

2nd Kings Chapter 3 - John Karmelich

1. My title of this lesson is "How do we go about making a difference for God?" If you've been a reader of my lessons for a while, you know that one of my favorite questions to ask is, "If we are saved, what are you doing about it?" I'm not saying this chapter gives the exact model of how we are to act as Christians. I'm saying that this chapter gives a great illustration of how we're to seek God's wisdom and once we are inspired to take on a project for Him, how does God blesses what we take on for His glory? A great example of that work and blessing is here in this chapter.
2. To begin, let me share a wonderful principal that I heard about how God will and will not work in our lives. It goes, "A great mistake too many churches make is that they build their own flood control channels and then say, OK God, here is our channel, work our way through this channel that we built." To put it simply, we want God to work our way. The problem with that model is that we get the glory and not God. I bring this up here because literally, we will read about the Israelites digging pits and channels in order for God to perform a specific miracle.
 - a) The difference is the ditches built here were a request for God to work through them, not a demand. This chapter is about the Israelites doing the footwork so that God can if He is willing to work through it. It would be like saying, "Dear God, we really want You to bless our lives as we make a difference for You, so we'll take a step in faith and take on a project if You desire to work through it". The difference between what the Israelites did and the negative example I gave is all about the credit. Do we take the credit for building our flood control channels or are we following God's lead of what He wants us to do? In effect, that is the great question most of us should ask if we are using our time to make a difference for God in our lives.
3. To state what may be obvious, there is more to the chapter than that one effort to dig ditches. As we read through this chapter, we'll learn about a war that the Israelites fight with the Moabites, a group that lives east of Israel. Yes it seems like every other chapter in Kings involves Israelites battling somebody to the east of them. As I also love to state, I don't think God cares that we can recall the names of the ancient Israelite enemies or even the kings names listed here as much as He wants us to learn how to apply the lessons of these stories to our lives.
 - a) With that said, this chapter involves both the Northern and Southern Kingdom of Israel fighting against the Moabites who live to the east (northeast) of Israel. The story is about how they attack from the southern direction and have the major problem of running out of water. The prophet Elisha comes on the scene. He makes a statement how he doesn't care for the king of Northern Israel as that man is not a God fearing man. However, he is willing to consult God for the sake of the God-fearing king of the Southern Kingdom.
 - b) Elijah then asks for an unnamed musician to play in order to get his focus on God. This is not saying that music is necessary in order to seek God, but simply that music that focuses on God can be a wonderful aid to get our focus on Him. That is why most church services feature music to get the congregation to focus upon God. Once that is done, Elisha's then tells the Israelite kings in effect, God is going to bring lots of water to this place, neither by rain nor by wind. Therefore, have all the soldiers who are dying of thirst out in this desert dig lots of ditches in order to collect the water that is about to occur. Apparently Elisha's reputation as a prophet is known enough that the kings obey Elisha's request. Either that, or they are so desperate for water they are willing to take the risk of trusting Elisha and digging ditches in order to collect whatever water will come.
 - c) The summary is that a flash flood probably occurred in nearby mountains. That caused the flow of water that can be collected by the effort made by these ditch diggers. There's a related miracle here: The water has a red appearance from a distance in the morning sun. That caused the enemy to think the Israelites are killing themselves, so they attack. This caused the Israelites win this war and are for the moment, are trusting God again.

4. There you now have a summary of the events of this chapter in one page. As we go through the chapter verse by verse, the important thing to learn is not the historical facts of what happened to the Israelite people in this battle, but to show how God works in our lives. How we should use our lives to make a difference for God by our willingness to take on projects for Him that not can bring Him glory but show others of His existence in the world around us. I admit, it's strange to think of making a difference for God by digging ditches in the hot sun by faith, this chapter is an example of how we make a difference for Him in our lives. With that said, 2nd Kings, Chapter 3.
5. Verse 1: Joram son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned twelve years.
 - a) To begin the chapter, we have to return to the confusing world of "who's who" in this 400 year history of Israel during the period that nation was ruled by kings. As of this moment the focus is on the son of a wicked king of the Northern Kingdom named Joram. To keep it simple, Joram's brother died in Chapter 1 (Verse 16) of 2nd Kings. Apparently the last king of Northern Israel didn't have any sons, so his brother became the next king. If you are new here, Samaria is the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, as Israel split into two separate kingdoms at this point in history. It also helps to remember that God never says anything good about any of the kings of the Northern Kingdom. Therefore, before we learn anything else about this Joram character, we know he is another "bad egg".
 - b) The other confusing thing about first and second kings is it marks time by who is reigning in the other kingdom. For example in this verse it says while Jehoshaphat was in his 18th year as king of the Southern Kingdom, Joram started to reign in the northern kingdom.
 - c) Now let me give everyone some good news: I'm pretty positive when we get to heaven we will not have a quiz on the names of all these kings. We may meet some of them and it is nice to know their story, but knowing all of these names is not an entry requirement for heaven. My point is don't worry about the names as much as the lessons to be learned how God is working at this time in these places.
6. Verse 2: He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, but not as his father and mother had done. He got rid of the sacred stone of Baal that his father had made. ³ Nevertheless he clung to the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit; he did not turn away from them.
 - a) Remember I said that no king from the North was a good egg? That effectively is what these two verses are saying. My rough translation is "This current king is not as bad as his father, who made a statue to the false god named Baal. However, he still sinned as bad as his brother Jeroboam." Bottom line is this family not only turned from the true God of the world, but required the Israelites to do like wise.
 - b) A quick footnote about something that is confusing. Until this current king took power, both the kings of the Northern and Southern Kingdom were named Jeroboam. That is why the text mentions Jeroboam as king of the South and another Jeroboam the "son of Nebat" who was the last king of the Northern Kingdom.
 - c) OK John, I get the idea we are dealing with a bunch of bad eggs as kings as you like to call them. Why should we care? The answer is we're only on the third verse and we haven't even come to the heart of the story or any of the "good characters" yet. Therefore, hang in there as the good stuff is coming.
7. Verse 4: Now Mesha king of Moab raised sheep, and he had to supply the king of Israel with a hundred thousand lambs and with the wool of a hundred thousand rams. ⁵ But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.
 - a) To explain this verse, remember that Chapter 1, Verse 1 (last lesson) opened with a similar statement that after Ahab's death, Moab rebelled against Israel. Here in Chapter 3, we're backtracking to the same event. Chapter 1 used this rebellion as a time marker. Now here we're discussing the rebellion itself. The quick historical version is a former king of Israel (Omri) apparently conquered Moab and they had to supply 100,000 lambs and ram's wool (each) to Israel for losing. Now many years later, this country is rebelling against Israel.

8. Verse 6: So at that time King Joram set out from Samaria and mobilized all Israel. ⁷ He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat king of Judah: "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?" "I will go with you," he replied. "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."
- Before I even comment on these verses, if you are thinking, "Why should I care about any of this stuff?" What about the introductory comments about how we make a difference for God? The answer is we're setting up the background to this story here and we're coming to that issue in another page. Therefore, hang in there as we're getting there.
 - Time for another very loose translation: The king of Northern Israel wanted to go attack the country of Moab. Therefore he organized all of the men of Northern Israel to go fight against this country. Then this king thought, "I still need more men so we will have Moab outnumbered. I know, I'll send a message to the king of Southern Israel to say in effect, "We are both Israelites. Help me conquer Moab and we'll both collect the spoil from this war effort." One has to remember that at this time in history, the king's word was it and whatever a king said, people did. Bottom line is both kings organized their resources to go attack Moab.
 - The unknown question at this point in history is, "Is this God's will?" My gut reaction is no, simply because the Northern Kingdom was not willing to seek God and the king of the Southern Kingdom should have not gone along with this plan. However, the plan is now in place, and we'll read on as to what happens next.
9. Verse 8: "By what route shall we attack?" he asked. "Through the Desert of Edom," he answered.
- A little history based on non-biblical sources should help here. The Moabites had strong defenses to the north and to the west. However, their weakest point of attack would be to come up from the south. Why did the Moabites not have a strong defense to the south? The quick answer is that it is a huge desert (wasteland) and hard for any army to survive from that direction. That is why the two kings plotted effectively, the weakest point to attack them is from the south so they traveled around the Dead Sea to the south to attack.
 - So how do we know this non-biblical source to be accurate? In the late 1800's in what was the country of Moab, a large stone was found called "The Moabite Stone". It tells the story of the Israelites attacking them as described in this chapter. That stone, found in 1868 in what is today Jordan. The stone itself was destroyed, but before that happened, a detailed description of what it was said was copied and that is now in the Louvre in Paris, France. The point is we have good archeological evidence to support this attack as accurate.
 - Meanwhile, let us return from France and get back to Israel. Since the attack needed to go through another kingdom called Edom, they also got the king of Edom involved in this plan and probably agreed to a three way split once they conquered Moab (again, think of the country of Jordan, today when describing the land of both Moab and Edom.)
10. Verse 9: So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. After a roundabout march of seven days, the army had no more water for themselves or for the animals with them.
- The story here is this combined army of three countries were now marching through the wilderness of "Edom" south of Moab. Armies survive either by taking whatever food and water they can find on the way or whatever supplies are brought to them. The point here is now they are out of water for themselves and the animals they brought as supplies and as food.
 - Now comes the good news, no more background of setting up the story. From this point forward, we're getting to the meat of the story and how it applies to our lives. The point here is that these three kings are now in trouble and the good news is that they focus on God to help them in what seems like an impossible situation. That is a good summary of our own lives: We get in situations that seem impossible to find a solution, we then turn to God and He works to make a difference for His glory. With that said, let's read on.

11. Verse 10: "What!" exclaimed the king of Israel. "Has the LORD called us three kings together only to hand us over to Moab?"
- a) I admit, I am fascinated by this verse. Remember that the Northern Kings did not trust in the God of the Israelites. The mother of the current king was Jezebel, who's famous in the bible for turning the king and the Israelites away from God to worship Baal. Yet when the three kings are in big trouble, the first thought of the king of (North) Israel was in effect, "What did we do to tick off God, so that we die out here in the desert?"
 - b) In other words, when the chips are really down, we realize God is there, He is in charge and our fates are in His hands, and not whatever else we may trust in, in order to help us through whatever situation we face.
 - c) With that dilemma stated, we now get to the heart of the story:
12. Verse 11: But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD through him?" An officer of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah. "
- a) At this point while the three kings are wondering what to do, the king of the Southern kingdom says, "Maybe we should find a prophet of God to consult for help." To put this another way, we can't pray as a group because one of us three kings is an Edomite and he doesn't trust in God and the king of the Northern Kingdom doesn't do a lot of praying so maybe we should find a prophet of God to help us here.
 - b) Remember that there is a large army from three countries assembled here. Apparently the prophet Elisha was either drafted to be part of this army or just happened to be in the area in case he was called into service as a prophet. If we learn nothing else, here is a reminder about our willingness to be a witness to the world around us for God. Elijah showed his willingness to be where the action is, in case he is called into service for God.
 - c) With that said, it is time for a quick reminder of who Elisha was. He was called to be a great prophet in Israel. Apparently he worked as an assistant to the prophet Elijah for a long time before Elijah was taken into heaven. Elisha asked Elijah before that event if he could have a "double portion" of Elijah's power. The implication of that request is Elisha wanted to be considered the next great power in Israel as a prophet just as Elijah was.
 - d) Bottom line here is that Elijah is no longer around, but even an officer of the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel recognized Elisha as a servant of the now famous Elijah. As I have been stating in previous lessons, if you get the names mixed up, remember that in the English word "Jesus", the "J" comes before the letter "S". Just remember that Elijah was much older and lived prior to Elisha. With that background stated, the point is that Elisha had the reputation of being an assistant to Elijah so he is trusted as a prophet.
 - e) Before we discuss what Elisha actually says to these three kings, I'm fascinated by the fact that Elisha was known as the man who poured water on the hands of Elijah. Most likely, this refers to an ancient Jewish ritual of washing one's hands before eating. My point is I have found that if one wants to be used greatly by God, which Elisha did desire by asking for the double portion, one has to be willing to work as a humble servant before one can be used greatly. I've yet to meet one person used in a mighty way by God who didn't have to first spend many years as a servant to another godly man or woman in order to understand how God does work in our lives. If nothing else this is another reminder of my principal that "Every Paul needs a Timothy and every Timothy needs a Paul". That just means every young believer should team with an older believer in order to pass on how God works in our lives.
 - f) In the meantime, it is time for these three kings to go meet Elisha.
13. Verse 12: 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.
- a) Jehoshaphat is saying, I do believe this man does have the gift of prophesy, which is just the ability to speak God's will (think His word) to others. Let's go listen to him.

14. Verse 13: Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What do we have to do with each other? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother." "No," the king of Israel answered, "because it was the LORD who called us three kings together to hand us over to Moab."
- a) If nothing else, I have to admit Elisha has guts. When one is in the kings' presence, one's life is now at risk. However that situation did not scare Elisha. I suspect Elijah trained him well on the principal of saying what it is God called one to say no matter what is the consequences of speaking God's will.
 - b) For Elisha to say to the king of (Northern) Israel, go to the prophets of your father and your mother, is meant as an insult. The mother of this king was Jezebel. She is the one who dined daily with hundreds of prophets of Baal. The father of this king was Ahab, and as the chapter opened, it said he built a statue to Baal. The point is Elisha was well aware that thing king was raised to trust in foreign gods, even though he was the king of the Israelites. That's why Elisha opens with this insult to start their meeting.
 - c) As I stated, I'm fascinated by the fact that king of Israel who knows he is in trouble, seeks the true God when the chips are on the line. That king believed it was God's will for the three kings to work together to go conquer Moab. Whether or not it was actually God's will in effect will be answered in the next verse. Speaking of which;
15. Verse 14: Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you."
- a) Time to paraphrase Elisha's response: I don't care for you, the king of North Israel, nor do I care about trying to help you, the king of Edom. That's because neither one of you seek the true God for guidance. However, the king of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) is a man who does care about pleasing God and I'm willing to seek God for his sake.
 - i) But John, isn't the role of a prophet to lead others to God? Of course. The point is just to say we seek God when the chips are down is one thing. It's quite another to want to seek God daily to guide one's life. That is what Elisha is saying albeit in a negative tone in these verses. However, because Elisha does respect the one king of these three he is willing to help anyway.
 - b) It may help to recall something that God told Elijah to do back in 1st Kings 19:15-16. Back when Elijah was depressed and God still wanted to use him for a great purpose, God told Elijah to go anoint not only Elisha, but also the next king of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) as well as the next king of Edom, the country directly to the south of where the Israelites are currently fighting. I bring that up here, because I suspect that Elijah told Elisha that he never completed that mission and now Elisha is staring at the son of Ahab, who God has condemned for turning from Him. I'd argue that Elisha is aware that God has already pronounced judgment on that family so Elisha is not interested in helping him. However for the sake of the "good" king, Elisha will see what God has to say here.
16. Verse 15, (Part 1): But now bring me a harpist."
- a) To understand this request, think about a couple of things:
 - i) First, these kings are in the middle of the desert with a large army about to attack a country called Moab. That means along with this army, somebody must have this musical instrument and the ability to praise God with that instrument.
 - ii) This also means there is God-fearing people in this army of three nations.
 - b) The other interesting point to get here is that Elisha didn't just start praying or recite some message from God that he had in his head. He wanted a musician for inspiration.
 - c) This leads me to the issue of why do we have music in our church services? To be honest, preachers can preach without that music coming first. People can listen without having a short concert before hand. To further state the obvious, there is lots of secular music now and I'm pretty positive back then too. So, why do we have music today in church in order to seek God and why did Elisha request a musician? The answer is that it is a way (not "the") way to get our collective focus upon God with music that focuses on Him.

- d) To continue, music inspires us to get our focus on him. There is something about either singing to God or listening to other people singing about God that helps get and keep our collective focus on Him. I don't believe it's a requirement for Christians to do so, nor do I believe it was necessary for Elisha to do so here, but in both cases hearing such music gets the audience to focus upon God better. I suspect Elisha called for this musician not just so he could get his own focus upon God, but so the audience that he's about to preach to will also get their focus upon God as Elisha speaks on his behalf.
 - e) Finally, notice in this passage that the musician's name is not given. This is a subtle way of saying one can be of service to God without getting credit on the spot. Was God aware of the musician's name? Of course. The point is we don't always get the public credit in this lifetime for our service to Him. Having the musician there gets the audience to focus upon God and not the musician himself or herself. I'm sure a nice tune was played and maybe a song that got the group's focus upon God.
 - f) While that music was playing it is time for Elisha's message.
17. Verse 15 (Part 2): While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha ¹⁶ and he said, "This is what the LORD says: Make this valley full of ditches. ¹⁷For this is what the LORD says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink.
- a) Before I talk about what Elisha actually said here, let me make one final comment about the music being played. As someone who has taught God's word in public settings, I do know first hand that such music can inspire me. Like Elisha all of sudden I believe I get messages from God what to say that was not written in my prepared notes. It doesn't happen all the time that way and I'm not saying it is a requirement for pastors or teachers to have such music. I'm just saying that just as this music was playing as all of a sudden God had a message for Elisha, so God often has messages for preachers and teachers that are not necessarily part of the planned speech. It isn't a requirement for God to work this way, but I have noticed that if an audience is collectively thinking about God such as can happen after music is played that focuses upon Him, I have seen God work in ways that can't be explained by preparation alone.
 - b) With that little unplanned speech out of my system, back to the text. While the music was playing God had a message for Elisha to give to the kings and through them, the message is to the three armies that are surrounding these kings.
 - c) Let me give the message and expand upon it a little: Remember that the issue at hand is that there is no water for these armies. It is hot and a very dry desert climate. Now God is telling the kings to go dig lots of ditches as God will fill those ditches with water. To prove this is from God, there will not be any rain nor wind, yet water will just come out of nowhere to fill up these ditches. God is saying through Elisha that there will be enough water not only for the soldiers, but also for their animals to drink.
 - d) Stop and think about the faith it took to carry out that order. It meant that all three of the kings had to trust in God. All three of them had to believe that Elisha spoke for God and that they had to obey what it was they had to say. What is more, they had to order all of their men who are thirsty to go work out in the hot sun and dig ditches to collect this rain that is supposed to miraculously come from God. That took faith.
 - e) If you haven't noticed by now, we are back to the main theme of this lesson, which is how we go about making a difference for God. To use the example here, God told them to go and dig ditches as to expect a miracle of water showing up out of nowhere. Give all of the soldiers credit for willing to listen to these kings. Give the kings credit for willingness to listen to Elisha and a willingness to obey. I suspect that the kings were desperate enough to try anything. Besides they didn't have to dig themselves, so they obeyed what it was that Elisha had to say. Besides they knew Elisha was an assistant to Elijah and Elijah was the one who made it rain after a three year drought some years earlier.

- f) Before we move on, let's get back to the idea of how do we dig our own "ditches" based on what God calls us to do in our lives. In other words, how do we know when God's calling us to take on some sort of project. Often we don't know until hindsight. I believe it is just doing what we believe is the right thing to do at any given moment and then watch God work once we make an effort for Him. To state the obvious we have to pray through such situations and then do what we believe is the right thing to do. In this particular case, the three kings were listening to background music focusing on God, they were listening to a man who had a reputation as being a prophet of God and then they took a step in faith to have a bunch of ditches dug to see if God was going to work this way. To put it another way, they had nothing to lose as they were in a desert dying of thirst anyway.
- g) Speaking of being back in the desert, it's time to get back to the story itself.
18. Verse 18: This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also hand Moab over to you.
¹⁹You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, stop up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones."
- a) John's loose translation: Because you have sought Me for guidance in your lives I will give you victory over your problems. What seems impossible to you is no problem for Me to solve as it is My will to guide you for My glory. To be more specific, because the Israelites did dig a whole bunch of ditches God will fill them with water to drink and to take with them as they go out and fight in His name.
- b) So why does God want to specifically destroy this placed called Moab? The short version is that they are rebelling against God's people. Does that mean that God wants us to fight against any group that doesn't believe in Him? Of course not. We are living witnesses for Him not destroyers of nations. However, there are times for war and apparently we have one of them here. God is specifically saying here, I want the Israelite solders to literally go and destroy these cities and ruin their fields so that they know the God of the Israelites is also the same God that rules over the whole world. That is why God is asking them to go fight to defeat the enemy, cut down their trees (that produce fruit), put rocks on top of the places where their water springs occur and place rocks all over the place where they go to grow food. But isn't that cruel? This is a message that God is not to be messed with and it costs the lives of those who refuse to believe in God.
- i) In other words we are back to judgment and God is using the Israelites to carry out His judgment on those who refuse to believe in His name.
- ii) Bottom line is the three kings and their army's obey God's command and water is going to fill the ditches that they dug.
- c) Let me say one more thing on this topic before I move on. I am convinced that God works based on how much effort we are willing to make to "dig a ditch" on his behalf. If we just go and dig a small hole, that's all God is willing to bless us based on that small hole. If we dig a large ditch, God will fill that ditch. Life is never a guarantee that whatever effort we make will pay off, but I have watched time and time again of those willing to "dig ditches" in order to succeed at some project and God comes through for them.
- d) I also have to admit that whenever I think of this story, I am reminded of the story of my fellow Croatians who immigrated to the United States in last 100 years. There used to be an old joke in California that there were two groups of "slavs" (Slavic people) that lives in California, the fisherman Slavs and the ditch digging Slavs. That's because the two main occupations of this group of immigrants were either fisherman or ditch diggers for some building projects. I happen to know that some of those ditch diggers went on to become great real estate developers locally just as some of the fisherman went on to successful in their own industry. My point is that hard work usually pays off when one is wiling to do the necessary work in order to succeed at a project.
- i) In other words the principal of making the effort "ditch dig and watch God work" not only applies to God but to any effort we make in order to do the right thing.

19. Verse 20: The next morning, about the time for offering the sacrifice, there it was--water flowing from the direction of Edom! And the land was filled with water.
- a) Before I talk about the water miracle of the ditches being filled, I love the fact that the time of the day is marked by the "time of the morning sacrifice". Back in Jerusalem, I assume there were priests performing their daily ritual of offering up lambs as a sacrifice to God. The connection is while the priests were doing what God called them to do and trusting that God will continue to provide the lambs for them, God is working here in the desert so that Israel can win its victory and provide more lambs for the future.
 - b) By the way, the text never says it was a flash flood that filled the ditches. I just suspect that is the way God worked at this moment. If you have ever seen a flash flood, it often comes in dry times based on water bursting from a source far away and then flowing to a valley. That is what I suspect happened here. If those ditches were never dug, the water would have kept on flowing and not be collected for the soldiers to drink. The point is the effort made to dig those ditches paid off as God blessed the work that they did here.
 - c) So how did they know the water came from Edom? That is logic. Edom was up on a hill and the Israelites were in a deserted valley. Whether it was a flowing water source or just some damn that broke in Edom, either way the flash flood provided the water that all of the soldiers needed to survive at this point.
 - d) At this point the story switches to the point of view of the enemy, the Moabites:
20. Verse 21: Now all the Moabites had heard that the kings had come to fight against them; so every man, young and old, who could bear arms was called up and stationed on the border. ²² When they got up early in the morning, the sun was shining on the water. To the Moabites across the way, the water looked red--like blood. ²³ "That's blood!" they said. "Those kings must have fought and slaughtered each other. Now to the plunder, Moab!"
- a) To set the scene, the point is the Moabites had army scouts who spotted this large army that was assembled out in the desert. Therefore, the Moabites mobilized their own forces in the direction of this large army. To add a bit of geography, there's a lot of red color in the rocks of this area. If one has ever traveled in some desert locations, there is often a lot of red in the color of that area and when the sun shines on it, first thing in the morning, it can even appear more red. The bottom line here is the Moabite scouts saw the water that appeared in the ditches and from their distant perspective, they were convinced that the water was very bloody. In other words they thought that the armies of these three united kings were fighting amongst themselves and a great slaughter had taken place.
 - b) Before I go on from here, this was a reasonable thing to think. After all the Northern and the Southern kingdoms of Israel had a history of fighting each other. Plus the Edomites were joining their side so internal squabbles were possible. Plus the Moabites must have been scared of this army approaching them so seeing the bloody looking water must have been a sign of relief to them that their war was already over before it began.
 - i) That is why the Moabites shouted amongst themselves, "We have already won this war. Quick, let us march down there and collect what we can off the dead bodies as we don't even have to go fight them!"
 - c) I mentioned earlier there was a great archeological discovery called the "Moabite stone" that records this battle from the Moabite perspective. It is amazing how history can be slanted based on who is writing the history. I heard Chuck Missler talk about when he was in Egypt, they had monuments to their victory over the Israelites in the 1967 war. If one knows that war, the Israelites defeated Egypt and if was not for a peace deal lead by the United States, the Israelites probably would have wiped out the Egyptian army at that point in that war. My point is when one reads historical accounts of a battle keep in mind who is the author as to the perspective of what happened in that war.
 - d) In the meantime, it is time for us to read the results of what actually happened in the war between the Israelites and the Edomites based on the bloody looking water.

21. Verse 24: But when the Moabites came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and fought them until they fled. And the Israelites invaded the land and slaughtered the Moabites.²⁵ They destroyed the towns, and each man threw a stone on every good field until it was covered. They stopped up all the springs and cut down every good tree. Only Kir Hareseth was left with its stones in place, but men armed with slings surrounded it and attacked it as well.
- a) Speaking of telling history based on perspective, the bible tells us that the Israelites won this war big time. When the Moabites came to collect the spoil of what they thought were many dead Israelite soldiers, they then lost the war big time. The text goes out of its way to point out that not only did the Israelites win, but they did what God commanded them to do, go conquer the land of Moab, destroy the towns, stop up the springs and cut down their trees that produced food for the Moabites. While all of this seems cruel to read from our perspective, one has to remember this is a kill or be killed way of living. One has to see this from the perspective of God showing the nations around Israel that God's people are not to be messed with as long as they are trusting in Him to guide their lives.
 - b) The lesson for us of course, is in effect we too can't lose if we are trusting in God to guide our lives. We may lose a battle or war, but eternally we are betting on the right horse. So if we are willing to bet our eternal souls here, how do we know we are betting as you put it, on the right horse? How do we know that the bible is not biased toward the Israelites winning just as the Moabite stone is biased toward their side winning?
 - c) To answer, remember the acronym "MAPS". The back of most bibles has a series of maps and that acronym actually helps us to understand how we know the bible is truly God's word. That acronym is "Manuscripts, Archeology, Prophecy and Statistics or MAPS for short. We have thousands of manuscripts of the bible from three continents that validate the accuracy of the bible. Yes there are copyists errors but they are not consistent from one place to the other. When it was a death sentence to own a bible, one can understand how copyist errors could occur let alone the normal process of hand copying these books. Yet by comparing all of those copies let alone the thousands (millions) of ancient quotes we have of what others believe were the original scriptures, we can pretty much validate almost all of the bible as being accurate based on the way it was written.
 - i) The next step is archeology. To put it simply the Moabite stone is not the only bit of archeological evidence we have of biblical events. There is lots of archeological evidence to support the bible as accurate.
 - ii) The next bit of evidence is prophecy. About one third of the bible is short term and long-term predictions of which the bible has a 100% track record of being accurate. If one simply believes the Old Testament was written long before the New Testament was written, it is amazing to study the predictions that came true let along all of the many predictions fulfilled from one book to the other.
 - iii) The final bit of evidence is statistics. Scholars have counted over 300 predictions made about the Messiah in the Old Testament that have been fulfilled through what Jesus accomplished in his life and death. I'm going to talk about that some more in the next lesson. Those same bible scholars count over 600 predictions to be fulfilled about Jesus Second Coming. My point is statistics about His first coming give us support to trust in the future events of the Second Coming.
 - d) The reason I went through this exercise in explaining MAPS, is to build up our own faith in our own times of doubts. Let's face it we can read about the ditches and just think, "OK a flash flood came, so what?" We can also think the bible says the Israelites won the war but the Moabite stone gives credit for their country winning the war. It's very easy to go and look at one piece of evidence and say it can be interpreted more than one way. If we start looking at hundreds or thousands of these little pieces of evidence one has to get to a point where we realize, all of this is way too much to be a coincidence, which is the logical conclusion one would come to if one studies it as a collective body of work.

- e) While I was going off on my MAPS tangent, the Israelites were still fighting this war. The text says they accomplished all that God wanted them to do, except for one city that was left in place. Think of this as a 98% victory and not a 100% victory. So why does the bible bother to tell us about this one city that was not conquered? One reason was to show the accuracy of the bible version as it mentions a specific town not conquered. It also shows that the Israelites failed to completely conquer this group, which means that they will live to fight again another day. The text even mentions the fact that the Israelites did make the effort to attack this place, but failed to conquer it. The "why" is not given.
 - f) The other possible reason this one city is mentioned is the next verse talks about the king of Moab trying to survive and what he does in desperation. This one city may be where he was located at that time. With that said, let's finish the chapter.
22. Verse 26: When the king of Moab saw that the battle had gone against him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through to the king of Edom, but they failed.²⁷ Then he took his firstborn son, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall. The fury against Israel was great; they withdrew and returned to their own land.
- a) The point here is the Moabites were losing badly and the king in his desperation took 700 soldiers (probably his personal guards) to get out but this group also lost. In a moment of desperation, the king offered as a sacrifice to his god, his firstborn son. This is their king in a desperate time saying, god (false one) to prove my loyalty to you, I'm willing to kill the next in line to be the king to see if you will act to rescue me out of this situation.
 - b) Before I say anything else, let us go back to the famous story in Genesis where God asks Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. In effect God is saying to Abraham, are you willing to trust me as much as the foreign kings in the area are willing to trust in their false gods? We see evidence of that here with the king of Moab. To state the obvious, this sacrifice by the Moab king didn't work and this was proof to him that the God of the Israelites is more powerful than the god he trusted in even to the point of offering his son as a sacrifice.
 - c) Let me also state the obvious that God never calls on us to kill or even hurt those around us to prove our loyalty to Him. God calls us on to be a witness for Him and that's how we show our love to Him, not by offering up people or even animals as a sacrifice. To say it another way, Jesus paid the complete sacrifice so we don't have to make any sacrifices in order to prove our worth to Him.
 - d) Coming back to the text, at this point the Israelites and the Edomites withdrew. The war was over, the Israelites won, and the Moabite king is now painfully aware that the God of the Israelites was far more powerful than the god he trusted in. All this suffering proved God's existence to that corner of the world at that time.
23. The next chapter switches topics, which is why I wanted to focus specifically here on teaching about taking the effort to trust in God and how we can make an effort in faith to do that. As I have stated, I don't think God wants us to care about the specific historical events as much as He is interested in us learning how this applies to our lives. Hopefully this lesson will inspire all of us to "dig our own ditches" in anticipation of God working in our lives. That's the key point that I wanted to get across here, and with that said, I'll end the lesson here.
24. Father, first we are grateful for our salvation and the fact we don't have to earn it. We desire that our time be used for Your glory. We don't know what You have planned for us today or coming up in the future, but our trust is that You will guide us for Your glory. With that said, help us to do the footwork to dig our own ditches in preparation for You working in our lives, whatever those ditches happen to be. Make it obvious to us how You would like to use us and what you want us to do to make that difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.