

Dr. John Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 18.1, 2 Kings 3-4, Part 1 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 18.1, 2 Kings 3-4, Part 1, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Oswalt's lecture focuses on 2 Kings 3-4, specifically the ministry of Elisha and the attack on Moab. The lecture examines Israel's covenant with God and how the kings either upheld or failed to uphold it. **It highlights the responses of King Joram and King Jehoshaphat to a water crisis, contrasting Joram's doubt with Jehoshaphat's faith in seeking God's purpose.** Oswalt stresses that while God may permit trouble, it is not to harm us but to demonstrate His power and care, or to call us back to Him. **The lecture also explores the complexities of interpreting God's will versus human actions in the context of the Israelite's actions towards Moab, and the ultimate results of the conflict.**

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 18.1 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Kings).**



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3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 18.1, 2 Kings 3-4, Part 1

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Oswalt's lecture on 2 Kings 3-4, Part 1.

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on 2 Kings 3-4, Part 1

Summary:

Dr. Oswalt's lecture examines the narrative of the Israelite attack on Moab (2 Kings 3-4) through the lens of covenant theology and the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. He emphasizes that this period reveals how Israel is living out its covenant obligations, or failing to do so. The lecture also delves into the complexities of interpreting God's role in hardship and the actions of prophets. Oswalt frames the ministry of Elijah and Elisha not as two separate ministries but as one with the unified goal of preventing Baal worship from replacing Yahweh worship in both Israel and Judah.

Key Themes and Ideas:

- **The Covenant on the Ground:** This refers to the ongoing reality of the Sinai covenant in the lives of the Kings of Israel and Judah. It also highlights the frequent failure of these kings to uphold their covenant responsibilities. As Oswalt puts it, it is "the covenant in operation on the ground," but also "the covenant that has fallen to the ground."
- **The Moabite Revolt:** Moab's revolt against Israel after Ahab's death presents an opportunity to examine the leadership of Jehoram (Joram) and the contrasting responses of Jehoram and Jehoshaphat to crisis.
- **Jehoram's Double-Mindedness and Response to Crisis:** Jehoram's partial commitment to Yahweh is contrasted with his reaction to the water shortage. Oswalt argues that Jehoram's belief that "the Lord called us three kings together only to deliver us into the hands of Moab?" (2 Kings 3:10) stems from his "double-mindedness" - trying to serve both Yahweh and the world. This leads to a perception that God is "out to get him" when difficulties arise.

- **Jehoshaphat's Faith-Based Response:** In contrast to Jehoram, Jehoshaphat seeks guidance from a prophet, demonstrating a desire to understand God's purpose in the situation. Jehoshaphat asks, "is there no prophet of the Lord here through whom we may inquire of the Lord?" (2 Kings 3:11). Oswalt emphasizes, "If our hearts are fully his, then our response is, Lord, what do you want to do through this? What do you want to accomplish through this?"
- **God's Permissive Will vs. God as Tempter:** Oswalt carefully distinguishes between God actively causing evil and God *permitting* trouble for a greater purpose. He clarifies James's statement that "don't ever say you are tempted by God," emphasizing that God doesn't tempt us to do evil. However, God does "test us" and allows trials that ultimately provide opportunities for demonstrating his power and care. He states, "Nothing happens to us without his permissive will...But having come through his hands, he has good planned."
- **Elisha's Role and Prophetic Trances:** Elisha is portrayed as a blunt and powerful prophet. Oswalt notes the unique instance where Elisha calls for a harpist, possibly to induce a trance-like state (2 Kings 3:15). However, he cautions against reading too much into this, reminding us that "Every place else is simply a straightforward dialogue between God and the prophet."
- **Miracles: When and to What Degree:** Oswalt deconstructs the common tendency to diminish miracles by seeking natural explanations. He argues that the key is not *how* a miracle occurs, but *when* it occurs and *to what degree*. The fact that water appeared in the desert valley precisely when and as Elisha prophesied demonstrates God's power. "The issue of a miracle is not how. The issue of a miracle is when and to what degree. When God said it would happen, it happened. And it happened to the degree that God said where there's water running all over the land. That's our God."
- **Interpreting Prophetic Utterances:** Oswalt addresses the challenging passage about destroying Moabite cities (2 Kings 3:19). He suggests that Elisha's statement is not a *command* from God, but rather a *prediction* of what the Israelites will do. "Just because God permits us to do something doesn't mean that's what we should do." He uses the example of Elisha's prophecy about Hazael to illustrate this point: the prophecy foretells actions without necessarily endorsing them.

- **The Sacrifice of the Moabite King:** The lecture concludes by discussing the ambiguous outcome of the battle after the Moabite king sacrifices his son. Oswalt outlines various interpretations of the phrase "the fury against Israel was great" (2 Kings 3:27), including the possibility that the Israelites were shocked, Yahweh was angered, or the Moabites became desperate.

Quotes:

- "The covenant on the ground, is a bit of a pun because, on the one hand, it is the covenant in operation on the ground. But in another sense, it's the covenant that has fallen to the ground..."
- "Has the Lord called us three kings together only to deliver us into the hands of Moab?"
- "Is there no prophet of the Lord here through whom we may inquire of the Lord?"
- "Nothing happens to us without his permissive will...But having come through his hands, he has good planned."
- "The issue of a miracle is not how. The issue of a miracle is when and to what degree."
- "Just because God permits us to do something doesn't mean that's what we should do."

Implications:

This lecture provides a framework for understanding the complex relationship between God, his people, and the consequences of their actions. It also offers insights into interpreting scripture, particularly prophetic utterances, and grappling with the presence of suffering in the world. The main theme is that God is always working toward good even in the face of human choices that oppose Him.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 18.1, 2 Kings 3-4, Part 1

The Covenant on the Ground: A Study Guide to 2 Kings 3-4, Part 1

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the central theme that Dr. Oswalt identifies in the books of Kings, particularly relating to the covenant?
2. According to Dr. Oswalt, what is the primary goal of Elijah and Elisha's ministry?
3. Why did Moab revolt against Israel, and what was the historical context of their subjugation?
4. Why did Jehoram choose to attack Moab from the south, going through Judah and Edom?
5. How did Jehoram's reaction to the water shortage differ from Jehoshaphat's, and what does this reveal about Jehoram's relationship with Yahweh?
6. According to Dr. Oswalt, does God tempt us? Explain the difference between testing and tempting.
7. What was significant about Elisha requesting a harpist, and what does this suggest about prophetic practices?
8. What prophecy did Elisha make regarding the water supply and the outcome of the conflict with Moab?
9. Explain Dr. Oswalt's interpretation of Elisha's prophecy in verse 19 regarding the destruction of Moabite cities and resources.
10. How does Dr. Oswalt interpret the phrase "the fury against Israel was great" after the King of Moab sacrificed his son?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The central theme is the examination of how Israel fulfilled or failed to fulfill the covenant made with God at Mount Sinai. The covenant is seen as both "in operation" and "fallen to the ground" due to the kings' actions.

2. The primary goal is to ensure that Baal does not replace Yahweh as the God of the northern kingdom, Israel, and by extension, the southern kingdom, Judah. This involved confronting Baal worship and reaffirming Yahweh's sovereignty.
3. Moab revolted after the death of Ahab, seeing it as an opportunity to break free from Israelite subjugation. Moab had been subject to Israel since the time of David, for almost 200 years.
4. Jehoram chose to attack Moab from the south, going through Judah and Edom, possibly to launch a surprise attack or because the southern border was less defended. This route involved the cooperation of three kings.
5. Jehoram blames Yahweh, thinking God is "out to get him," while Jehoshaphat seeks a prophet to inquire of the Lord's intentions. This reveals Jehoram's double-mindedness and lack of trust in Yahweh compared to Jehoshaphat's faithful response.
6. Dr. Oswalt explains that God tests us, but He does not tempt us. Testing involves challenges that God allows to demonstrate His power and enable us to triumph, while tempting is inducing someone to do evil, which God never does.
7. Elisha requesting a harpist suggests a possible attempt to enter a trance state, although Dr. Oswalt cautions against over interpreting this. This practice was typical among prophets in the ancient world.
8. Elisha prophesied that the valley would be filled with water, even without wind or rain, providing water for the armies and their animals. He also prophesied that God would deliver Moab into their hands.
9. Dr. Oswalt interprets Elisha's prophecy in verse 19 not as a command from God, but as a foreknowledge of what the Israelites would do. God permits but does not necessarily endorse their destructive actions.
10. Dr. Oswalt says that commentators disagree on the meaning of this phrase. One theory suggests that it signifies the Israelites being shocked by the sacrifice and losing their will to fight, another says it describes Yahweh's anger, and a third that the Moabites went berserk.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the concept of "double-mindedness" as illustrated by King Jehoram's actions and attitude towards Yahweh. How does this relate to the challenges of maintaining faith in the face of adversity?
2. Compare and contrast the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, focusing on their shared goals and the different approaches they employed to combat Baal worship.
3. Analyze the ethical implications of Elisha's prophecy regarding the destruction of Moabite cities and resources. To what extent can such actions be justified within the context of divine command and warfare?
4. Explore the role of miracles in the narratives of 2 Kings 3-4, focusing on Dr. Oswalt's perspective on the nature of miracles and their significance as demonstrations of God's power and care.
5. Examine the significance of the King of Moab's sacrifice of his son and the subsequent withdrawal of the Israelite forces. What does this episode reveal about the complexities of warfare, religious belief, and divine intervention in the ancient Near East?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or treaty, in this context, the agreement between God and Israel established at Mount Sinai, outlining obligations and blessings.
- **Baal:** A Canaanite deity, often associated with fertility and storms. The worship of Baal was a major threat to the exclusive worship of Yahweh in Israel and Judah.
- **Yahweh:** The personal name of the God of Israel.
- **Double-mindedness:** Holding conflicting loyalties or beliefs, particularly attempting to serve both Yahweh and other gods or worldly values, leading to instability and distrust.
- **Miracle:** An extraordinary event or occurrence attributed to divine intervention, often defying natural laws.
- **Prophet:** A person regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God.
- **Test:** A trial or challenge permitted by God to reveal character, strengthen faith, or demonstrate divine power. This is distinct from temptation.
- **Temptation:** The inducement to do evil or act contrary to God's will. Dr. Oswalt emphasizes that God does not tempt anyone.
- **Vassal:** A state or kingdom that is subordinate to a more powerful one, owing allegiance and tribute.
- **Edom:** An ancient kingdom located south of Judah.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 18.1, 2 Kings 3-4, Part 1, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: The Books of Kings and the Ministries of Elijah and Elisha

- **What is the central theme explored in the books of Kings, particularly concerning the covenant between God and Israel?**
- The books of Kings examine how Israel fulfilled the covenant made with God at Mount Sinai. A key theme is the repeated failure of the kings of Israel and Judah to uphold this covenant, resulting in significant consequences. The text uses the phrase "the covenant on the ground," meaning the covenant is both in operation and, metaphorically, has "fallen to the ground" due to Israel's disobedience.
- **How should we understand the relationship between the ministries of Elijah and Elisha?**
- The text suggests that the ministries of Elijah and Elisha were not separate, but instead different phases of one continuous ministry. The primary goal of this unified ministry was to prevent Baal worship from replacing the worship of Yahweh, especially in the northern kingdom of Israel, and to influence the southern kingdom of Judah.
- **What is the significance of Moab's revolt against Israel after Ahab's death?**
- Moab's revolt, taking advantage of the leadership transition in Israel after Ahab's death, presented an opportunity to examine King Jehoram's (Joram's) response and faithfulness to Yahweh. Despite some initial actions suggesting loyalty to Yahweh, such as removing a sacred stone of Baal, Jehoram's reaction to the water shortage reveals a "double-mindedness" and a lack of trust in God's intentions.
- **How do the reactions of King Jehoram and King Jehoshaphat to the water shortage exemplify different approaches to faith and adversity?**
- Jehoram's reaction is characterized by doubt and blame towards God, viewing the crisis as Yahweh trying to harm them. In contrast, Jehoshaphat seeks out a prophet to inquire of the Lord, demonstrating a desire to understand God's purpose and potential provision in the situation. These contrasting responses highlight the importance of trusting in God's goodness even during difficult times.

- **Does God send or cause trouble in our lives, according to the text?**
- The text emphasizes that God does not "send" trouble intending to harm us. However, God does permit trouble to come into our lives. When difficulties arise, they provide opportunities for God to demonstrate his power, care, and ability to enable us to persevere. In some cases, God may allow hardship to prompt a return to faithfulness, especially for those living a "double-minded" life.
- **How should we understand the statement that God "tests" or "tempts" us?**
- The text clarifies the difference between "testing" and "tempting." While God does not tempt us in the sense of inducing us to do evil, God does test us. These tests or challenges provide opportunities to demonstrate faith and reliance on God. God provides a way to escape or triumph through these challenges.
- **What is the significance of Elisha's request for a harpist before prophesying in 2 Kings 3?**
- The passage describes Elisha asking for a harpist to play music. The text cautions against reading too much into this, noting it doesn't explicitly say Elisha sought to be possessed. While similar practices were common among prophets in the ancient world, it's important to be careful not to overstate the interpretation, focusing instead on the subsequent prophecy and God's direct communication.
- **How should we interpret God permitting or revealing future actions that seem morally questionable, such as the destruction of Moabite cities?**
- The text makes a distinction between God permitting actions and God commanding them. Elisha's prophecy about the destruction of Moabite cities is presented as an observation of what the Israelites *will* do, not a command from God. The text suggests that while God may allow certain actions, they may not necessarily be what God desires or approves. It stresses the importance of seeking God's will and discerning whether an available opportunity aligns with God's purposes.