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Midweek Study
2 Kings 3–4
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2 Kings 3 and 4 feature one miracle after another: water in the desert, a flask of oil that does not run out, and a boy who was dead raised to life. Each example began with people coming to the Lord for help and being willing to act in faith before seeing the miracle happen. In this study, we will learn from Biblical examples what faith in action looks like.

1. Context
    a. The title
        i. In a Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Kings are one book called **Melachim**, meaning "kings."
    b. The author
        i. The author is unknown.
            1. Some say Ezra, others Ezekiel.
            2. Jewish tradition says Jeremiah.
    c. The time
        i. 1 and 2 Kings cover about 400 years of history, from Solomon to Zedekiah.
        ii. Zedekiah's reign ended with Judah going into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.
    d. The kingdoms
        i. Israel was divided into two kingdoms:
            1. The kingdom of Judah
                a. The king to the south ruled Judah and Benjamin from Jerusalem.
            2. The kingdom of Israel
                a. The king to the north ruled the 10 remaining tribes from Samaria.
    e. The prophet
        i. Elijah
            1. God's prophet to Israel, Elijah, was taken up to heaven.
        ii. Elisha
            1. Elijah's apprentice, Elisha, succeeded him in **2 Kings 2**.
            2. Elisha, like Elijah, primarily ministered to the northern kingdom.
            3. Elisha's ministry spanned over 50 years.
            4. Elisha did more miracles than any except for Jesus.
                a. The Gospels record Jesus performing 37 miracles.

2. **2 Kings 3:1–3** – *"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. 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. Nevertheless he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; he did not depart from them."*
    a. Timing
        i. To indicate the timing of events, one king's reign was often compared with another's.
    b. Jehoram
        i. Jehoram was the eighth king of Israel.
        ii. Jehoram was the son of Ahab, a child of two wicked people.
        iii. Jehoram was bad, but not as bad as his parents.
            1. Jehoram took away *"the sacred pillar of Baal,"* which was likely a phallic symbol tied to this fertility god.
        iv. Jehoram followed in Jeroboam's steps.
            1. Jeroboam was the first king of Israel.
            2. Jeroboam made two golden calves because he feared that if the Jews of the north went to worship at Jerusalem in the south, they would seek to rejoin Judah.

3. **2 Kings 3:4–10** – *"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. But it happened, when Ahab died, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. So King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel. 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.' Then he said, 'Which way shall we go up?' And he answered, 'By way of the Wilderness of Edom.' 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. And the king of Israel said, 'Alas! For the LORD has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.'"*
    a. The revolt
        i. Moab was a foreign country to the east of the Dead Sea.
            1. Moab was located on the northern part of modern-Jordan.
        ii. The Moabites were subject to the Israelites.
        iii. Mesha the Moabite king was tired of paying taxes and saw Ahab's death as an opportunity to rebel against Israel.
    b. Jehoram's appeal

i. Although Israel and Judah were divided, Jehoram appealed to Jehoshaphat as a fellow Jew.
ii. Jehoshaphat agreed.

c. Jehoram's plan
i. Jehoram thought he and the kings with him could sneak up from the south of Moab, through the wilderness of Edom.

d. Jehoram's complaint
i. Jehoram realized their armies and animals could die in the desert without any water, then claimed the Lord forsook them.

4. **2 Kings 3:11–15** – *"But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?' 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.' 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. 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." 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.' 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. But now bring me a musician.' Then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him."*

a. Jehoshaphat's response
i. Jehoshaphat was one of the few good kings of Judah.
ii. Jehoshaphat knew to seek the Lord for help.
1. **DISCUSS**: Contrast Jehoram response to difficulties with Jehoshaphat's. How do you tend to respond to trials?

b. Elisha
i. One of Jehoram's servants described Elisha as one who had the honor of serving Elijah.
ii. Elisha's view of the kings:
1. Elisha rebuked Jehoram, for this king of Israel had only come to God for help but did not obey Him.
2. **DISCUSS**: Do you seek God's face, or only God's hand of provision? How have you learned to love the Gift Giver more than His gifts?
3. Elisha only helped Jehoram because Jehoshaphat was with him.
iii. Elisha called for a musician, and the Lord showed up.

1. When David played the harp for a Saul, who was tormented by evil spirits, Saul experienced relief (**1 Samuel 16:23**).
2. Worship invites God's presence.
3. Worship is what prepares our hearts to listen to God's Word.
4. **DISCUSS**: How has the Lord used worship to prepare your heart to receive what He wants to tell you?

5. **2 Kings 3:16–20** – *"And he said, 'Thus says the LORD: "Make this valley full of ditches." 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." And this is a simple matter in the sight of the LORD; He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand. 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.' 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."*
    a. Flash floods
        i. The Dead Sea area has flash floods, a phenomenon in which a sudden downpour washes away the ground or torrents of water come from off the mountains.
        ii. However, this flash flood happened without wind or rain.
    b. Digging ditches
        i. The people dug ditches that became pools of fresh water.
            1. God wanted the people to act in faith before they saw the miracle.
            2. If they had not dug ditches, the fresh water would have passed them by.
            3. The people and animals were able to drink fresh water because of a miracle from God.
            4. Obedience allowed the people to witness the power of God and receive rescue.
            5. **DISCUSS**: When has God called you to do take a step of obedience before He worked on your behalf?

6. **2 Kings 3:21–27** – *"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. 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. And they said, 'This is blood; the kings have surely struck swords and have killed one another; now therefore, Moab, to the spoil!' 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. 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. 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. 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."

a. A double miracle
    i. The Moabites thought the kings had turned on each other.
        1. The red sunrise made the water look red, and the Moabites assumed that this water was the blood of battle.
        2. The Moabites more readily assumed there were pools of blood than pools of water in the desert.
    ii. The Moabites went to get the spoils of what they supposed had been a great battle, but they were made to flee instead.
b. The slingers
    i. The stones of the walled city Kir Haraseth were left intact, but the slingers picked off the Moabites still on the wall.
c. Human sacrifice
    i. King Mesha of Moab sacrificed his oldest son and heir to appease his god and ask him to save him.
    ii. The Moabites were a cruel, pagan people, but even among them there is a thread of redemption.
        1. Ruth was a Moabite, but she became a proselyte to Judaism and married Boaz.
        2. Boaz fathered Obed.
        3. Obed fathered Jesse.
        4. Jesse fathered David.
        5. David's line led to the Messiah.
        6. A Moabite was part of the line that led to Jesus the Christ.
        7. **DISCUSS**: How has the Lord redeemed you and used your story for His glory?

7. **2 Kings 4:1–7** – *"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.' 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.' Then he said, 'Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; do not gather just a few. 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.' 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. 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. 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.'"

a. The sons of the prophets
    i. The schools of the prophets were like seminaries, places where men who felt God's calling on their lives could go to learn and prepare.
    ii. The sons of the prophets were the men who went to these schools.
b. A certain woman
    i. This woman had married a man in ministry.
        1. The phrase *"you know that your servant feared the LORD"* implies that Elisha would have known her husband.
        2. Josephus, the first century Roman historian, asserted that her husband's name was Obadiah, but we do not know for certain.
    ii. This woman had been widowed.
c. The problem
    i. The creditor had threatened to take away the woman's children if she did not find the funds to pay him.
d. The solution
    i. Elijah asked the woman to use what she had: a jar of oil.
        1. The oil was likely anointing oil.
        2. The jar was likely a small flask.
    ii. Elijah instructed the woman to borrow vessels and shut the door behind her.
        1. Similarly, Jesus instructed people to pray with the door shut.
        2. **Matthew 6:6** – *"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."*
        3. Some things are just between you and the Lord.
        4. **DISCUSS**: Why do you think there are some things that God wants people to keep between them and God?
e. Man of God
    i. The phrase *"man of God"* is used of Elisha 22 times.
        1. Elisha was called man of God more than any other in the Old Testament.

ii. Moses was the first to be called *"man of God"* in the Bible.

f. The miracle
   i. Faith is more than hope; faith is action.
   ii. The woman borrowed containers and kept pouring the oil till she ran out of vessels.
   iii. Elisha told her to sell the oil so her family could get out of debt and live on the rest.

8. **2 Kings 4:8–17** – *"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. And she said to her husband, 'Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly. 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.' And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there. Then he said to Gehazi his servant, 'Call this Shunammite woman.' When he had called her, she stood before him. 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.' So he said, 'What then is to be done for her?' And Gehazi answered, 'Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old.' So he said, 'Call her.' When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. 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!' But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her."*
   a. A notable woman
      i. This woman was hospitable and considerate of Elisha.
         1. **DISCUSS**: What are some practical ways that you can be hospitable to the people around you?
   b. Gehazi
      i. Gehazi served Elisha.
   c. The miracle
      i. Elisha wanted to do something for the hospitable woman, so he suggested to the woman that he could talk to the rulers on her behalf.
         1. The woman said she was happy to live simply among her own people.
      ii. Elisha asked Gehazi what he could do for the woman.
         1. Gehazi said that the woman was barren and her husband old.
            a. In those times, widows without children to care for them were often left destitute.

iii. Elisha promised the woman that she would bear a son.
    1. The woman did not believe told him not to get hopes up, but she bore a child as Elisha had prophesied.

9. **2 Kings 4:18–22** – *"And the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. And he said to his father, 'My head, my head!' So he said to a servant, 'Carry him to his mother.' When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out. 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.'"*
    a. The boy
        i. The boy was probably 3 to 5 years old at this point.
        ii. The boy's head hurt, and some think he had a brain aneurysm or suffered from heat stroke.
    b. The woman's faith
        i. She laid her son on the prophet's bed.
        ii. She was not preparing her son for a burial; she was preparing for a resurrection.
            1. **DISCUSS**: When you are facing trials, do you prepare yourself to be disappointed, or do you come ready to receive the Lord's comfort?
    c. The woman sought Elisha
        i. Elisha was at Mount Carmel, where his mentor Elijah was used of God to defeat the prophets of Baal and Asherah.
        ii. The woman traveled by donkey from Shunem to Mount Carmel.
            1. She traveled 20 miles, desperate for a miracle.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)