

A Valley Full of Ditches

II Kings 3:1-20



WISDOM FROM THE DITCHES

- ◆ God's Plan Can Be Trusted!
- ◆ God Is No Respector Of Persons!
- ◆ God Is Always Working!

“Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches.”
(II Kings 3:16)

Bill Kirk

“A VALLEY FULL OF DITCHES”

Text: II Kings 3:16 “Thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches.”

Subject: How the Sovereignty of God works with the responsibility of man!

Introduction

- ◆ II Kings Chapter 3 is an incredible wisdom chapter.
- ◆ It's a true story and a real event.
- ◆ It's a discovery and a revelation from the heart of God.
- ◆ It's a message that speaks to everyone – without exception.

(What's The Context of II Kings 3?)

1. It's about Israel at war with Moab
2. The war is on because the Moabites refuse to pay tribute to Israel since the death of Ahab.
3. Ahaziah has been unable to subjugate Moab into obedience.
4. Jehoram is now anxious to overtake Moab, make spiritual progress and gain new ground!

Question: What does Jehoram do?

Answer: He's doing his very best...

- In v. 6 – He numbers Israel for battle.
- In v. 7 – He asks Jehoshaphat to help him in battle
- In v. 8 – “Which way do we sneak up on Moab?”
- In v. 9 – Jehoshaphat's journey is seven days in but the army of Israel is in great danger:

Question: What's the problem Israel?

Answer: (v. 9) “There is no water for the army or the cattle, and panic sets in.”

Question: What happens next?

Answer: (V. 11, 12) Jehoshaphat says, “I know a prophet named Elisha, and he knows how to pray.”

Question: So what's the advice of Elisha in v. 15?

Answer: We know it works, because in v. 24 the Israelites smite the Moabites, and in v. 25 it's a WWE Smackdown Victory for Israel! (Moab is defeated)

(But the issue is)

- ◆ How does Israel make spiritual progress with God?
- ◆ How do you enjoy the journey like Israel did?
- ◆ What makes it possible to be spiritually healthy in a very sick world?
- ◆ What's the meaning of the ditches to hold the water?
- ◆ What's the message to your heart and mine today?
- ◆ What is God saying in the valley full of ditches?

(Wisdom From The Ditches For Healthy Spirituality)

I. God's Plan For My Life Can Always Be Trusted!

(v. 8) “And Jehoram said, which way should we go up and advance? And Jehoshaphat said, “The way through the wilderness of Edom.”

Question: Why is this so odd (and interesting?)

Answer: Because there are two ways to enter the land of the Moabites (and gain the victory)

#1. The short (most direct) route – by going above the Dead Sea

- ◆ Crossing the Jordan (and)
- ◆ Entering in from the North (or)

#2. The longer route

- ◆ By going around the southern point of the Dead Sea
- ◆ And advancing through the northern part of the mountains of Edom,
- ◆ And entering it from the south.

Question: Why is this so interesting?

Answer: Because the way the Lord led Israel was the longer of the two routes:

- ◆ It had the most difficulties and dangers
- ◆ The army would have to cross mountains that were difficult, painful, tedious and frustrating.

Question: So what’s up with God taking Israel the long way around (and what difference does it make in your life and mine?)

Answer: It’s wisdom for a healthy soul:

- #1. Short-cuts and the easy way are not always the best way!
- #2. Present disappointments have a long term purpose!
- #3. God knows more than you do – so you can chill!
- #4. Patience is the price for your future reward.
- #5. God may send you what you need in packages you do not like.

(And by the way, in verse 9)

(v. 9) “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 troops.

(v. 10) “What should we do? The king of Israel cried out: The Lord has brought the three of us here to let the king of Moab defeat us.”

(v. 11) “And King Jehoshaphat said, is there a prophet that we could inquire of the Lord what to do?”

Question: What’s the dilemma?

Answer: Israel is in the will of God and seven days into the journey God records two things:

- #1. There was the unexpected (no water).
- #2. There was panic (or loss of perspective).
 - ◆ **What a discovery here – that what surprises me never surprises God!**

“Now what? The Lord has brought us out here to let Moab defeat us and embarrass the God we serve.”

Question: What does the king of Israel do in v. 10?

Answer: He blames the Lord for his dilemma – and blaming other people never gives you a healthy perspective!

(In Fact)

- To the degree that you blame someone else for what's inside of you – to the same degree you cannot be changed and will not be healed. (Repeat)

(Why Not?)

- Because we will justify our behavior, defend our ego and forfeit the reward of a healthy soul.

Remember

- Adam blamed Eve and
- Eve blamed the serpent and
- When we blame people or things, it prevents us from taking responsibility for our attitudes, choices and behaviors.

Question: What do we blame that keeps us from growing?

1. We blame our **context**.
“You would have done the same if you had been in my situation.”
2. We blame our **upbringing**.
“I take after my parents or whoever raised me; I learned my anger from them.”
3. We blame our **history**.
“You’d be just like me if you’d been through what I’ve been through.”
4. We blame our **biology**.
“It’s how I was born; it’s the way I am; there’s nothing I can do about it – genetics, heredity.”
5. We blame other **people**.
“If you had helped me more, if you had been there for me, if you had loved me more.”

II. There Is Power And Direction In My **Quiet Place!**

(v. 11) “Go get Elisha the man of God, so we can get God’s perspective.”

(v. 15) “Elisha says, bring me someone who can play some music...and the presence of the Lord came upon Elisha.”

Question: What does Elisha do?

Answer: When his mind was agitated at the sight of Jehoram, Elisha calls for some music and quiet time – to settle his spirit.

- ◆ He wants to shut out the outside distractions.
- ◆ He collects his thoughts before he acts.
- ◆ He subdues the temptation to rush out and prophesy.
- ◆ He stops and lassoes his self-life.
- ◆ He wants to become absorbed and sensitive to the whispers of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ He aligns himself with the purposes of God.

Question: Why does God record this in your Bible?

Answer: To show us that “hurry” is not of the devil – it is the devil

- ◆ “But I’d rather burn out than rust out.” (Either way, you’re still out)

Question: Why does Elisha quiet his mind and gather his thoughts?

(Thomas a Kempis said)

“The further the soul is from the noise of the world, the closer it may be to its Creator, for God will draw close to a person who seeks solitude and silence.”

(Richard Foster said)

“Jesus craves solitude and rest not for selfish reasons; but because this is where the spiritual resources for ministry are found.”

(Henri Nouwen said)

“In solitude we realize that we are not driven together in community – but brought together by God.”

(Parker Palmer said)

“Self care is never a selfish act”

(Charles Spurgeon told his students)

“Come apart – or fall apart.”

(Joyce Huggett said)

“Meditation allows God’s word the opportunity to penetrate not just our minds, but our emotions – the places where we hurt, and our will – the place where we make choices and decisions.”

(Paul David Tripp said)

“If you are not requiring yourself to get your deepest sense of well-being, vertically, you will shop for it horizontally, and you will always come up empty.”

III. God Is No Respector Of Persons – Only My Preparation!

(v. 16) “And Elisha said, thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches, for the dry valley will be filled with water.”

Question: What’s the instruction?

Answer: Dig some ditches!

Question: Why the ditches?

Answer: Because there is a principle of God here:

- ◆ Believing preparation – for Divine Blessing!
- ◆ Human responsibility – and Supernatural Provision!
- ◆ Our part on earth – God’s part in Heaven!
- ◆ We position ourselves – God sends the water!

Question: What’s the big deal about all this (preparing ditches?)

Answer: The big deal is, God is so clear in scripture:

(Proverbs 12:1)

“If you don’t till the land, you will just be chasing fantasies; if you work the land you will have plenty of bread.”

(Proverbs 21:31)

“The horse is prepared for the day of battle but the victory belongs to the Lord.

(In other words)

- ◆ We till the land – then God grows the bread!
- ◆ We prepare the horses – then God gives the victory!

Question: What is God saying to us?

Answer: It’s obvious for us all:

- #1. It does no good to sow seed in the ground if God does not send rain on the fields (and)
- #2. It does not good for God to send rain on the fields if I have not first put seed in the ground.

(In other words)

- ◆ If I don’t do my part (and prepare the ditches) how can I facilitate what God wants to do (in sending rain).

(In other words)

- ◆ I can’t do God’s part – and God won’t do my part!

What’s the message?

- ◆ Am I aligning my heart so that God can go deeper and bring change?
- ◆ Am I positioning myself to serve God’s purpose – not my own?
- ◆ Am I allowing spiritual disciplines to put me in the way of blessing?
- ◆ Am I preparing so God can do what God wants to do?
- ◆ Is there a system “in place” to retain, prepare and channel God’s provision?
- ◆ Will I respond to what God speaks to me about?

IV. God Is Always Working - Even When I Cannot See Him!

(V. 17) “For thus saith the Lord, you will not see wind, neither will you see the rain.”

(Oh, and by the way, in v. 18)

“This is but a light, or easy, or simple thing in the sight of the Lord – He will deliver the Moabites into your hand.”

Question: What’s the revelation in v. 17?

Answer: “You won’t see the wind or the rain.”

(In other words)

- ◆ You'll have to dig the ditches in faith!
- ◆ You'll have to walk by faith not by sight!
- ◆ You'll have to believe that God can make something out of nothing!

(Notice the great lesson)

(v. 20) "And sure enough on the following morning, water suddenly appeared – and flowed by the way of Edom."

(In other words)

- ◆ A heavy rain fell in the eastern mountains of Edom.
- ◆ It was a great distance from Israel's camp.
- ◆ The water filled the valley, came from a long distance away and Israel never observed the source.

Question: What's the discovery for Israel (and you and me)?

Answer: The discovery is – at times God's work is invisible, but God is working even when you cannot see Him!!

- ◆ Israel is praying for water, doesn't see any visible answers to their praying, but God is going to bypass what Israel can only see, and hear, and observe with their senses!!!

(What a lesson here)

- ◆ For **Elijah** – The showers poured from clouds above. (He saw it)
- ◆ For **Elisha** – The ditches were filled in a silent mysterious manner. (From an unknown place)

(Spurgeon said)

"The Lord has His own sovereign methods of action."

Bill Kirk