

# Episode 234

## Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. For those of you who have been listening to our Difficult Passages of the Bible series, this will be the conclusion of that series. Today we're actually going to be covering, hopefully, if we get to it, six different smaller episodes, not as well known or not as big or extensive in terms of the length of the passages as some of the other ones. Jeff and Kevin are joining me as usual today to discuss these, hopefully help you and help us to come to a better understanding of what's going on. I'm going to draw pieces of paper. We know what the six situations are. Maybe not 100% sure which ones we're going to end up with. Jeff volunteered for this first one, and I'm glad he did.

## Shea Houdmann

Jeff, the first question we're going to deal with is in 2 Kings 3. There's an interesting passage about the Moabites' rebel against Israel. Israel comes to invade, brings Judah and Edom along with them. They're winning the battle, and then suddenly something happens that makes a difference that I don't understand why that made a difference. Fill us in. What's going on in 2 Kings 3?

## Jeff Laird

Well, like you said, there's a bizarre war going on. It's basically about whether or not Moab is going to continue to submit the way that they're supposed to. Israel, at this point in time, is actually split into two kingdoms. You have Judah in the south, Israel in the north. They coordinate. Somehow they get Edom involved in it, even though Edom is typically one of their enemies. They go after the Moabites, and beforehand they stop and they talk to Elisha and get some information about what's going to happen and how it's going to happen. When they actually go to do the attack, there's this sort of strange episode where there's a sudden onrush of water into the fields, and the Moabites see it and think maybe it's blood. They think that the soldiers are gone, so they run out, and they find out that it's not soldiers, it's just water. They get caught, chased back into Moab, and the real critical part of it happens when the Moabite king gets cornered. He takes a couple hundred of his best swordsmen, and he tries to push through against Edom specifically because he probably figures that's the best chance he's got. When that doesn't work, scripture says that he takes his son and sacrifices him, presumably on the walls right in front of everybody where they can see it.

## Jeff Laird

I'm just going to read the verse here. We've got 2 Kings 3:27. Then he, this is the king of Edom, or I'm sorry, the king of the Moabites. Then he took his oldest son, who was to reign in his place, and offered him for a burnt offering on the wall. There came great wrath against Israel, and they withdrew from him and returned to their own land. That's the part that's kind of interesting, is you've got the wars going on, it goes badly, he sacrifices his son, and then wrath comes on Israel, and they leave. So we are not the only people to look at this and kind of raise an eyebrow and say, what exactly is that supposed to mean? The language that's there is a little obscure, and it is definitely vague. So people have offered a couple different options.

### **Jeff Laird**

One is that this is God's wrath coming down on the people of Israel, possibly because they took this conflict too far, and they wound up pushing the Moabite king to sacrifice his son. That's one of the options. Another option is that the wrath that's coming down is that Israel is just disgusted by what they see, that they recognize to themselves, oh, we went too far. You know, we pushed this situation just way further than we were supposed to. Another is that, remember, Israel, Judah, and Edom are three separate entities in this going against the Moabites, and one option is that Judah and Edom are the ones who get angry about this. So it's Israel in the sense of the Northern Kingdom of Israel that everybody gets mad at. The Moabites may have been motivated by what happened. They may have seen their king sacrifice his son, and that so rallied them that they were able to drive everybody back. Another option that at least, if you read it from a secular perspective, people want to talk about is the idea that the Moabite God is supposedly being the one who is sending his wrath, that he's responding to the sacrifice, and he's sending people. The other option is that the sacrifice here is mentioned, but that it's not necessarily the cause of what happens after.

### **Jeff Laird**

And all of those different ideas, I think that's what, eight of them, have different strengths and different weaknesses. None of them, except the one about the Moabite God, is easy to just dismiss out of hand. Now, the reason we know that this text is not saying that the Moabite God sent that power is because throughout the Old Testament, including these passages here, it's made clear that the writer is writing from the understanding that there is only one God, and that these Moabite deities are not actually deities. So it would be a very poor misunderstanding of what the writer means to assume. And I can see when you read it, that could be a possibility you put out there, but in the context, it just doesn't work.

### **Jeff Laird**

Most people come down with the assumption that this is either God is angry at Israel because they've driven Moab to do something awful, or that the shock of what happened just completely disrupted the battle, and everybody just kind of stopped and went, whoa, wait, hang on, we can't do this. And we don't really have a good answer for exactly what happened. We know what it says, and we know what the end result was, but we don't have anything really, really clear.

### **Jeff Laird**

Now, we do know that there were issues beforehand where Israel was committing idolatry, having a lot of other issues and a lot of other problems. So God had reasons to be upset and angry with Israel. So personally, when I read it, the thing that sort of makes sense to me is that the sacrifice is mentioned as a way of discussing, you know, it was an important thing that happened, but that God ultimately let Israel fail in the battle because of these other things and these other issues that you see discussed in the passage. So that is, I think, the most reasonable possibility, but other people have different ideas.

### **Jeff Laird**

We know that God is not necessarily going to punish Israel directly for some sin that someone else committed, but he may have been upset because they took what should have been a minor issue and turn it into something big. So lots of different possibilities, different options in there. It's always going to be a question mark. I don't think there's any scholar who can come down on that and say, I can tell you with 100% certainty, this is what it means, but at least we've got some sort of an idea.

### **Shea Houdmann**

Yeah. I mean, Jeff, that's preparation for this and questions we've gotten in the past. Those are the different views I've heard as well. What I found fascinating about this passage is that there's actually a version of the story from the Moabite perspective, and I think it was like in the 1800s, a missionary actually find what's now called the Misha Stile, or the Moabite stone, where it tells this exact story, or part of it from the Moabite's perspectives. And in the Moabite perspective, it's definitely more King sacrificed his son, the God of the Moabites therefore enabled Moab to gain victory, and Israel and Judah and Edom fled. So that's the story from the Moabite perspective.

### **Shea Houdmann**

But this is one of those instances where the story, aside from each side kind of telling it from their own perspective, the story is the same. It's interesting to have direct archaeological evidence of something that occurred literally like 2600-ish years ago, or maybe even longer. But yeah, that was an interesting

discovery about a century ago where confirming the events of this story, but just telling it from the opposite perspective.

### **Shea Houdmann**

So the second question, I'll take this one, see what we've got here. Okay, why did God send a lying spirit to deceive King Ahab? Now this passage is, make sure I pull it up here correctly, in 1 Kings chapter 22, verses 19-23, I'm going to just summarize the story. The King of Israel, Ahab, was seeking to go into battle. He had actually the King of Judah who had joined him for this meeting, and the king was trying to find a prophet who would tell him the truth. He's consulting all these different prophets from Israel, none of whom were prophets of the Lord, and they're all telling him, go into battle, you will have a great victory.

### **Shea Houdmann**

Well, the King of Judah says, you need to consult the prophet of the Lord. So Ahab's like, there's only one, all he ever tells me is bad news. Well, go ahead and call him. So they bring the prophet of the Lord, Micaiah, I think his name was, and he says, first, go into the battle, you are going to have victory. And Ahab's like, how many times do I have to tell you? Just tell me the truth. And the prophet says, okay, basically, you're going to die and Israel is going to be defeated. So, but then we get a little background picture of the Lord talking to certain spirits and says, who will basically lead Ahab to go into this battle? And eventually it comes down to this, a lying spirit says, I will go and I will deceive Ahab so that he goes into this battle. And so the Lord then sends this lying spirit to basically deceive Ahab into going to the battle. How that all fits together with what is actually taking place with him and the King of Judah and so forth, the passage is sort of confusing.

### **Shea Houdmann**

But the main question that comes up is why would God send a lying spirit? Obviously, God is the God of truth. So what's going on here? Well, what seems to be happening in this passage is that Ahab, likely the most wicked king in all of Israel's history, and that's saying a lot, was not following the Lord's commands, was continually doing evil, evil all the time. The Lord was going to bring judgment on him and was going to use it in this battle. But Ahab needed something to essentially cause him to go in the battle, even though it would have been a foolish decision to go. So God essentially, apparently allowed a demon to deceive Ahab, to trick him into going to battle, knowing that Ahab would die and therefore God's judgment would be poured out on Ahab and his family as a result of the battle.

### **Shea Houdmann**

So did God lie to Ahab? No, God didn't. But did God allow a spirit, likely a demon, to lie to Ahab in order to deceive him into going to battle when he shouldn't? Yes. That seems to be what's happening here. How often does God do this sort of thing? Does God use demonic deception? It's like, yes, he does. Just as God uses human deception when we lie to each other. That's evil. It's not God's plan, but God still uses it to accomplish his purposes. So remember, Ahab, it's not like God is tricking a righteous king into making a stupid decision so he will die. No, God is allowing a demon to deceive Ahab, who is already deceived and doing demonic acts and rebelling against the Lord in every possible way imaginable in order to bring about judgment on him. So that's just the summary of why God sent a lying spirit to deceive Ahab. Kevin, are you ready for yours?

**Kevin Stone**

I'm next. Yes. Oh, and I'll just say, by the way, that story of Micaiah is one of my favorite in the Old Testament. Micaiah himself is one of my favorite people in the Bible. I just love his courage and his sarcasm as well that he uses in that narrative.

**Jeff Laird**

I'm glad you brought up that word.

**Shea Houdmann**

Yeah.

**Jeff Laird**

So it's the same with me. I think that initial encounter between Micaiah and Ahab is great, and it proves the point you were saying, Shea, is that this is basically God just letting Ahab get what he wants. Because he says, there's only one prophet. He never says anything good. Micaiah shows up and says, go ahead. You're going to win. Go ahead. And Ahab goes, come on. What are you going to say? He says, oh, you're going to go up there and you're going to die. And Ahab turns. It's like a scene from a gangster movie. He just turns to his friend and says, see, this guy, this guy. And then he ignores him. And he goes on. So I agree with you, Kevin. It's one of the most primary examples of sarcasm you get in the Old Testament. It works well.

**Shea Houdmann**

Yeah. It does. It is a fascinating passage. Just seeing from the human perspective and getting a picture behind the veil of what's going on in the spiritual realm. So Kevin, your question regarding Uzzah and the ark. Super quick summary, and then Kevin can take it from there. The ark had been staying not in Jerusalem, not in the tabernacle. And there David wanted to bring it into the city. And so the ark is being brought. The cart that it was on starts to stumble. Maybe the ark leaves the fall. Uzzah reaches up to steady

the ark and God strikes him dead for touching the ark. So Kevin, what's going on in this passage?

**Kevin Stone**

Yeah, it's one of those difficult passages. And I'll just mention here that all of these that we're discussing today, they're difficult for a reason. They're called difficult because they're just difficult to understand. And so we give some opinions, but we don't have all of the answers for all of these things.

**Kevin Stone**

But Uzzah here in this particular case, in 2 Samuel 6, we see the story also 1 Chronicles 13, Uzzah seems to have been kind of like a good guy just at first glance, because what he does seems to be very helpful and even instinctive. I mean, something's tottering on the cart. It's very valuable. He instinctively reaches up and steadies it. And of course, he's being helpful as well. He seems to be doing something praiseworthy. So why would he get in trouble for this? And not only get in trouble, but actually be struck dead. God's anger was aroused against Uzzah and God struck him dead right there on the spot.

**Kevin Stone**

Well, I think one thing that we can take away from this right away is that good intentions do not justify wrong actions. And this that Uzzah did was definitely a wrong action. It was a sinful action to touch the ark. The law was very clear that Moses had given back in Numbers 4, verse 15. I'll read this verse concerning the transportation of the articles of the tabernacle. After Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy furnishings and all the holy articles, when the camp is ready to move, the Kohathites are to come and do the carrying. The Kohathites were a specific clan within the tribe of Levi. They were the only ones that were to carry these articles. And the articles were to be covered. And then the passage goes on in Numbers 4. They must not touch the holy things or they will die. The Kohathites are to carry these things that are in the tent of meeting.

**Kevin Stone**

So the law was very clear and the penalty was actually specified. That nobody could touch these items that were in the tabernacle, especially the Ark of the Covenant, which was seen as God's throne. This was symbolizing God's presence among his people. And it was not to be touched. It was only to be carried by the Poles and only by the Kohathites. And it was to be covered. So the Israelites are doing everything wrong here. They put it on a cart. It's a new cart, Scripture says. But old or new, it doesn't belong on a cart. It was supposed to be carried with these Poles. The Poles were there because Exodus 25 says that these Poles were part of the Ark. They were permanently placed there. So the Poles were there. We assume that there would be some

Kohathites around that could have carried this, but they're doing it all wrong and they put it on a cart. And Uzzah is there. He, through this series of circumstances, chooses to do something very foolish and actually sinful. He touches the Ark. And God had specified, God had been very clear back in the book of Numbers, that the death penalty would result from somebody touching one of these holy articles. And so God follows through, and this happens to Uzzah. It's a tragic situation. It should never have happened had King David been transporting the Ark according to the law.

### **Kevin Stone**

But I like to contrast this with our approach to God today. In Hebrews 4 and verse 16, let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need. How different under the new covenant. We still approach God's throne of grace with reverence, with awe, with godly fear, but we have access to God's presence. So different from the layers of separation that God had put between himself and the people just to emphasize his holiness. And Uzzah did not respect God's holiness, did not fear his name, as he treated the Ark of the Covenant just like it was any other piece of cargo on that cart.

### **Jeff Laird**

And that's something that David also recognizes. You mentioned that 1 Chronicles 15 also records the same basic story. And in the end of that, as it was recorded in 1 Chronicles, David at one point gets Levites together. And it's 1 Chronicles 15:12, where he says, "...consecrate yourselves, you and your brothers, so that you may bring up the Ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it." And then verse 13, David says, "...because you did not carry it the first time, the Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not seek him according to the rule." So even David in scripture recognizes the reason why this happens. He's not happy that it happened, but he knows why. And he resolves to say, okay, if we're going to do this, we actually have to do it right.

### **Shea Houdmann**

In preparation for today's conversation, I thought it was very revealing that how David learned from this mistake and made sure the second time around it was carried properly. But Kevin, I liked what you said about how he was treating the Ark just like any other piece of furniture. And I couldn't find it. I didn't have a whole lot of time to dig in this time. But I remember someone teaching once that in describing where the Ark was being kept, that it was kept in the house, possibly even the house where Uzzah stayed. Maybe it was in Uzzah's father's house or something like that. So maybe he was just used to it being around, thereby he was comfortable enough with it. He was

like, oh, I can just reach up and touch it, even though it's been being carried the wrong way, and we're not supposed to touch it. He wasn't treating it as holy. And that's the reason.

### **Shea Houdmann**

What's fascinating, I've seen many, many times, it got questions, we've gotten questions about, well, what would happen today? If someone touched the Ark today, would they be struck dead? And I'm like, I don't know. But let's just say if the Ark were to be discovered, I'm not going to be the first person to reach out my hand. We'll say that for sure.

### **Shea Houdmann**

So, Jeff, you ready for question number four? Jeffery Sure. Richard Alrighty. So, all right. The story of Esther, specifically, the question we get most often that's difficult to explain is Esther chapter two, essentially, King Xerxes had fired the queen and was now looking for a new queen and basically had a beauty pageant of all the beautiful women in the entire country who had to come and stay in his harem. And maybe he doesn't say it explicitly, but the thought is, and what likely was occurring, he slept with, had sex with each woman who was brought to him. And then eventually he would choose who's going to be the new queen. And eventually he chooses Esther. And did she have to go through this same type of process? And the text seems to indicate that. So, Jeff, in your study of this passage, what's standing out to you and what can we learn from it?

### **Jeff Laird**

Jeffery Esther's a really interesting book in the first place. People make a big deal about how it's one of the only books, I think the only book of the Bible that doesn't explicitly mention God, or at least one that's that long. It's interesting that it doesn't go into that detail.

### **Jeff Laird**

The situation that's described, I think it's important to remember that I think the way you describe it is pretty accurate. I don't know that pageant is the word, and that's sort of the thing that people think of when they see it. But I don't know that this was the sort of thing where the king was sitting back with some objective interest and going through a list or a parade of women and then picking one out.

### **Jeff Laird**

This very much seems to indicate that he was enjoying each of these individuals in turn, because that was the privilege of kings of that time. It's really important to remember that that's not something that is assigned by God. That's not something that's commanded by God. This is a pagan king



who has these people in captivity when he's doing this. So this is not something that is just the normal course of events.

### **Jeff Laird**

People may want to say, well, why wouldn't Esther just refuse to do that and say, I'm not going to be intimate with this man out of wedlock. I suppose that's a reasonable question in some respects. Again, we do have to remember the cultural side of this. If Esther is a concubine, that was a legal-ish position that we see used at other places in the Bible. Not that that necessarily justifies it, but I think it's a little more complicated than just saying Esther should have just put her foot down and said, no, I refuse. Because we all know exactly how that's going to end. She's just going to be dead and that's going to be the end of it. So, and as it turns out, because she went through the process that she did, she was able to put herself in a position to actually rescue her people from being destroyed.

### **Jeff Laird**

So when we read through the passage, we see that the queen who was there before basically ticked off this pagan king. He wanted her to show up for something and we're not sure if he wanted her to do something lewd or just embarrassing, but he was drunk. He called for her. She said, no, I'm not doing that. So she got fired as queen. I can only imagine what that entails. And the advisors to the king said, have people from all over your empire, send beautiful young girls here and you can bring them here as concubines. And then if one of them you really like, you can make her queen.

### **Jeff Laird**

Well, as it turns out, Esther was the one that he liked the best. So we would like maybe to read this and feel like, you know, the king was looking at these women one at a time and he saw Esther and he said, oh, wow, she's really pretty. I'm going to make her the queen. That's not what happened. You know, we may like to think that Esther would have said, no, I am not going to be a concubine of a pagan king. Well, that's not what happened. It's not what she decided for whatever reason. So yeah, the likely answer is that she was treated like any other concubine, but the king really, really liked her and decided probably at some point in the process, not necessarily immediately that she was going to be the one that he was going to select as his queen.

### **Jeff Laird**

So it's one of these cultural type stories where we look at it today and we say, boy, that sounds awful. That sounds terrible. Yeah, it is. But in the cultural context, king's having lots of wives and lots of concubines was a very different sort of a concept and it was held in a different regard. So it's hard for us to get our minds wrapped around it, but that's basically exactly what was happening.

### **Shea Houdmann**

So many of the different passes we've covered in this series of people ask questions, assuming, oh, so God bless this. This is what God wanted to happen. It's like, no, this is a, like you said, Jeff, a pagan king. This is common. I mean, Xerxes was basically the ruler of the world at the time, the most powerful man in the world. And he could do whatever he wanted. No one could stand in his way. So you look at Esther and the story of Mordecai and basically God raised her up for such a time as this. Did she get to the position where she could make a difference through the most beautiful and perfect and loving and romantic way possible? No, but God took an evil king making evil decisions and use it to get the perfect person in place to influence and to save hundreds of thousands, if not millions of lives, to save the people of Israel through Queen Esther. So do we like how it got there? Of course not. Is that how God wanted? Is that God's desire? Is that a holy action? Of course not. But God still used it. And that's a lesson we've seen again and again and again as we've gone through these difficult passages.

### **Shea Houdmann**

So I guess it's my turn again. This one, that's funny. So I get the other evil spirit one. Why did God send an evil spirit to torment King Saul? So this passage, 1 Samuel 16, verse 14, says, The spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him. This is also mentioned later in the same chapter and also in chapters 18 and 19. So why did God let or even send an evil spirit to torment Saul? So here's another king who apparently a demon is tormenting, deceiving, harming a king. If you look at the story of King Saul, so almost immediately before this passage is when Saul makes two major mistakes.

### **Shea Houdmann**

First, there's going to be a big battle with the Philistines. The prophet Samuel told Saul, wait until I get there and I'll offer the burnt offering. Well, Saul doesn't wait. He offers a burnt offering, even though kings were not allowed to do that. Samuel actually refers to it, which is basically an abomination before the Lord. Then second, the Lord commands Saul, take the armies of Israel, go and completely destroy the Amalekites. Well, Saul goes, attacks the Amalekites, but spares the king, spares the animals. And if you look later in 1 Samuel, there's still a whole bunch of Amalekites running around causing problems. So clearly Saul did not follow the Lord's commands. Samuel comes to Saul again and rebukes him saying, since you have rebelled against the Lord, refused to obey him, the Lord is removing the kingdom from you and is going to give it to another.

### **Shea Houdmann**

Here, now this passage, previously Saul had the spirit of the Lord empowering him, leading him as king. God withdrew, apparently would say it's the Holy Spirit, and now is allowing the demons to attack Saul, which they likely wanted to begin with, but previously Saul had God's protection. So this evil spirit from the Lord, it's not like the Lord is an evil spirit, which is what some people interpret this passage. But no, the Lord sent or allowed an evil spirit, a demon, to come and torment Saul. And this is from the time of the two big disobediences of Saul to you see Saul downward spiral, tries to kill David multiple times, continuing to make evil choices, down to the point where right before the end of his life, he consults a witch, a medium, because the Lord had completely ceased talking to him.

### **Shea Houdmann**

So that's what's going on here in this passage. Saul had rebelled against the Lord, had not repented from that. The Lord withdrew his spirit from Saul and was allowing an evil spirit to torment Saul as judgment on his evil choices. So that's that passage. So Kevin or Jeff, any thoughts on this? Anything I'm missing on that one?

### **Kevin Stone**

I don't know if there's anything missing from what you said. But when I read that passage and also tying it in with the one that we mentioned earlier about Micaiah and the prophets of Baal there and the lying spirit that was sent by God, just a reminder that God is sovereign. And one of his names in Scripture is the Lord of hosts. And sometimes that's translated as the Lord of heavenly hosts. And so I think that might include not just the heavenly armies, the angelic armies of heaven, but also the evil spirits armies as well. God is sovereign over all of them. And they do his bidding. We also see in the book of Job that it looks like they have to ask permission. They're kept on a leash. However long that leash is is up to God. But they have to get God's permission to do what they do and just points all back to the sovereignty of God.

### **Jeff Laird**

I think you also get to see the echoes of the idea that these are people who are basically inviting this on themselves. We talked about Pharaoh in Egypt. We talk about Ahab and the spirits there. We read in Judges 9:23, there's a conflict between groups where it says God allowed this spirit of contention between them. Second Thessalonians 2:11 talks about God sending a delusion. But it's always with people who basically want to be deluded. They want to be deceived. This is where people say, this is where I want to go with this. So this is where I'm going to go.

### **Jeff Laird**

And it's interesting that the text says that the Holy Spirit left Saul. That made him subject to this tormenting spirit. And even the men who were advising him to get music therapy from David, they actually say, God is sending this spirit. So we're going to have somebody come in and play music for you so it will ease what's happening. And that to me strikes a lot to that idea that this is about a voluntary thing. This is not Saul being demon possessed. He's not being completely overtaken by something. I mean, if his mood and his attitude affects how much the spirit can influence him, then you're talking about somebody who's giving into temptation and he decided he didn't want to listen to God. And God took his hands off and that's where he's at.

**Kevin Stone**

Yeah. Self deception and self delusion I think play into that very much so.

**Jeff Laird**

Ya.

**Shea Houdmann**

Absolutely. Good points both of you. So Kevin, for the last question for today, why did God stone a man for gathering sticks on the sabbath? And the passage is Numbers 15:32-36.

**Kevin Stone**

Ya. Seems like a severe penalty for gathering sticks on a Saturday. But it's part of that wilderness wandering time. The law had been given. People are following Moses. They are supposed to be under this new covenant that, the Mosaic covenant was new to them. The Mosaic covenant was enforced and they were to be keeping the sabbath holy. And part of that was to not to any work, no labor done on the sabbath day. And so they caught this man gathering sticks. They keep him in custody for awhile. And they inquire of the Lord, what should we do? They didn't know exactly what the penalty should be. And the Lord said this man must die. Execute him by stoning. And so that was carried out.

**Kevin Stone**

That does seem to be very severe to us. But in the context, I think the key is the verses that come right before this, so Numbers 15:30 and 31. God says this, if anyone sins defiantly whether native born or foreigner, blasphemes the Lord, He must be cut off from Israel because they despise the Lord's word and broken his commands. They must surely be cut off. Their guilt remains on them. And so this is what God said as a general principle. If you sin defiantly. If you sin brazenly. If you are shaking your fist at God. If you know the rules and say, I don't care I'm going to do them anyway, then that is a severe crime and needs to be punished severely. So the general principle is given about defiant sin. And then immediately following that God gives an example what this looked like. This happened. So this is what it looks like to sin defiantly.

This man was stoned to death because he was sinning defiantly. He was rebelling against God. Open rebellion against a clear command of God. He knew what he was doing. This wasn't an example, a case of a guy who just went out there and picked up a stick and then said, oh man, what day is it? And he dropped it again because it was a mistake. He doesn't go out there and he's not making a mistake. He's doing this purposefully and he is doing so rebelliously. And so this was the penalty. Some translations say he was sinning with a high hand. Others say he was sinning brazenly. But it was open rebellion against God. And so God seems to be right at the beginning here setting the standard and sounding the warning. You know this was a warning to all of Israel that God is not going to tolerate flippancy and the ignoring of his word. This law, this covenant that they were under was meant to be kept. And I see parallels in Acts chapter 5 with the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. Right there at the beginning of the early church God kind of did the same thing. He said I'm going to set this as an example. Let this serve as a warning to all the church that you don't lie to the Holy Spirit. You keep God holy.

### **Shea Houdmann**

Kevin, I love your point that he didn't just happen to forget, oh stink! Today's Saturday. It wasn't a, I forgot what day it was. It was like no, this man in context knew what day it was. Knew he was commanded not to do a certain thing. He brazenly goes out and does the exact thing that he was not supposed to do and he didn't even hide it. I mean he got caught. Essentially his attitude was I don't care what the world does. I don't care who sees me. I don't care what the law is. I don't care what other people think. I am going to do this act. An act in itself nothing inherently wrong with gathering sticks. It was the man's attitude that led to his demise not the specific action itself.

### **Jeff Laird**

Ya. When you have a child there are times when parents, teachers will see something like this where you will tell a kid something like, put that down. Or I don't want you touching that. And there's, everybody instinctively knows there's a massive difference between seeing the kid doing it again a day or two later and when you say hey, I said don't and they put it down right away. That's very different from when you look at a kid and say, put that down. Don't touch that. And they look you right in the face and without breaking eye contact they reach over and pick up the thing you just told them to put down. That's sort of what we are seeing here with this guy. That's with this high handed type of sin is. When you notice when you read through the passage, like you said Kevin, the verses right before it are talking about intentional sins. The verses just before that use words like unintentional. And it says if somebody sins, and we know that all sins are intentional in a sense, but God is talking about the ones that are not high handed. Where somebody doesn't

say I know the rules, I know what it says, and I'm going to do it anyway. But you've got passages talking the law, this incident, then it goes back to the law. This incident is kind of like when you read a text book or a study Bible and they have those little insets off to the side, you know it's separate from the rest of the text. It's got a little border around it. You know maybe a different color that's talking about. That's kind of what this feels like is this is a little side commentary that's included there to explain what this looks like in practice. And then it goes on, goes back to talking about what's happening. So the guy got due process. It doesn't say they saw him and they just went out and killed him. It says they got a hold of him. They held him until they could figure out what was happening. And when they determined that he had decided to do this very much on purpose, they said well, if you don't want trouble, don't ask for trouble. So I guess he wanted the smoke and he got it.

### **Shea Houdmann**

Well said both of you. Throughout this whole series I think of the 200, or whatever number of episodes we've done together, I think I enjoyed this series more than any other. And some of the feedback we've received from people, I love how you explained it. I love how you purposely set out to be humble about these things. Its like being willing to admit I don't know exactly what's going on. Even heard some of that today. So Jeff, Kevin, thank you joining me for this difficult passages in the Bible series. I look forward to what we decide to do next. This has been the Got Questions podcast covering 6 different difficult passages of the Bible. Got questions? The Bible has answers, and we'll help you find them.