

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF ELISHA

STUDY NUMBER TWO - II Kings 3:1-27

TEXT:

- v. 1 Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.
- v. 2 And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, though not like his father and his mother; for he put away the sacred pillar of Baal which his father had made.
- v. 3 Nevertheless, he clung to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin; he did not depart from it.
- v. 4 Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and used to pay the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.
- v. 5 But it came about, when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.
- v. 6 And King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel.
- v. 7 Then he went and sent word to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?" And he said, "I will go up; I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."
- v. 8 And he said, "Which way shall we go up?" And he answered, "The way of the wilderness of Edom."
- v. 9 So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom; and they made a circuit of seven days' journey, and there was no water for the army or for the cattle that followed them.
- v.10 Then the king of Israel said, "Alas! For the Lord has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab."
- v.11 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?" And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah."
- v.12 And Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the Lord is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.
- v.13 Now Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What do I have to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother." And the king of Israel said to him, "No, for the Lord has called these three kings together to give them into the hand of Moab."
- v.14 And Elisha said, "As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you.
- v.15 "But now bring me a minstrel." And it came about, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him.
- v.16 And he said, "Thus says the Lord, 'Make this valley full of trenches.'

- v.17 "For thus says the Lord, 'You shall not see wind nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, both you and your cattle and your beasts.
- v.18 'And this is but a slight thing in the sight of the Lord; he shall also give the Moabites into your hand.
- v.19 'Then you shall strike every fortified city and every choice city, and fell every good tree and stop all springs of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.'"
- v.20 And it happened in the morning about the time of offering the sacrifice, that behold, water came by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.
- v.21 Now all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them. And all who were able to put on armor and older were summoned, and stood on the border.
- v.22 And they rose early in the morning, and the sun shone on the water, and the Moabites saw the water opposite them as red as blood.
- v.23 Then they said, "This is blood; the kings have surely fought together, and they have slain one another. Now therefore, Moab, to the spoil!"
- v.24 But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites arose and struck the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they went forward into the land, slaughtering the Moabites.
- v.25 Thus they destroyed the cities; and each one threw a stone on every piece of good land and filled it. So they stopped all the springs of water and felled all the good trees, until in Kir-hareseth only they left its stones; however, the slingers went about it and struck it.
- v.26 When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him 700 men who drew sword, to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not.
- v.27 Then he took his oldest son who was to reign in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall. And there came great wrath against Israel, and they departed from him and returned to their own land.

INTRODUCTION:

First In our last study we saw Elisha take the mantle in hand from his leader and guide Elijah, as he departed into glory. Elisha's first miracles were performed in the striking of the waters of the Jordan River and they parted for him to walk through on dry land; and then the second miracle was the purifying of the waters in Jericho; and then the third miracle was witnessed in the curse which was pronounced upon the lads who were mocking him in derision as he came to the city of Bethel. And as the story concluded, there were two female bears that had torn up 42 of his lads who were making light of the prophets and of his ministry.

① Elisha is making a reverse Trip! - Jordan - Jericho
20mi. to Bethel - Northern Kingdom - Gold calves

A. School of Prophets

B. " " False Prophets

"Goup You Bald head!"

"Come down From the cross"

Heard About it
From Elijah!

We left Elisha going to Mt. Carmel and then from there to the principal city of Samaria which is the center for all of the political activity for the Northern Kingdom.

Now as we open the study, he is in Samaria and it will be interesting to note his international effect in ministry upon the leaders who are in power in the study.

v. 1 "Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years."

Daddy Killed
in battle
wasn't going
to make the
same mistake

Jehoram was another son of Ahab and Jezebel. They had two sons, one Ahaziah, and he had reigned for a very brief period of time, and had sent his troops into war against Moab, but did not go himself, staying home in the refuge of the palace, he fell out of one of the upper windows and ended up terribly hurt and was sick in bed, and went to call upon Baalzebub, the god of the flies in Ekron. As a result of his consultation with Baalzebub rather than the living God, Elijah confronts Ahaziah with this, whereupon Ahaziah sends several troops to apprehend Elijah, but Elijah each time calls fire from heaven. On the third occasion he goes with the captain and his fifty men to Ahaziah to pronounce the fact that he will indeed die.

Upon his death then, Jehoram, the son of Ahab, becomes king over Israel at Samaria. The beginning of his reign is in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat who is king of Judah. And it tells us further that Jehoram reigned for a period of 12 years.

873-848 BC
Total
25 yrs.

v. 2 "And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, though not like his father and his mother; for he put away the sacred pillar of Baal which his father had made."

Keep The end
in view
How do you want
to be
remembered?

In summing up the life and leadership of Jehoram, the son of Ahab and Jezebel, we find that he is just like every king that has reigned in the northern nation of Israel. "He did evil in the sight of the Lord."

I think it is important for us to note the fact that our lives are open before the Lord.

- * II Chron. 16:9 says "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on the behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward Him."
- * Proverbs 15:3 "The eyes of the Lord are in every place watching the evil and the good."
- * Hebrews 4:13 "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him, with whom we have to do."

There is this stipulation about Jehoram, however, and that is that he was not like his father and his mother, for when he came to the place of leadership, he did put away the sacred pillar of Baal which his father had made. He, however, remained in the tradition of his father in worshipping and leading his people.

Computer
Print Out !!
ON Your
Life !! *

I think it is also important for us to realize that the Lord not only sees, but he also registers the deed of each one. And in looking over the life of Jehoram, the Lord does take note of the fact that he did put away the sacred pillar of Baal.

Character -
Virtue
Honesty !!
Matter !!

Rev. 20:12 certainly vindicates this thought: "And I saw the dead, the great and the small standing before the throne, and books were opened, and another book was opened which is the Book of Life, and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds."

v. 3 "Nevertheless, he clung to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin; he did not depart from it."

Jehoram, as the next king in the Northern Kingdom, follows in the footsteps of the first king, Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Jeroboam was a political figure, and religiously he erected golden calves in both Dan and Bethel, and used religion only to accomplish greater political advantage.

Use Religion to Accomplish A Political Agenda !!

Jehoram clung to the sins of Jeroboam and ordered his reign after that of Jeroboam.

v. 4 "Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and used to pay the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams."

Found
Archaeologically

Moab had been enslaved to Israel for most of the history of the Northern Kingdom. However, as Ahab's kingdom began to become shaky and Ahaziah took over, at this point, the Moabites rebelled against Israel, and war began.

Terms of Peace + Taxation !

During these years when they were subjected to Israel, they gave to them 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.

v. 5 "But it came about, when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel."

* Proverbs 16:7 "When a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

The historical reference made here in verse 5 is recorded in II Kings 1:1 when it says: "Now Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. And Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber which was in Samaria and became ill. So he sent messengers and said to them,

Go inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover from this sickness. The angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, Is it because there is no god in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron. Now therefore, thus says the Lord, You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die. Then Elijah departed."

Ahaziah should have been leading his troops in war against Moab, but he preferred the security of the palace, probably because of the death of his father in such a tragic way previously, having died in battle.

v. 6 "And King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel."

King Jehoram is just like Ahaziah and like Ahab and Jezebel his mother and father. You never find them turning to the Lord in time of crisis. He simply does what he thinks he needs to do, and he moves out and tries to get Israel excited about fighting against the invasion of Moab.

v. 7 "Then he went and sent word to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, 'The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?' And he said, 'I will go up; I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.'"

Jehoshaphat makes the mistake here in that he did not seek the mind of the Lord in this matter before he made a commitment to Jehoram.

II Chron. 18:1-3 "Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, and he allied himself by marriage with Ahab. And some years later he went down to visit Ahab at Samaria, and Ahab slaughtered many sheep and oxen for him, and the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramoth-gilead. And Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Will you go with me against Ramoth-gilead? And he said to him, I am as you are, and my people as your people, and we will be with you in the battle."

And then we have the statement in verse 4 by Jehoshaphat, which is absent in this situation, "Moreover Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, Please inquire first for the Word of the Lord."

ISA. 55:8-11

In chapter 19 it says of Jehoshaphat when he returned back to Jerusalem that he was met by Jehu who had said, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord and so bring wrath on yourself from the Lord? There is some good in you for you have removed the Ashteroth from the land and you have set your heart to seek God. So Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem and went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and brought them back to the Lord the God of their fathers."

Affection
Anticipation
Advice

Older we
get the less
we need
Advice?

use This!

In chapter 20 of II Chronicles then, when Jehoshaphat faces this great multitude surrounding him as a nation, says in verse 3 that "Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the Lord" And then his beautiful prayer, as he stood among the assembly, said, "Oh Lord, the God of our fathers, art Thou not God in the heavens? And are not Thou ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Thy hand so that no one can stand against Thee. Didst Thou not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and give it to the descendants of Abraham Thy friend forever. And they lived in it and have built Thee a sanctuary there for Thy name saying, Should evil come upon us, the sword or judgment, or pestilence or famine, we will stand before this house and before thee. For thy name is in this house and cried of thee in our distress and thou will hear and deliver us."

And he concludes that prayer by saying, "Oh our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against, nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on thee."

v. 8 "And he said, 'Which way shall we go up?' And he answered, 'The way of the wilderness of Edom.'"

He is immediately willing to put his troops at the disposal of Jehoram in Israel without consulting the Lord, and now he only seeks instructions as to which way they are going to go up to be in battle. "So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. And they made a circuit of seven days' journey, and there was no water for the army or for the cattle that followed them."

v. 9 *So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom; and they made a circuit of 7 days journey and there was no water for the army or for the cattle that followed them.*

There are three kings here that are joining together:

- The king of Israel
- The king of Judah and
- The king of Edom to go against Moab.

And they go in a round about way for 7 days journey in preparation for the battle, and then a need arises.

There is no water for the army or for the cattle. This could mean the demise of all three of these kings and their military forces.

You will always find that when you are taking steps in your own wisdom and presuming upon the will of God that you will immediately have needs.

The Lord has promised to supply all our needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus, and we experience that provision and prosperity in our lives when we are walking in obedience in the center of His will.

Whenever a need arises, it constitutes a re-examination of where we have stepped out of the will of God or what it is the Lord is trying to teach us in the midst of circumstances that we don't understand.

v.10 "Then the king of Israel said, 'Alas! For the Lord has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab.'"

Proverbs 19:3 "The foolishness of man subverts his way and his heart rages against the Lord."

It is only now in the midst of dire circumstances that the king of Israel even mentions the Lord; and this mention of the Lord is in a negative way. The Lord is calling these three kings together to give them into the hand of Moab to be defeated here in the wilderness.

v.11 "But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there not a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?' And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, 'Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah.'"

In contrast to the response of Jehoram, Jehoshaphat asks for a prophet of the Lord to give them wisdom at this time and to inquire of the Lord by the prophet as to why these circumstances are the way they are.

I think Jehoshaphat realizes that he along with Jehoram and the king of Edom, but basically these two, Jehoshaphat and Jehoram, are guilty of making all these plans and commitments before consultation with the Lord.

One of the hardest things in our Christian lives is to learn how to live with divine authority, to learn how to patiently consult and seek the Lord's will before we make commitments and enter into agreements and sign contracts so that truly the Lord is leading us rather than us leading him, and asking him to bless the commitments we have already made.

Jehoshaphat's question is very crucial: Is there not a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?

It is interesting that Jehoram does not answer this question. He probably did not know. And yet one of the king's servants answered and said, "Elisha, the son of Shaphat, is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah."

It is certain that Jehoram knew of Elijah because of the bitter resentment and hatred that both Ahab and Jezebel had for him. And perhaps during the intervening years, and with the departure of Elijah, Jehoram was far enough distant from spiritual things that he was not aware of the fact that Elisha had now in God's divine program taken over the prophetic office.

v.12 "And Jehoshaphat said, 'The word of the Lord is with him.' So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him."

Never learned that from his Father-Mother-Big Brother

Plans + Commitments before Consultation

Prov. 3:5,6
Learn not

Ps. 50:5

This might be Old Faithful Obadiah

The immediate response of Jehoshaphat in this situation is "The word of the Lord is with him." He has evidently had some encounter with Elisha and had certainly knew of Elijah, and knows that the word of the Lord is with Elisha, just like it was with Elijah.

As a result of this favorable recommendation on the part of Jehoshaphat, the three kings, the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, and Edom, all go down to have an interview with Elisha.

v.13 "Now Elisha said to the King of Israel, 'What do I have to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother.' And the king of Israel said to him, 'No, for the Lord has called these three kings together to give them into the hand of Moab.'"

Elisha's response to Jehoram certainly tells us a lot about him when his first question to him is "What do I have to do with you?"

Don't come crying to me, just because you got yourself in hot water

Ezekiel 14:3 "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and have put right before their faces a stumbling block of their iniquity. Should I be consulted by them at all?"

Elisha then commands Jehoram to go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother. Here he has reference to Ahab and Jezebel and the fact that in their household they sustained 450 prophets of Baal during Ahab's reign as king, and why does he need to come and consult of Elisha, the prophet of the Lord God, when he has all of these false prophets to consult of the god Baal?

Died at Carmel

Ahaziah his brother hadn't done any better, in that he was consulting of Baalzebub the god of Ekron at the time of his illness rather than of the Lord God. And Elisha had witnessed all that, and now he tells Jehoram to go and do the same thing.

And the king of Israel said to him, 'No, for the Lord has called these three kings together to give them into the hand of Moab.'

Defiant spirit

Here you have the warped concept of divine existence by Jehoram, feeling that the Lord had ordered all of these circumstances to bring these kings together to place them in bondage to Moab.

v.14 "And Elisha said, 'As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you.'"

Elisha is not overly impressed with the fact that these three kings have come to consult him, and his immediate response is to take issue with Jehoram, king of the Northern Kingdom. 'As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand,' is a Lord who is alive, and I stand before him, and will one day stand before him in judgment. Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, who certainly has a heart

Without the fact Jehoram expresses his opinion !!

God Always getting in the way !! Joy robber

for God, I would not look at you nor see you, to be consulted of you at this time, in other words.

v.15 "But now bring me a minstrel." And it came about, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."

Get A Guitar player

Elisha sends out for the musicians, and in the time of worship and meditation, as the music is being played, the hand of the Lord comes upon Elisha, so that he can speak the instructions and messages to these three kings.

v.16 "And he said, 'Thus says the Lord, "Make this valley full of trenches."'"

v.17 "For thus says the Lord, You shall not see wind nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, both you and your cattle and your beasts."

Isn't God Gracious & Good

Moses Hit The Rock! God still provided water! We Are Sinners! → Savior

When the multitude was hungry in John 6: the Lord provided bread, and now they are thirsty here, and although they are out of the will of God in the way they have gone about these things, the Lord very graciously tells them what to do and how he will supply their needs.

They are first to build trenches in the valley, and then they will not see the wind nor the rain, but the valley will be filled with water, so that provision can be made for all of them and for their cattle and beasts.

v.18 "And this is but a slight thing in the sight of the Lord; he shall also give the Moabites into your hand."

Jer. 32:27 33:13

As a result of this message from the Lord, we can see how wrong Jehoram was in saying that the Lord had brought them down to give them into the hands of Moab, and to let them die of thirst. The Lord's desire is running completely contrary to this. He is filled with loving kindness, goodness and grace, and it is his desire to meet every need of his children who are willing to trust him for that provision.

And now the Lord is not only going to provide water, but he is also going to provide victory over the Moabites. It is a slight thing in the sight of the Lord to provide the water, and he will also give the Moabites into their hand and they will experience the victory.

v.19 "Then you shall strike every fortified city and every choice city, and fell every good tree and stop all springs of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones."

He is now giving the instructions for warfare, and how these three kings are to liquidate the Moabite opposition, by first striking the fortified cities, and every choice city, and then fall the good trees, and stop up the springs of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

This is to keep them from being able to re-inhabit the land and to once again become a power and threat to the children of Israel and of Judah.

v.20 "And it happened in the morning about the time of offering the sacrifice, that behold, water came by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water."

Along about 9:00 in the morning at the time of the offering of the sacrifice, water came up by way of Edom, and the country was filled with water--Just like the Lord had said.

v.21 "Now all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them. And all who were able to put on armor and older were summoned, and stood on the border."

At the same time as this coming of the water of refreshment for these three kings and their soldiers, the Moabites also heard that the kings had come to fight against them.

v.22 "And they rose early in the morning, and the sun shone on the water, and the Moabites saw the water opposite them as red as blood."

They evidently arose very early the next morning, and the sun, as it was coming up, shined on the water; and as the Moabites saw the water opposite them, it looked as red as blood.

v.23 "Then they said, 'This is blood; the kings have surely fought together, and they have slain one another. Now there, Moab, to the spoil!'"

As the Moabites look upon this water, it looks red and they form a wrong conclusion. Their conclusion is that these three kings have fought against other and have slain one another, and now all Moab has to do is go and take the spoil of all of this warfare.

v.24 "But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites arose and struck the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they went forward into the land, slaughtering the Moabites."

There is instant warfare and the victory is given into the hands of these three kings, just as the Lord promised.

Promised the water, and he promised the victory, and both are made good.

The Moabites are a very heathen people. They were descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew, and had a Baal-type worship, that involved human sacrifice to satisfy their god.

We Are Sliding Fast to
Certain Judgment!
Stem Cell Research!

Child Sacrifice
Male Prostitutes
Abortion
Homosexuality

v.25 "Thus they destroyed the cities; and each one threw a stone on every piece of good land and filled it. So they stopped all the springs of water and felled all the good trees, until in Kir-hareseth only they left its stones; however, the slingers went about it and struck it."

The picture in verse 25 is a picture of complete obedience to the Lord's instruction, and the carrying out of the war in the way that the Lord had commanded.

v.26 "When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him 700 men who drew sword, to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not."

The king of Moab witnesses the fact that the battle is too fierce and they are being defeated. He took his 700 Green Berets and tried to break through to the king of Edom, but he is not even able to do this.

v.27 "Then he took his oldest son who was to reign in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall. And there came great wrath against Israel, and they departed from him and returned to their own land."

When the king of Moab was frustrated in his counter-attack, he then took his oldest son, who was going to be ruling in his place over the land of Moab; and he took his life and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall, so that everybody could see. Because of this act, there came great wrath against Israel. And Israel departed from him and returned to their own land.

What a tragic conclusion to a Godless people, who are being defeated in this warfare, that this king would sacrifice his son as a burnt offering to placate the gods of the Moabites.

IRAQ - Afghanistan - Hiding in Temples - Schools - Suicide Bombers

CONCLUSION:

There are a number of lessons that we can learn from this particular study:

LESSON #1: Everything we do is witnessed by the Lord, and it is also recorded or registered by him.

LESSON #2: Jehoram and Jehoshaphat make the mistake of formulating plans and commitments before they consulted the Lord.

LESSON #3: Jehoshaphat put himself in a very serious situation by joining together with this Godless king in making a commitment to him without first discussing it with the Lord.

"Last ditch effort to seek the help of His God..."

7 lessons

- 89.
- ① Joel Rosenberg : Inside The Revolution
 - ② Mark Hitchcock : The Late Great United States
 - ③ Marcus Luttrell : Lone Survivor (Military Language)

7

WHEN GOD ABANDONS A NATION

Your Republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth century, with this difference—the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman Empire came from without, and your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country.

—Thomas Macaulay, British Parliamentarian, 1857

American culture is complex and resilient. But it is also not to be denied that there are many aspects of almost every branch of our culture that are worse than ever before, and that the rot is spreading.

—Robert Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*

God is love.
There's no more comforting, reassuring truth in the world than that. The God of the Bible is a God of compassion, kindness, grace, and mercy. More songs, hymns, and poems have been written about God's love perhaps than any other topic. People everywhere enjoy talking about the God who loves the world. And rightly so.

We don't, on the other hand, like to talk about His judgment. The notion of divine judgment has never been popular. How many best-selling books expound on the wrath of God? But the truth remains that the loving God of the Bible is also infinitely just and righteous and, therefore, must express His wrath against human sin. No one can read the Bible honestly and escape this fact.

One often-overlooked aspect of God's judgment is His dealing with nations. God has often judged entire nations in the past. Lengthy sections in the Old Testament are devoted to God's prophesied judgment against nations. God repeatedly pronounced judgment against Judah and Israel for their disobedience. The majority of the Old Testament prophets are devoted to this subject—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi. But Judah and Israel were not the sole recipients of God's just displeasure. God also announced judgment on Gentile nations for their sin. Long catalogs of condemnation are found in all the major Jewish prophets—Isaiah 13–23, Jeremiah 46–51, and Ezekiel 25–32—listing nation after nation that has found itself under the mighty hand of divine wrath.

But there's more. Genesis 19 records the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain for their gross sin. Ezekiel 16:49–50 gives the full reason for this divine judgment: "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it." As you can see, homosexuality was not the only "abomination" for which God judged Sodom, but it was the final straw.

God also judged Egypt, by means of a series of horrible plagues, for its failure to heed His command to let His people go (Exodus 5–12). The book of Nahum records God's judgment of the ancient Assyrian empire and its capital city of Nineveh in 612 BC for its violence, idolatry, pride, and selfish materialism. The brief prophecy of Obadiah is God's prediction of coming judgment on the kingdom of Edom for its arrogant sin against the Jewish people. The

prophet Daniel (chapter 5) records the sudden fall of the Babylonian empire to the Medo-Persians in 539 BC.

In light of the biblical record, we would be shortsighted to believe that God no longer judges nations for their sin. Which raises a very important and often-asked question: will God judge America for its sin?

America the Beautiful

The founding and development of the American republic is legendary. Any tour of America's great historical monuments or reading of the founding documents reveals a deep awareness of the power and providence of the Almighty. One simply cannot escape the deeply religious, and frequently Christian, underpinnings of the American republic.

But it seems that, by any measure, America has begun a startling slide into moral decay. Estimates as to when the moral decline began may vary, but all the leading cultural indicators drive one to the conclusion that America is rotting from within.

There's hardly a need to quote a long list of statistics. Almost everyone sees it. Moral corruption on television, in movies, and at the newsstand. The covers of most popular women's magazines today, like *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan*, are more explicit than the *Playboy* covers of the late 1950s. We see all around us evidence of our culture's "downward lemming-like rush."¹ Here are a few signs of the moral malaise in America.

- *Widespread acceptance of homosexuality promoted by the gay lobby.*
- *Abortion and the barbaric practice of partial-birth abortion.* About 50 million unborn babies are known to have been killed in the United States since the enactment of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that about 12–20 percent of the abortions performed nationwide are not reflected in their annual figures.

- *Pervasive Pornography.* The Internet has exploded its availability. It's a \$10–\$12 billion-a-year industry in the United States. Porn has become the norm.
- *Epidemic drug use and alcoholism.*
- *Raging sexual immorality and sexually transmitted diseases.* Here's a staggering statistic from the CDC that blew me away: 26 percent of American girls between the ages of fourteen and nineteen have at least one sexually transmitted disease.²
- *Unraveling of the family.* The United States has the world's highest divorce rate—currently twice what it was in 1960. "The risk of a marriage ending in divorce in the United States is close to 50 percent." At the same time, marriage rates are falling while cohabitation is on the rise. "From 1970 to 2004 the annual number of marriages per 1,000 adult women in the United States plunged by nearly 50 percent.... The number of unmarried, cohabiting couples has increased dramatically over the past four decades, and the increase is continuing."³ This trend is hardly surprising in light of Hollywood's consistent mockery of the traditional family.
- *The national catastrophe of out-of-wedlock birth.* In 1948, only 3.8 percent of all women in the United States weren't married when they gave birth. In 1960, the number rose slightly to 5 percent. The number today stands near 40 percent. By 2015, it's projected to be 50 percent. At that point illegitimacy will be a greater factor in fatherlessness than divorce. In eight of America's forty largest cities, unmarried women give birth to more than three out of every five children.⁴ "Out-of-wedlock births used to be a source of shame" and carried a social stigma, but now they're greeted with little more than a shrug. Surprisingly, according to the CDC, "teenagers account for only 23 percent of current out-of-wedlock births.... The vast majority of unwed mothers are old enough to know what they're doing.... Unwed

births are surging among women ages 25 to 29.”⁵ Again, Hollywood is setting the standard as more and more unmarried female megastars bear children.

America is hemorrhaging from within. The Huns and Vandals of moral rot are upon us. Herman Hoyt, a well-known Bible teacher, asks this searching question: “Within recent years, conditions within the country and criticism from without have raised the serious question of the continued greatness of this nation. Can this nation long endure with crime, lawlessness, and anarchy threatening from within...? Is this nation approaching dangerously near the point that other great nations reached before they disintegrated and disappeared?”⁶

I recently heard a man comment that the only way to promote morality in America is to convince Americans that “fornication is fattening.” I’m not even sure that would work! In light of the moral drift in America, it’s fitting to ask, Will God judge America?

The sobering answer appears to be that He has already started. The slide into the abyss has begun.

History's Pattern and Romans 1

History is strewn with the wreckage of many great nations that have risen to unusual power and influence, only to decline and fall under their own weight because of internal corruption, compromise, and a collapse of political will. It may well be that the United States today is at the apex of its power, just as Babylon was in the sixth century BC, prior to its sudden downfall in one night at the hands of the Medes and the Persians (Daniel 5). Any reasonable appraisal of moral conditions in the world today would justify divine judgment on any nation, including that of the United States. God is long-suffering and has blessed America with extraordinary benefits, including political and religious freedom and economic blessing. But one could argue that

Marriage
Business

II Cor. 6:14 applies here: "Do not be bound together with unbelievers, for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness. Or what harmony has Christ with _____, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"

LESSON #4: When a need arises in our lives, it is an indication that we are either out of the will of the Lord, or that He is preparing to give us new instructions.

LESSON #5: When a man does not know God, he formulates wrong opinions about what is happening in his life. Jehoram does this when he says, "Alas, for the Lord has called these three kings, to give them into the hand of Moab."

LESSON #6: How gracious the Lord is to give directions and insights into our problems and needs if we will only consult him.

LESSON #7: Victory will always result when we follow the Lord's way of doing things.

Ruth, the Moabitess - God has a program
as He looks on the heart.

Man looks on outward appearance

- * ① Repentance
- * ② Return
- * ③ Restore

Trust + Obey

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