

2 Kings 3-4

Good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to 2 Kings chapter 3?

Last week 2 kings started off with a very seemingly random line. That the Moabites wanted to rebel, and then the narrative quickly shifted into the end of Elijah's ministry as he was taken to heaven. You remember that Elisha has now taken the mantle. BTW that's where that saying comes from!

This week, the scene shifts as we understand more of this Moabite rebellion against Israel.

SHOW PIC And here's what's fascinating. In 1868 a German missionary, FA Klein, discovered a bluish, basalt stone - 4' x 2' x 14" thick. It was found in the Moabite city of Dibon, 20 miles east of the Dead Sea. It dates to the 9th century BC. Today, it's on display in Paris at the Louvre.

It's an ancient monument called the Moabite Stone, or the Mesha Stele. It basically describes the facts of 2 Kings 3, but from a Moabite perspective. And it confirms conclusively the historical reliability of this chapter. But this section is much more than a historical account of a battle from 3,000 years ago, because it continues to display God's power, and is absolutely dripping with practical application for you and I.

We're gonna study both chapters 3-4, and the title of this mornings message is **WHEN A MIRACLE IS NEEDED**
Let's pray

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. Jehoram was the second of Ahab's sons to be king. Jehoram was evil, but not as big a blasphemer as his parents, Ahab and Jezebel. Jezebel was the worst queen Israel ever knew!

2 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not like his father and mother; for he put away the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had made. 3 Nevertheless he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.

If you're keeping score from 1 Kings, Jehoram was the ninth consecutive bad king over the Northern Kingdom, which never had a godly king.

4 Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheepbreeder, and he regularly paid the king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs and the wool of one hundred thousand rams. 5 But it happened, when Ahab died, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. The Moabites lived on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, and were under tribute to Israel. When King Ahab died, the king of the Moabites saw an opportunity to escape the taxation that the king of Israel forced upon him.

6-7

6 So King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel.

7 Then he went and sent to Jehoshaphat 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 was a godly man, but he was a gullible king. This is the exact phrase he said when Ahab, Jehoram's father, asked him to help battle the Syrians. 1 Kings 22 we saw how Jehoshaphat barely escaped with his life.

8 Then he said, "Which way shall we go up?"

And he answered, "By way of the Wilderness of Edom."

Although Israel was long since separated by a civil war, the two nations were now willing to come together to fight this common foe.

But there's a problem with this strategy of attacking the king from the south

9-11

9 So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom, and they marched on that roundabout route seven days; and there was no water for the army, nor for the animals that followed them. 10 And the king of Israel said, "Alas! For the LORD has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab."

11 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?" Pause here... While Jehoram bemoans his circumstances and declares they are God's judgment, Jehosphat seeks the Lord.

There's application here for us. When we're in the wilderness, when we're in those dry dusty deserts and we're tired, worn out, we need to seek the Lord! Our flesh will never feel like it!

...11 So one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the

hands of Elijah.”” This is a wonderful title for any servant of God. Elisha was the humble and practical servant of Elijah. Washing Elisha’s hands was practical service that prepared him for further spiritual service.

Elisha was known as the man who served Elijah. And because he was faithful in little things, he was given greater responsibility

Luke 19:17 “And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’

We mustn’t forget that Christian life is really all about serving.

John 13 12 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them

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.

13 Then Elisha said to the king of Israel, “What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother.” Pause here Elisha is being sarcastic. Jehoram was an

idolater. He worshiped the golden calves of Jeroboam. Why is he now running to Yahweh in a time of trouble?

...13 But the king of Israel said to him, “No, for the LORD has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.”

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

15 But now bring me a musician.”

Then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. This is such a provocative detail. The prophet Elisha is seeking guidance from God so he calls for a musician. Next time you need to hear from God approach Him with praise and worship!

This is as good a time as any to talk about the importance of worship.

16-18

16 And he said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Make this valley full of ditches.’ 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, your cattle, and your animals may drink.’ 18 And this is a simple matter in the sight of the LORD; He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand. God promised to send water to the valley, but the people had to dig the ditches to catch what God would provide. They had to take the step of faith to dig the ditches even when there was no sign of water so they could benefit from it when it came.

19 Also you shall attack every fortified city and every choice city, and shall cut down every good tree, and stop up every spring of water, and ruin every good piece of land with stones.”Elisha tells the soldiers if they’ll dig ditches God will fill the ditches with life-saving water, and lead them to victory. Here’s a lesson. Our job is to dig the ditch.

In every work of God there’s our part and His part. If you’re believing God to deliver you from alcohol - clean out the fridge. If you’re asking God to supply a mate - don’t be afraid to go out on a date. Don’t pray for water if you’re unwilling to dig a ditch for God to fill.

Too often we’ll rely on our feelings and say “But I’m in the desert. There’s no water. I don’t feel like digging...” This is often where we miss God’s blessing because faith isn’t a feeling. Faith is hearing the Word of God and acting on it despite the external circumstances.

Think about what just happened. The kings came to Elisha inquiring about water. God wanted to give them more than they even asked-He wanted to give them complete victory over their enemies.

How often we are shortsighted to what God wants to do through our trials!!

20 Now it happened in the morning, when the grain offering was offered, that suddenly water came by way of Edom, and the land

was filled with water. Like Elisha predicted, the armies didn't see rain, but rains fell in the distant mountains, and sent flash floods to fill the valleys and trenches that they dug.

21-23

21 And when all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, all who were able to bear arms and older were gathered; and they stood at the border. 22 Then they rose up early in the morning, and the sun was shining on the water; and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood. 23 And they said, "This is blood; the kings have surely struck swords and have killed one another; now therefore, Moab, to the spoil!" The Moabites battle plan was based on an optical illusion. They charged forward with their armies thinking Israel, Judah and Edom were in disarray.

24 So when they came to the camp of Israel, Israel rose up and attacked the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they entered their land, killing the Moabites. 25 Then they destroyed the cities, and each man threw a stone on every good piece of land and filled it; and they stopped up all the springs of water and cut down all the good trees. But they left the stones of Kir Haraseth intact. However the slingers surrounded and attacked it. God used the ditches in a completely unexpected way to supply the need and to defeat the enemy.

26 And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not. 27 Then he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall; and there was great indignation against Israel. So they departed from him and

returned to their own land. The Moabites worshipped Molech, and Molech-worship involved the evil of child sacrifice. To solicit the help of his god the king of Moab offered his son on the altar. For whatever reason, when the Hebrews see the horrible, hideous act taken by the king they stop fighting and return home.

Chapter 4

1 A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves.” This is a desperate situation. The poor woman has lost her husband, and now her sons are about to be sold into slavery.

2 So Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” And she said, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil.” In other words, Elisha is asking her if she has anything of value. She’s got no jewelry - no I-Pad’s or flatscreen TV. The only valuable this woman has is a single jar of olive oil. She’s not only broken, she’s also broke.

3 Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; do not gather just a few. 4 And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones.” That must’ve sounded like a strange command. Did he not hear me? I’ve only got a little oil?

5 So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured it out. 6 Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.”

And he said to her, “There is not another vessel.” So the oil ceased. This was an incredible miracle of multiplication. As the widow pours her olive oil from her one jar she discovers God has given her an endless supply. The oil doesn’t cease to flow until her son announces in verse 6, “There is not another vessel.”

What a lesson! God’s blessings are endless. His grace is a well that never runs dry. Our limitation isn’t God’s willingness, but our lack of faith. Just like the digging of ditches, the work that occurred before the miracle determined the amount of blessing and provision actually received. God’s provision invites our hard work, and never excuses laziness.

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you and your sons live on the rest.” There was enough to not only pay the debt but to also provide on-going support.

8-11

8 Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food. So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food. 9 And she said to her husband, “Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly. 10 Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there.”

11 And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there. Here’s a couple with the gift of hospitality. They notice Elisha travels a circuit. They set up a guest room, so when he passes through he has a place to stay.

12 Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite woman." When he had called her, she stood before him. 13 And he said to him, "Say now to her, 'Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?'"

She answered, "I dwell among my own people."

14 So he said, "What then is to be done for her?"

And Gehazi answered, "Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old." To not have a son was a huge issue it meant the lineage of the family would cease

15 So he said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. 16 Then he said, "About this time next year you shall embrace a son."

And she said, "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!" She can't believe this promise-it reveals a deep hole in her heart that had been there for many many years.

17 But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her. End of story right!?

18 And the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. 19 And he said to his father, "My head, my head!"

So he said to a servant, "Carry him to his mother." Perhaps he had a brain aneurism, or a sudden stroke. In a matter of hours his headache turned to death.

20 When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. 21 And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him,

and went out. This shows the faith of the woman. She prepared for the resurrection of the boy, not his burial.

I'm sure she had heard how Elijah had raised the widow's son of Zarephath to life; and she believed Elisha could do the same.

22 Then she called to her husband, and said, "Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back."

23 So he said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath."

And she said, "It is well." Evidently the woman decided that it was better if her husband didn't know about their son's death—we don't know why.

24-26

24 Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, "Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you."

25 And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, "Look, the Shunammite woman! 26 Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?'"

And she answered, "It is well." She doesn't tell anyone of her son's death, she's waiting till she gets to Elisha

27 Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away. But the man of God said, "Let her alone; for her soul is in deep distress, and the LORD has hidden it from me, and has not told me." In

this circumstance Elisha was more surprised that God didn't speak to him than if God had spoken to him.

28 So she said, "Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?"

29 Then he said to Gehazi, "Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child." Instead of going directly himself, Elisha sent his servant Gehazi with his staff. This seems to follow the pattern in Elisha's ministry-we just read how he gave people the opportunity to work with God and to trust Him for the results. God told the alliance of kings to have ditches dug, God told the widow to gather vessels and pour the oil herself

30-35

30 And the mother of the child said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So he arose and followed her.

31 Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing.

Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him, saying, "The child has not awakened."

32 When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. 33 He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. 34 And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm. 35 He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. Elisha lays on the corpse. He identifies himself with the dead child – mouth to

mouth, eyes to eyes, hands on hands... It's as if his life is transferred to the boy.

And this is exactly how Christian conversion works. **Romans 6 4**

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6

knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead,

dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the

death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to

be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Just as the breath, and warmth, and life of Elisha radiated into the boy - Jesus breathes into us. He transfers to us His vitality. This is how we're made alive spiritually - Jesus shares with us His life.

36-40

36 And he called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite woman." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Pick up your son." 37 So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out.

38 And Elisha returned to Gilgal, and there was a famine in the land. Now the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and

he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets." 39 So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, though they did not know what they were. 40 Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, "Man of God, there is death in the pot!" And they could not eat it. **SHOW PIC** The gourds were probably colocynth. Popularly called 'wild cucumber,' the vine still grows near the Dead Sea. It has a very bitter taste. If eaten in enough quantity, it induces colic and can be fatal **CLOSE PIC**

41 So he said, "Then bring some flour." And he put it into the pot, and said, "Serve it to the people, that they may eat." And there was nothing harmful in the pot. There was nothing inherently purifying in the flour Elisha put in the pot. The real purification was a miraculous work of God.

Let's finish the chapter

42 Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, "Give it to the people, that they may eat."

43 But his servant said, "What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?"

He said again, "Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: 'They shall eat and have some left over.'" 44 So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD. In a miracle that anticipated Jesus' miracle of feeding the 5,000, Elisha commanded that a small amount of bread be served to 100 men.

Don't look to circumstances, look to the power of God. God wants to do a work in your life and in your family this week.