Shaphat, is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah. 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.

And Elisha said to the king of Israel, what have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother. But the king of Israel said to him, no, it's the Lord who has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab.

And Elisha said, as the Lord of hosts lives before whom I stand, were it not that I had regard for Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would neither look at you nor see you.

But now bring me a musician. And when the musician played, the hand of the Lord came upon him. And he said, thus says the Lord, I will make this dry stream bed full of pools.

[3 : 48] But thus says the Lord, you shall not see wind or rain, but that stream bed shall be filled with water so that you shall drink, you, your livestock and your animals.

This is a light thing in the eyes of the Lord. He will also give the Moabites into your hand. And you shall attack every fortified city and every choice city and shall fell every good tree and stop up all the springs of water and ruin every good piece of land with stones.

Now the next morning, about the time of the offering, offering the sacrifice, behold, water came from the direction of Edom till the country was filled with water.

When the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, all who were able to put on armor from the youngest to the oldest were called out and were drawn up at the border. And when they rose early in the morning and the sun shone on the water, the Moabites saw the water opposite them as red as blood.

And they said, this is blood. The kings have surely fought together and struck one another down. Now then, Moab, to the spoil. But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose and struck the Moabites till they fled before them.

[5 : 16] And they went forward, striking the Moabites as they went. And they overthrew the cities. And on every good piece of land, every man threw a stone until it was covered.

They stopped every spring of water and felled all the good trees till only its stones were left in Karharazneth. And the slingers surrounded and attacked it.

When the king of Moab saw that the battle was going against them, he took with them 700 swordsmen to break through opposite the king of Edom. But they could not.

And then, he took his oldest son, who was to reign in his place, and offered him for a burnt offering on the wall.

Now this last sentence is difficult. And there came great wrath upon Israel. I think what that means is, all Israel were fiercely angry at what they saw being done in that terrible human sacrifice of the king's son.

[6 : 25] And they withdrew from him, the Israelites, and returned to their own land. Amen. Well, may God bless to us his word and teach us all he has to say to us from it this evening.

Well, good evening to you, and please have your Bibles open to 2 Kings 3. That will be most helpful.

Thank you. The nation is in turmoil.

Idolatry and lawlessness are rife. It's everywhere. God's true people, those who cling on to him and his promises, are vastly outnumbered.

As for the nation's leadership, the vast majority of them have no knowledge of the Lord or regard for him. Instead, they go to great lengths to actually promote evil, even calling it good.

[7 : 36] And on the international level, out there in the world, the surrounding nations are full of turmoil also. There are many wars and constant rumors of wars.

And friends, that is how things looked at the time of 2 Kings. But of course, looks can be deceiving. For as the books of 1 and 2 Kings tell us again and again and again, history is not rumbling and thrashing on in uncontrolled chaos.

No, the word of the Lord, the Lord, the living true God, is sovereignly ruling over all things by his inescapable and all-powerful word. And that is actually the dominant theme of the whole of 1 and 2 Kings.

The word of the Lord is sovereign and at work in everything at all times. Even using the evil that men commit and are responsible for to bring about God's plans and purposes.

No human power can stand against it, is what we've seen so far. The word of the Lord has the power to raise up nations and then bring them down.

[8 : 51] Same thing goes for kings and rulers. The word will never be thwarted for the Lord himself will never be thwarted. And even when the Lord's own covenant people fall and fail, his word still accomplishes that which he has sent out to accomplish.

And friends, because this is true, another constant big message of the book of Kings, that he mentions again and again, the author, is the need to take very seriously indeed the word of the Lord.

Very seriously indeed. He calls us again and again to surrender our lives to it. To obey the word. To do it. For if we reject the word of the Lord, then friends, we are in big trouble.

For the word of the Lord is our only hope. And that is really what is at the heart, actually, of 2 Kings chapter 3. But before we look at that chapter, because you might have had other things on your mind over the last couple of years, I have had other things on my mind, let us just have a little recap of 1 and 2 Kings, shall we?

Let me just say a couple of introductory things then, therefore, before we look at the chapter that we are going to look at. Firstly, is that 1 and 2 Kings is actually, remember, one whole book. At some point in the past, for some reason, probably because it couldn't fit onto one scroll, it was split into two.

[10 : 20] But do not be fooled by that. It is one book meant to be studied together. Secondly, let's just ask, what's in these books? Well, they cover some 400 years of Israel's history.

And really, you could split it up into three major sections. So in chapters 1 to 11 of 1 Kings, the focus is on the rise, the reign, and then the demise of King Solomon.

I call that section a glimpse of glory. Because that is what you see in Solomon's kingdom, a glorious moment in history where Israel hit its peak. God's Old Testament church hit its maturity. There's a little tiny foretaste of the greater kingdom of the Lord Jesus that is yet to come. But tragically, it doesn't last long. Solomon's heart is seduced away by his many foreign wives. And he ends up clinging to their false gods. And that takes us into the next big section of the book. From 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 17.

[11:27] And as a result of Solomon's sin, the people of God, they are torn apart in two. And this is very important, or else you won't make sense of what we're going to look at this evening.

God's people are ripped apart into two rival kingdoms. Up in the north are ten tribes that take the name Israel. And in the south, down here, are two tribes under the heading of Judah.

And tragically, throughout this section, the kings of Israel in particular are so rebellious that they lead their people away from the Lord. Farther and further down they go.

And by the end of that section, Israel, up in the north, is taken off under judgment in exile. And from 2 Kings 18 to 25, the last section of the book, you have an account of the dire demise of Judah. It goes the same way as the kingdom in the north. It doesn't learn. Their kings and their people turn away from the Lord too. Despite the best efforts of a couple of decent kings, they also end up in exile in Babylon.

[12:37] So just to summarize that so that you know where you are, 1 Kings 1 to 11, a glimpse of glory that doesn't last long. 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 17, I've called dismal kings in a divided kingdom.

And 2 Kings 18 to the end, Judah's dire demise. And so that's where we are in 2 Kings 3. We're really right in the middle of the middle section of the book.

Dismal kings in a divided kingdom. Well, with that in mind, let's look at chapter 3 now, under 5 points. I have 5 points for you this evening.

Somebody once joked, said, you've always got 3 points. Well, you've got 5 tonight. So you can blame them if by point 4 you're thinking, okay, 3 would have been good.

There we go. Firstly, verses 1 to 3, we're going to look at these scenes under titles to do with the word of the Lord, since that's at the heart of this passage. Firstly, verses 1 to 3, the word of the Lord calls for fidelity.

[13:44] The word of the Lord calls for fidelity. So verse 1, we meet a new northern king called Jehoram. He comes to the throne in Samaria, in Israel, up here, during the reign of Jehoshaphat, who's in his 18th year as the king of Judah down here.

And immediately, the writer doesn't waste any time. He assesses Jehoram's reign by looking at the most important thing, which is, what did the Lord think of him?

What did the Lord think of him? And Jehoram was yet another evil king of Israel. Verse 2, he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

Although notice, he was not as evil as his parents. But of course, that doesn't mean very much, does it? When you remember who his parents were, Ahab and Jezebel.

And back in 1 Kings, they're described as being the most evil people in the history of Israel up to that point. Because Ahab and Jezebel pumped Israel full of stinking paganism.

[14:55] That is, they established Baal worship. Baal was the name given to a number of false gods from the neighboring nations around Israel. And Ahab and Jezebel saturated God's land with this putrid idolatry.

They'd also been responsible for the murder of many of the Lord's prophets because they hated God's word with a burning passion. And you remember, of course, Ahab is dead at this point.

The word of the Lord cut him down for his rebellion. Jezebel is still alive at this point. But the word has also said that her days are numbered. Remember that.

We'll come back to it in the weeks ahead. But now their son Jehoram is here and he isn't that guilty of that same degree of evil as his folks. And verse 2 says that he removed the big stone, the big pillar of Baal that was in the middle of Baal's temple that his dad had built.

Now does that not mean that Jehoram was therefore acceptable in the Lord's sight? He's not as bad really as the really evil people of history. He's done a few good deeds.

[16:08] Surely that will get him in God's good books. And sometimes, friends, you often meet people in the world who believe this and think this way. I remember talking to a neighbor that I used to have next to me down in England where I lived, he sadly passed away now but I remember talking to him one evening over the fence and he said to me, you know, if I die, I know God will

accept me because I'm just not as bad as other people.

I'm not that bad as some of the monsters you see on TV who've committed heinous crimes. Was he right? The second thing is he says, no, look at Jehoram.

You see, yes, Jehoram may not have been as wicked as he could have been but he was not righteous as he should have been either. Yes, he wasn't guilty of great idolatry but he was guilty of lesser idolatry.

Please look at verse 3. Nevertheless, alright, he got rid of that stone from the temple of Baal but nevertheless, he clung to the sin of Jeroboam.

Now, the Hebrew word for clung there is used before in the Bible in Genesis 2, 24 where the man in the garden sees his wife and he comes and becomes one flesh and he clings to his wife.

[17:31] He clung to his wife, the text says. It's a word that denotes deep love, affection, intimacy and fidelity. And that is how Jehoram treated the idolatrous golden bull calves that were set up in Israel in the northern kingdom back in 1 Kings 12.

The king who set that up is mentioned there. That's what the text means in verse 3 by the sin of Jeroboam. Jeroboam set up these two disgusting bull calf statues in 1 Kings 12 and he said to Israel, Ha ha ha!

Behold your gods who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. In 2 Kings 3 Jehoram loves these things.

He's clung on to these things in his heart and that is why he's declared evil. The fact that he wasn't as bad as his folks in no way cancels that out.

He should have gotten rid of all Baal worship, all calf worship and instead clung to the Lord alone in his heart. And how do you cling to the Lord?

[18:40] You cling to the Lord by clinging to his word and not turning away from it to the left or to the right. My friends, the word of the Lord calls for the same fidelity from actually all of our hearts as God's people today.

We too are to forsake all false gods and cling to the Lord alone by clinging to his word. Remember when the Bible teaches, remember what the Bible teaches about idolatry.

Idolatry is something we can all slip into. It's when we take a good thing and turn it into a God thing and we cling to this thing in our heart, whatever it may be, and say, without this I am nothing.

Is there something like that in your heart perhaps? Well, that's an idol and it comes so easily to us. It's something we should frequently be taking to the Lord in prayer, asking that by the power of his spirit he will help us to be a people who turn away from that and to instead cling to him alone.

And friends, the Lord will help us with this because he is a jealous God, jealous in the good godly way, in a holy righteous way. He will not share us with other deities.

[20:01] The word of the Lord calls for fidelity. Well, secondly, in verses 4 to 9 we see that the word of God must lead.

The word of God must lead. So in verse 4 we are introduced to Mesha, the king of Moab. Verse 5 says that until recently Moab had been a vassal of Israel.

That is, Moab was under Israel's authority. And that would have had loads of implications for Moab, one of them being that Mesha would have had to pay regular tribute to the king of Israel.

Verse 4 seems to imply that the payments were loads of lambs and loads of wool. But Mesha was willing to do all of that in the past.

But now that Jehoram is on the throne, he says, and no chance. Not anymore. And Moab rebels against Israel. And so in verse 6, Jehoram takes action.

[21:04] He stirs up Israel to go and fight Moab, to put them back in their place, to bring them down. And in verse 7, he sends a message down south to Judah, to King Jehoshaphat down there in Judah.

And he says, Jehoshaphat, come up, come on, come up and fight with me against Moab. And without a second's hesitation, without exercising any discernment, without seeking the word of the Lord to see if this was right, Jehoshaphat says, yes, yes, oh yes, I will go, I'll come.

Hey, my people, my horses, well, they are yours. Now, Jehoshaphat has been in this situation before. Back in 1 Kings 22, Ahab was king in Israel then, and he asked Jehoshaphat to join him to fight against Syria.

And back then, Jehoshaphat did exactly the same thing. And how did that go? Not very well.

Jehoshaphat was nearly killed the last time he entered into a union with an evil king of Israel.

So it doesn't bode well for this new campaign against Moab. And just look at verse 8. Off they go, off they go, verse 8. They've got the king of Edom with them too.

[22 : 27] Edom was probably at that time a vassal of Judah. But anyway, these three kings, king of Israel, king of Judah, king of Edom, and their armies, they go marching off to Moab through the wilderness.

And after seven days of marching, disaster strikes. Verse 9, there is no water. They've run out of supplies of water, and they cannot find any water in the wilderness.

It is completely parched. It is bone dry. And when you read this, it's hard not to recall the devastating drought of 1 Kings 17 and 18 that came over the land as a sign of God's judgment. And you also can't help but think back to the Exodus story after the Lord has brought His people out and they were wandering through the wilderness. Only the Lord could provide life-giving water to His people.

And with all those images in our head, we picture these three kings and their armies on their own, without the Lord, they are dead meat. We will see how they respond to it all in a moment, but let's just think before we look on in the story about Jehoshaphat.

[23 : 43] Now friends, we must not be too hard on the man in these verses because he will show himself to be a very different man from Jehoram, the king of Israel.

Jehoshaphat will show himself to be a real believer. Verse 14 tells us that the Lord has regard for him. He is faithful, but he is flawed.

He is faithful and flawed. And there is no denying that for the second time in his reign, he has made a real blunder in partnering with the king of Israel.

And there's big consequences. Now he and his troops are in danger and later in 2 Kings, this unwise union with Jehoram, it nearly leads to the end of his family line, actually, which is the family line of David.

It's nearly wiped out because of his conduct here. And if you read Chronicles, you will see that the word of the Lord actually comes and explicitly rebukes Jehoshaphat for joining Israel in these chapters.

[24 : 48] But it could have been so different back in verse 7. It could have been so different. Instead of inquiring of the Lord before saying yes to Jehoram, he would have been warned not to do this.

He failed because he didn't have the word of God in the driving seat. The word of the Lord must lead. Now friends, as the people of God today, as his church, the word of the Lord must also lead our lives too, both as individuals and as a church.

Now remember David Jackman's illustration? I was trying to remember this illustration earlier in the week. I'm probably going to butcher it. Forgive me. But David Jackman's got this legendary illustration where he says if our lives are like a car, then where must the Bible be?

Where must the word of the Lord be? The answer is not shut away in the boot, mostly out of sight, picked up, flicked through occasionally. Neither must it be in the back seat making the odd comment to annoy us like some kind of annoying back seat driver.

Neither is it to be in the front passenger seat like a co-instructor or navigator. Now the word of the Lord must be in the driving seat, driving our lives, driving all that we do, mastering our thinking, and so shaping the decisions that we make.

[26 : 13] Now forgive me, if you've been coming to this church for more than a few months, you'll probably have heard that point repeated again and again and again. the word must lead. It's so elementary to the Christian life.

But if you're anything like me, then you will know that it is one thing to know this in theory and it is quite another thing to put this into daily practice, isn't it?

Friends, it is a struggle to let the word of God lead in your life, is it not? It is a daily fight to let the word lead us.

And I think most of us, if you were really being honest, would say that you often find yourself making the same blunder as Jehoshaphat did. He was faithful, he's not an unbeliever, but he's still flawed.

And 2 Kings 3 calls us to keep up the fight against complacency in our lives. And again, friends, let's not shy away from being honest with the Lord our God about this and asking for help.

[27 : 19] That by the power of His Spirit, He will give us hearts that are soft and submissive and eager every day to let the word lead us and shape our decisions. Well, thirdly, in verses 10 to 14,

we see that the word of the Lord is mercifully disturbing.

The word of the Lord is mercifully disturbing. Verses 10 to 14. So, there they are. The three kings, the three armies, and all of their animals, that's their horses and their livestock, if they needed a bit of food, they're all there.

They're all stranded in the wilderness. It is as dry as a bone, and everyone is gasping for water, and there's no water anywhere. They are helpless.

They are facing a painful and slow demise. Now, just look at how Jehoram responds to all of this in verse 10. Please look at verse 10. Then the king of Israel said, Alas, the Lord has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab.

All of a sudden, Jehoram seems to believe in the sovereignty of the Lord. It's just so interesting, isn't it? Jehoram has had absolutely no time from the Lord God in his life up to this point.

[28 : 45] That's what verses one and three tell us. He has had no time for the Lord in his life up to this point, but now that he's in grave danger, now that calamity has hit him, he's not crying out to his beloved bull calves anymore.

Instead, he's crying out about the Lord. But my friends, don't be fooled. His outburst here in verse 10, it might sound pious, it might even be theologically true, but his outburst is not a desperate cry to the Lord seeking his help.

Look at it again. His cry is a bitter cry about the Lord. And really, it is a grumbling statement against God disguised in pious-sounding language.

Clearly, this king's heart is full of spite simply because his plans have been scuppered. His voice is not the voice of faith. To hear that, we must listen to Jehoshaphat in verse 11.

The king of Judah does not panic. He's not full of grumbling and spite. Rather, he turns to the place where he knows there is hope. Arguably, the place he should have turned to in verse 7, but now he's turning nonetheless.

[30 : 04] In verse 11, he says, is there no prophet of the Lord here through whom we may inquire of the Lord? And notice there, King Jehoram says nothing.

He hasn't got a clue where to find the prophet of the Lord because King Jehoram doesn't care a thing for the word of the Lord. But notice, verse 11, it's one of his servants knows where the prophet is to be found.

And that's one of the themes you will find through 2 Kings again and again and again. Those who are in power know nothing about the ways of the word of the Lord. And again and again, actually, it is often unnamed background characters who don't have positions of power who are truly in step with the word of the Lord.

Look out for that theme that pops up again and again. But here, one of the king's servants shouts out, there is a prophet among us in the traveling party, Elisha.

Now, we're not told about how the prophet Elisha got there. But by God's grace and his providence, he was somewhere amongst the three armies. It is also interesting that in verse 12, Jehoshaphat seems to know of Elisha and know that he is the real deal.

[31 : 21] He is a true prophet. And so the three kings search him out and they come to Elisha in verse 13. And oh my goodness, there are no pleasantries, no introductions.

Elisha is immediately confrontational. Elisha means business with Jehoram. Please look at verse 13. As soon as Elisha claps eyes on the king of Israel, he says this, verse 13, what have I to do with you?

Go to the prophets of your father and go to the prophets of your mother. Another, Elisha is saying, why on earth are you here before me speaking to me, Jehoram?

Why the sudden interest in the word of the Lord, eh? You've never shown the slightest bit of interest before. Why don't you go off to those clowns that your parents, your mummy and daddy used to go and seek counsel with?

It's a really blunt and brutal challenge. And Jehoram tries to get all pious sounding again. In verse 13, he repeats the same thing that he said back in verse 10.

[32 : 36] No, it is the Lord who has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab. But friend, the word of the Lord has no time for Jehoram's pretense.

You cannot play games before the word of the Lord. The Lord knows that Jehoram's heart is clinging onto his idols and that he's only seeking the Lord now for his own selfish convenience.

And so Elisha delivers the word of the Lord to him. And listen to this, listen to this, verse 14. Elisha looks at this man and says, as the Lord of hosts lives before whom I stand, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would neither look at you nor see you.

I would neither look at you nor see you. The reason I'm talking to you now is because you're standing next to Jehoshaphat, the king in the line of David, the one who is flawed but faithful. The only reason I'm talking to you right now. In other words, Elisha is saying that Jehoram is beyond the help of the Lord's word if it weren't for the fact that Jehoshaphat was stood beside him. [34 : 00] I don't know about you folks but I find that concept utterly alarming. You can place yourself beyond the point of receiving direction or help from God.

Isn't that sobering? Listen to Ralph Davis talk about how you might know if you are guilty of doing the same as Jehoram.

Ralph Davis says this, You could be doing a Jehoram if your pattern is to seek God only for your convenience so that you are trifling with God.

You may be interested only in escape from trouble but not the path of discipleship. that was Jehoram. He wanted to use the word of the Lord in the moment and not to submit to it in the long term.

Today Jehoramites view the word of God as something for emergency only but not for normal days. God is simply the airbag in the disasters of life which you hope you never have to use.

[35 : 08] If that is the pattern of your life then you may be placing yourself beyond the help of the word of God. That is sobering but before we move on I just want you to notice that even though Elisha's words are severe and they are severe and disturbing they are actually at the same time friends a gift of God's mercy and kindness aren't they?

for humanly speaking Jehoram is being disturbed here so that it would shock him out of his unbelief and so that he might hear and take up the chance to respond to the disturbing word that he has heard.

That is a gift of God's kindness. That's a gift of his mercy. The Lord is actually being very kind to this idle clinging king. He's been given the chance to repent and to respond by faith.

My friend if you're sitting here tonight in sorrow because as I was reading that quote out earlier you might be thinking that sounds a little bit like me actually. If you are worried now then friend you need not fret for long.

The answer is to turn to the word of the Lord to humble yourself and to build your life upon what God has said today without delay. And friend you will find new life and you will be blessed with every spiritual blessing through an even greater king in the line of David than Jehoshaphat.

[36 : 47] The perfect king Jesus Christ. And friends that's actually how all of us have received blessing from the Lord.

We receive blessing from the Lord not because we deserve it but because we stand in union with the perfect Davidic king of all time the Lord Jesus.

And if it weren't for being in union with the greater descendant of Jehoshaphat and none of us would know the Lord's salvation. Well fourthly from verses 15 to 25 we see that the word of the Lord is generous all powerful and trustworthy.

The word of the Lord is generous all powerful and trustworthy. Well having confronted Jehoram for his sham interest in the word of God Elisha brings the word of the Lord again to the three kings before him now.

And in verse 15 he calls for some music and the hand of the Lord comes upon him as a metaphor for the spirit of the Lord coming upon him and he starts to speak and in verse 16 the word of the Lord promises water and not just a little tiny bit of water to keep these guys going for a few more days but the Lord is going to provide an abundance of water he will supply pools and pools of water all over the wilderness in verse 17 the water is not just going to come about by the usual means the three armies as they stand there will not see any rain clouds rain drops on their face the water will just fill up in the stream bed from the Lord and everyone shall drink the life giving water from the Lord the kings troops horses livestock no one will be thirsty and in verse 18 the

[38 : 49] Lord looks at this and says you know that's an easy thing for me to do no trouble at all no problem the word of the Lord is all powerful like that there's no limitations easy for the Lord to do that but just notice how generous the word of the Lord is too because the word goes on to promise these kings so much more than they possibly could ask for and have asked for verse 18 let's look at it verse 18 please he says!

that is providing you with life-giving for the Lord I'll do it for you no bother oh I'll also give you victory over Moab too I'll give them into your hand and in verse 19 Elisha lays out what Israel will do to Moab please look at verse 19 he says you shall attack every fortified city and every choice city and shall fell every good tree and stop all springs of water and ruin every piece of a twist here because they think that Elisha is somehow tricking Israel into breaking a bit of Deuteronomy 20 where the Lord commands about what not to do when you attack a city but friends I've spent time in this and if you carefully read Elisha's words that is not what he is doing he is not doing that he's not contradicting!

God's law instead Elisha's words are declaring to these kings that the Lord is so generous they're going to win this battle easy peasy and really this should not surprise us because if we know our Bibles for this is wonderfully typical of the Lord our God you come to him seeking grace and what you find so often is you receive not just grace but grace upon grace he's so much more generous and full of kindness than we could possibly comprehend well in verse 20 to 25 we find that everything that the Lord promises comes to pass the word of the Lord is generous it's all powerful but it's also totally trustworthy and in a world that's full of uncertainty and instability in a world full of broken promises here is a word that you can stand on for everlasting stability and security in verse 20 the next morning after

Elisha has spoken water appears water in abundance it flows from every direction and the wilderness is covered in pools and obviously it's not stated there but obviously the three kings their armies and animals they all drink to their hearts content so that they thirst no more the Lord saves them by that provision but then notice the Lord actually uses the water as the very means through which to bring down Moab as well in verse 21 we're told that the Moabites had heard about these three kings coming up to fight them and so they had suited up in their armor and got ready for battle and stationed themselves on the border line not too far away from the camp of the three kings and in verse 22 in the morning of the day when all the water appeared the Moabites go out to spy out bone the night before and remember there had not been any rain clouds they hadn't seen any rain and they look out at this wilderness and they see this odd thing these red patches all over the place and what they come to the conclusion is not that they were looking at pools of water with the sunlight reflecting off them but they look at it and they say ah that's pools of blood these three kings who've come to attack us these idiots they've turned against themselves and they've slaughtered each other and these pools that we see here as the evidence of the fight being over that must be their blood they've killed each other so come on let's just stroll up now to their camp and steal any spoil that's been left over they don't realize that this is all a powerful work of the word of the Lord fulfilling its promises and in verse 24 when they stroll into the camp of the three kings with their defenses down thinking that they're about to plunder a bunch of corpses when they arrive they find Israel and the coalition alive and well and armed to the teeth and Israel rises up and smashes the Moabites and so they flee and Israel rises up and pursues them and every word that the Lord promised back in verse 19 happens in verse 25 and what a testimony to everyone who was there everyone who had heard Elisha the night before what a testimony to Jehoram that the word of the Lord is not only generous and all powerful it is utterly trustworthy to the Lord says something will happen and he will always deliver on his promises and that brings me to my last point this evening verse 26 to 27 we see that the word of the

[44 : 28] Lord is beautiful unlike paganism the word of the Lord is beautiful unlike paganism so in verse 26 having seen that he is losing the battle Mesha the king of Moab he tries one last desperate counter attack but it fails again the word of the Lord will not be thwarted Moab cannot fight back successfully because the word of the Lord won't let them but in his desperation what he does is he carries out a heinous and wicked act verse 27 he takes his own son who was to succeed him as king and he sacrifices him by flames he torches his son burns him alive against the city wall as a burnt offering and it works this is a surprise it works because the

Israelite coalition turns away and leaves now many find these that's this verse tricky because it's unclear why mesha's human sacrifice worked and the explanation lies in the middle of verse 27 after the sacrifice was made look at the middle of verse 27 and there came great wrath against Israel whose wrath was this read the commentaries my friends on second kings i'm not sure that's one thing you want to do with!

your life than i have you will see a lot of different proposals some of them are mad one liberal commentator says that this was the wrath of the moabite god chemosh that came against Israel but

friends that is impossible because chemosh was not real he's about as real as Baal was on the top of Mount Carmel he is a powerless!

dead man made idol so we can dismiss that others think the wrath was the Lord's but why was the Lord full of wrath for Israel why was he this is the Lord fulfilling his word most people who take this view they hold also that Elisha was tricking Israel back in verse 19 into breaking Deuteronomy but as I've already said that is not what Elisha is doing if you read it carefully and anyway all the way throughout Kings if the Lord is ever angry with his people the text will tell you this is the anger of the Lord the Lord's not mentioned here now there's more theories there are more theories if you want to have a bit of coffee later well not all night because I don't want to be rattling off these seeds I could tell you more but the view that I'm most convinced by is that the wrath being described in verse 27 actually belongs to the Israelites themselves verse 27 could also be translated as great wrath came upon

Israel in other words when the Israelites saw this disgusting burnt offering they were full of indignation full of horror and repugnance so much so that they quit fighting they turned away without enjoying a total victory well if that's the case so what what is the author of Kings telling us by ending the chapter like this well my friends I take it that the author of Kings is actually ending by painting a contrast a massive contrast a stark contrast think about zoom out and think of the big picture of the chapter earlier on in chapter three three Kings their armies find themselves in dire straits no water in the wilderness they're as good as dead they're about to face destruction Jehoshaphat seeks the word of the Lord the word of the Lord comes to them without any manipulation without any coercion needed by the King of Judah and the word of the Lord shows itself to be beautiful generous all powerful trustworthy it brings these men great blessing even though they do not deserve it contrast that with the pagan king he's also in dire straits facing destruction he decides to turn to his pagan god how do you seek your god according to his paganism you have to coerce your idol manipulate it to save you and so he torches his own son alive do you see the message for Israel in these final verses of the chapter it's like the author is screaming out look look oh Israel at the beauty of the Lord your God and his word Israel do you know how good you have it and knowing the Lord belonging to him by his grace do you know how good it is what a privilege it is to be under the Lord's rule no or just look at the alternative look at the horror of paganism look at the horror of man made religion and where it leads and the message for us today is this if you ever feel tempted today to turn away from the Lord Jesus if you're ever tempted to turn away from the living word of God you must resist because to turn away from the Lord and his word is to turn away from grace beauty assurance life and salvation and to instead turn to cruelty instability horror and death well let's be quiet for a moment let's think about that in our heads and our hearts and then I'll pray for us let's pray our gracious heavenly Father we praise you for your generous all powerful and trustworthy word your word that is beautiful your word that cuts through our pretenses your word that slices through our sinful defenses and pricks us away spiritually and points us to the way of salvation Lord please help us to forsake and destroy any idols that may be clinging onto our hearts this day and instead help us to cling onto you alone as

[51 : 34] our only God and savior who can only be known through your majestic word and we pray this in Jesus precious name and for his sake amen