

Elisha

Our introduction to Elisha manifested God's foreknowledge of Elisha's heart. Clearly he was one of the seven thousand that had not bowed their knee to Baal, and while at Mt Horeb(Sinai), God told Elijah to anoint Elisha as his replacement.

And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram; 16 and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. 1 Kings 19:15-18

As soon as Elijah returned to Israel, This is the first thing he did when he returned to Israel.

So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. 20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" 21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant. 1 Kings 19:19-21

Elisha accepts the call, but takes the time to cut his ties. First he kisses his mother and father and tells them goodbye. Then he takes the yoke of oxen he had been plowing with and after slaughtering them, took the wood from the yoke and boiled the flesh in that fire. In that way, he showed to all that he was leaving with no intention of returning. After that, he followed Elijah and became his servant. An interesting idiom that captured this service is "washed the hands of"

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." 2 Kings 3:11

All that Elisha did for Elijah are passed over completely. His name is not even mentioned until the day that Elijah was to be taken up to heaven. The only event that gives us some idea of the emotional relationship between these two men is seen when he tore his clothes. The final day they are together is ambiguous. Elisha will not leave Elijah, but whether it was this due to his closeness to him or his desire to ask for the double potion is impossible to determine.

As the final day begins, it is evident that Elisha has some reason to suspect that Elijah is leaving, but we are not told what it was. He refuses to leave him to travel alone.

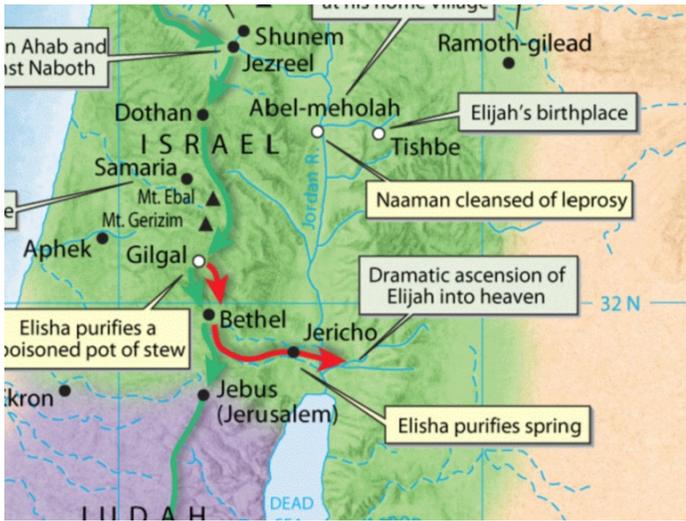
*And it came to pass, when the Lord was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from **Gilgal**. 2 Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to **Bethel**." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to **Bethel**. 2 Kings 2:1-2*

Elisha is not the only one who knows of Elijah's departure, so there were either words from Elijah or some other revelation.

*Now the sons of the **prophets who were at Bethel** came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent!" 2 Kings 2:3*

First at Gilgal(2:1) then Bethel(2:1), then Jericho(2:4), then on to the Jordan(2:6) Elijah asked Elisha to stay behind and he refused. At each location the "sons of the prophets" knew Elijah would be leaving that day.

*Then Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to **Jericho**." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they came to Jericho. 5 Now the sons of the **prophets who were at Jericho** came to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?" So he answered, "Yes, I know; keep silent!" 6 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to the **Jordan**." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So the two of them went on. 7 And **fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance**, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. 8 Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them*



crossed over on dry ground. 2 Kings 2:4-8

After they crossed the Jordan, the time of the departure had come and Elijah asked Elisha if he had any last request from him. Elisha for something that Elijah called “a hard thing.”

And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." 10 So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." 2Kings 2:9-11

Elisha wants a “double portion” of “your spirit.” None of the translations use a capital on the word “spirit” which means no one wants to

commit themselves to whether this was the Holy Spirit he was asked for or simply the same spirit (attitude and disposition) that Elijah had displayed. This is clearly the meaning of the words of Gabriel to Zacharias about his son.

He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Lk. 1:17

Hence Elisha is most likely asking to be placed into the same role and work that Elijah had except he wanted it doubled. After all the discouragement and difficulties Elijah had suffered, he knew that this young prophet was asking for a hard thing indeed. Yet this is not a request that Elijah can answer. Whether this answer came from inspiration, or only from Elijah's own mind, the condition set forth will be immediately known by how Elijah is taken from the earth. If God allows Elisha the opportunity to actually see Elijah taken up into heaven then he most certainly will receive that double portion. But if God withholds that sight, then it will not happen.

Elijah taken to Heaven

They continued talking as they walked, until suddenly a chariot of fire appeared.

Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. 2Kings 2:12

There are too few details to get a clear picture. There is a chariot that appears to be of fire, with horses that also have the appearance of fire. They separate Elijah from Elisha and Elijah was taken up into heaven. Whether he died and his body was buried somewhere, or whether like Enoch, he was translated and did not see death is not revealed. There is so much we would like to know about this event, but for God's own reasons this is all we have received.

"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. Deut 29:29

Elisha tearing his clothes is the only indication we have of his emotional state. Clothes were only torn during moments of great distress and sorrow.

Elisha's Double Portion

The conditions set by Elijah had been met. Elisha had seen him taken away and in addition, Elijah's mantle had also been left behind. It is evident that Elisha had no doubt when he struck the water.

He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck

the water, and said, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over. 2 Kings 2:12-14

Yet his expression: "where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" is puzzling. Under the circumstances, it does not appear to be doubt. But a simple question. Although Elijah has said that this would be the case, maybe Elisha was still leaving it up to God to make the final decision and reveal Himself. If that is the case, "where is the LORD(YHWH) the God(ELOHIYM) of Elijah" is a simple prayer of hope and desire, which God immediately answered by opening the Jordan as he had for Elijah.

Since the Jordan was divided exactly the same way as it had for Elijah, those who witnessed this act realized that he had been given the same power.

Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him. 16 Then they said to him, "Look now, there are fifty strong men with your servants. Please let them go and search for your master, lest perhaps the Spirit of the Lord has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley." 2Kings 2:15-16

Elisha tells them not to go and look but they continued asking in such a way that left Elisha feeling ashamed. He knew God had taken care of this matter just as He had for Moses it.

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan, ... 5 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. 6 And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day. 7 Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. Deut 34:1; 5-7

While no one had sent to check on Moses, because they continued to plead, Elisha allowed them to go on this fruitless endeavor. But he rebuked them for it after they returned. For although they had said "the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha," they still didn't believe.

And he said, "You shall not send anyone." 17 But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, "Send them!" Therefore they sent fifty men, and they searched for three days but did not find him. 18 And when they came back to him, for he had stayed in Jericho, he said to them, "Did I not say to you, 'Do not go'?" 2 Kings 2:16-18

Elijah began his Ministry in Jericho

The words of the prophets in Jericho, may have been a simple statement or a hopeful request.

Then the men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the ground barren." 2 Kings 2:19

Perhaps this problem with the water was a part of the curse God had placed on Jericho. Joshua had sternly warned that the man who sought to rebuild Jericho would lose his firstborn and youngest sons. During the reign of Ahab this curse had been fulfilled, but the city had been rebuilt.

*Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, "**Cursed be the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.**" Josh 6:26*

*Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. 34 In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. **He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates,** according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun. 1 Kings 16:33-34*

Since Ahab "reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years" (1Kings 16:29), and his son died after two years(1Kings 22:51), the city had only recently been rebuilt(probably less than 30 years).

Through inspiration, God revealed to Elisha that He would heal the waters, and gave the method by which it would be done.

And he said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. 21 Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, "Thus says the Lord: 'I have healed this

water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness." 22 So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke. 2Kings 2:20-22

The Youths in Bethel

As Elijah began his work, he returned to Bethel, which was the seat of the religious error set up by Jeroboam at Bethel and Dan. There is so much we don't know about these 42 youths.

Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" 24 So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the Lord. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths. 2 Kings 2:23-24

Did they know this was Elisha the prophet of God? Was their mocking because he was a prophet, or just a sign of their unruly character? When Elisha pronounced this curse, did he know that God would respond with those two bears? The term "mauled" is translated *tore up* in the NAS. It is a strong term used for "ripping open the women with child," and "breaking open the fountain of the deep" during the flood. It is very possible these youths were killed. But regardless of the outcome, it was of God and not from Elisha who only cursed them in the name of the LORD and left the nature of the curse to Him.

Elisha Works with the Kings of Israel and Judah

Although just mentioned here, Elijah was still alive until the death of his older brother so it is in the midst of this twelve year reign that these events occurred.

Like all the previous kings, Jehoram also held fast to the sins of Jeroboam refusing to return to the worship of the LORD that was written in the Law of Moses. Although he did reform Israel in its worship of Baal, God had Elisha treat him with disrespect for his wickedness.

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." ... 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. 2 Kings 3:13-15

Punishing Moab

A brief history of Moab reminds us that they were the offspring of Lot, and God had initially forbidden Israel from taking any of their land. But they hired Balaam to curse them and using Balaam's advice tempted Israel into idolatry. Thus began a long and contentious relationship, which still continued.

Their subjugation to Israel had been done through David and Solomon and it appears had continued until the death of Ahab when they broke away(2Kings 1:1). Jehoram decided to retake Moab, but enlisted the help both of Judah and Edom.

The mission seemed ill fated as they were seven days journey toward Moab and had found no water. Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet of the LORD, and he was informed the Elisha was among them. Elisha prophecies that God will first give them the water they seek and then give Moab in battle and they were to severely punish as a judgment of the LORD.

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. 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." 2 Kings 3:17-19

First, at Elisha's word they filled the valley with ditches and God then filled those ditches with water. When the sun's early light reflected on this water, the Moabites mistook it for the blood of the soldiers, they rushed into the camp to take the spoil and were routed by the soldiers of the three kings. After destroying the army they did the Lord's bidding regarding his national judgment against Moab.

Elisha Saves a Prophet's Widow and the Son of the Shunammite

After an unfortunate death of a devout son of the prophets, the widow came to plead for help from Elisha. Her two sons were to be sold to pay the debt (so much for compassion in that age). Elijah finds out she has some oil in the house and bids her collect as many empty vessels as she can find and God creates enough oil to pay for her debts.

The story of the Shunammite woman is a fascinating story that stands alone in the Old Testament. It begins with the kindness of this woman toward Elisha.

Shunem was located just below the Sea of Galilee not far from what would later become Nazareth. There was a wealthy woman who recognized Elisha as a "holy man of God." She wanted to do an act of kindness for him and persuaded her husband to build him a small room. Elisha is deeply touched by this kindness, recognizing it for an act of faith and submission to God (another from among the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal). He calls her and asks if there is anything she would like him to do for her. Her answer revealed her generosity and humility. She had not done this for gain, but was comfortable among her people.

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."

This intrigued Elisha even more and when he found out she had no son, he called her into his presence to make a promise from the Lord.

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." 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!" 17 But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her. 2Kings 4:13-17

One can only imagine the great joy, pride and contentment that must have filled the heart of this woman who had given up on ever having a son. But as the child grew, a severe problem arose that led to the death of this son. The woman is deeply grieved and goes to Elisha to express her grief.

And he said to his father, "My head, my head!" So he said to a servant, "Carry him to his mother." 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. 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." ... 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.

Did she know about the widow in Zarephath and Elijah's raising her son from the dead? Was she hoping for the same miracle? We don't have that information, but from all these events it is definitely possible. Elisha immediately determines to help.

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." 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." 2 Kings 4:20-29

He arrives and like Elijah's prayers for rain, is not dissuaded that it took a long time.

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. 2 Kings 4:32-36

This miracle must have done a great deal to validate the prophets closeness to God in the eyes of

the people.

The Pot of Stew

Another famine is gripping the land of Israel. As an act of hospitality, Elisha asked his servant Gahazi to put on a pot of stew. The prophets wanting to be helpful, went to the field to gather herbs. One of the evidently inexperienced ones gathered some gourds(melons/cucumbers).

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. 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. 2 Kings 4:39-41

After the meal is fully prepared, the flavor immediately warns those who were about to eat that there is “*death in the pot.*” Elisha puts their faith to the test by “healing the pot.” All witnessed him placing flour into the pot with the poison. At his assurance they were willing to eat. This manifested the respect and trust these prophets now had in Elisha.

The Feeding of 100

The final miracle in the fourth chapter centers on something very similar to the oil with which it began. These loaves were not like ours, but the small ones that fit in the hand like those Jesus used. Each loaf would barely feed one man. But with God’s blessing, Elisha performs a miracle that allows 100 men to eat all they wanted and still have some left over.

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."

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 so me left over, according to the word of the Lord. 2Kings 4:42-44

This passage brings something very important to light. It is plainly stated that this miracle and the words of Elisha were all “*according to the word of the Lord.*” God was always behind these things. No prophet could make such decisions on his own. Peter made it clear that all the prophecies made by a prophet(all teachings and events to validate those teachings) were even initiated by the prophet.

knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2Pet. 1:20-21

Elisha and Naaman

Jesus Speaks of Naaman

Jesus’ words to the Jews in Nazareth hold a very important key to the events we will be studying this evening. After performing many miracles in Capernaum, He returned to Nazareth where He found a heightened expectation. They seemed to feel that if He would do such things in Capernaum, He would also do some in his hometown of Nazareth. Yet Jesus had no intention of doing any miracles there. His reason: “*no prophet is accepted in his own country.*”

16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ... 23 He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.'" 24 Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. ...

The real problem at Nazareth was revealed in the parallel passages in Matthew and Mark. He “*did*

not” and “could not” do many mighty works “because of their unbelief.” He was not performing miracles solely for the benefit of those who were sick. It was done to increase and strengthen belief. If there was no belief to work with then he “did not and could not” do any mighty works there.

*But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." 58 **Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.** Mt. 13:57-58*

*But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house." 5 **Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He marveled because of their unbelief.** Mk. 6:4-6*

Jesus then made a very important application. Elijah and Elisha had been confronted with the same problem. Although there were many widows in Israel during the days of Elijah, God only sent him to one widow and she was not in Israel. The implication is that just as there was no one in Nazareth, there was also no one in Israel to whom such a miracle would accomplish its purpose as a sign. So “to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon.” NOTE: Elijah was sent to help that widow in Zarephath. The Lord knows those who are His and this knew this women would be greatly benefitted by the sign. So also for Elisha. There were many lepers in Israel during the days of Elisha. “Yet none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; 26 but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." Lk. 4:16; 23-28

A careful reading of Jesus words again makes it clear that there was an important reason why Naaman was healed while all others in Israel were passed over. Since God was directing these miracles just as Jesus was directing them in his own day, they are given where they will do the most good. The purpose of miracles has always been for a sign.

The very first time they were used was during the times of Moses after he had asked God what to do if they didn't believe:

Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'" Ex 4:1

God's answer consisted of three things. The staff turning into a serpent and his hand becoming leprous, and water turning into blood. Moses was to use these as a sign if they didn't believe.

*"Then it will be, **if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign.** 9 And it shall be, **if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice,** that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. **The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land.**" Ex 4:6-9*

Introduction to Naaman

Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper. 2 Kings 5:1

Although there are two possible meanings, the context of the chapter seems to lead to the second. The first, God wanted Syria to win over Israel as punishment for their sins and Naaman just happened to be the commander. The second, God used these events to make Naaman “a great and honorable man in they eyes of his master,” by allowing him to decisively win these battles in a way that brought honor and glory to him as a “mighty man of valor.” This is exactly what God did for Joseph.

*The **Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man;** and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3 And **his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand.** 4 **So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him.** Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. 5 So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house*

for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field. 6 Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Gen 39:2-6

The Providence of God and Naaman's Faith

Because of all that Naaman had become and the possibilities of his potential, God allowed a young girl to be brought back from Israel and become a servant in Naaman's house.

And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. 3 Then she said to her mistress, "If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy." 2 Kings 5:2-3

As she witnessed the greatness of Naaman and the terrible blight of his leprosy, she made an important observation to his wife. It is fascinating that she would have made this application. Perhaps she had witnessed or at the very least heard rumors of all the things Elijah had done. Why she went so far as to assure his wife that he would definitely be healed is a mystery. Elijah had never healed anyone of leprosy, and there is no record of him healing someone among the Gentiles. But since this was all part of God's plan, things proceeded as He wanted them.

Naaman has enough faith that he doesn't scoff or mock at such a incredible and unlikely possibility. He brings it up to the king of Syria, who also seems to have enough confidence not to mock or scorn such an idea and is even willing to write the letter.

Naaman is so convinced of the possibility he brings "ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing," which is a tremendous sum of money. He also brings a letter from the king, hoping to enlist the help of the King of Israel in Naaman's being healed of his leprosy.

Then the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. 6 Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy.

The only one in this narrative without faith is the king of Israel. When he reads the letter, he doesn't even think of Elisha or sending the matter to him. He tore his clothes as a sign of deep distress and grief, thinking that the real reason for this visit is an opportunity to start another war.

And it happened, a when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me." 2 Kings 5:5-7

Once again we see the working of God either through providence or direct revelation, for Elisha hears the exact nature of the visit, the letter and the torn clothes.

So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." 2 Kings 5:8

God has already revealed to Elisha that He wanted Naaman to be healed of his leprosy. The event itself would have been reported everywhere. The general of the Syrian army came to the king with a letter requesting he be healed of his leprosy. God had raised up this man to be famous where ever the reputation of his valor and might had gone. Now, his leprosy would be healed and his fame would go far and wide.

Although the king clearly didn't know, Naaman would know "that there is a prophet in Israel." Naaman soon finds himself at the door of Elisha's dwelling. What follows is perplexing but after some careful consideration is clear.

Elisha is not to be a part of this healing. He doesn't come to the door or meet Naaman. He refused to take any credit or recompense for it after it is over, and Gehazi is severely punished for later taking something from him. Naaman is to learn only that the true God is the God of Israel.

Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. 10 And

Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean." 2Kings 5:9-10

It is interesting that after all the points where his faith might falter, it came as he stood before the door of the prophet's home. It is difficult to see if it was his pride or faith that faltered.

But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy." 12 Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. 2 Kings 5:11-13

His "fury" and "rage" come to the very forefront and blind his mind. His own ideas of how this event should have transpired are verbalized. "He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy." From these words it appears to be his pride, but could also have been his faith. It was a wasted journey. To dip in the Jordan river was a waste of time. He had better rivers to have washed in while in Damascus.

Naaman's Servants Change his Mind

Here is a classic example of God choosing foolish things to test and assess.

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. ... 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 1Cor. 1:27-29

Naaman came within "the eye of a needle" from losing the wonderful blessing God had in store for him. Just like multitudes today, trust in God comes first and then the benefits and blessings. Without that trust there can and will be no blessings.

The servants reason from the greater to the lessor. He would have done something exceedingly difficult if the prophet had come and told him to do that. Why turn away in wrath when something so easy could be done?

And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" 14 So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. 2 Kings 5:13-14

It is difficult to read these words without feeling powerful emotions toward God. His power, grace, mercy and love are all on display. But He wants faith first and submission first, before He will bestow it. Naaman travels to the Jordan river. Since we don't know where Elisha is staying it is impossible to determine how long this journey would take. One has to wonder about the play of emotions in Naaman's heart. Doubt and fear one moment, hope and anticipation on the other. Will this work! Can the prophet be trusted! He doesn't know but must hope.

Naaman is Cleansed

He began the process of dipping. Elisha had told him to "wash-bathe, wash off, wash away." He interpreted this as a need to "dip."

The verb conveys the immersion of one item into another: *bread in vinegar* (Ruth 2:14), *feet in water* (Josh 3:15), *a coat in blood* (Gen 37:31). *bapto* is the common LXX rendering of this root. ..." (TDWNT OT 2881)

He immersed himself seven times. Was there skepticism, hope, excitement, anticipation, doubt. One time - nothing, again - nothing. A third and fourth time with no tangible results. The fifth and sixth showed no improvement. Nothing happened. There is only one more chance for this to work. He must have felt the strongest emotions as the seventh time he plunged himself under the water of the Jordan River. When he came up out of that water after the seventh time, "his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." The joy, relief, amazement, excitement,

adoration and praise are passed over until he arrives at the home of Elisha.

And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, "Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant." 16 But he said, "As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing." And he urged him to take it, but he refused. 2 Kings 5:15-16

He now professes the true faith that was inside his heart: "now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel." In his joy and gratitude, he reaches out to the servant offering him the gift. It seems inconceivable that he would not want to give Elisha everything he had brought with him. "So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing." Elisha turned down great wealth because it was not in God's plan for him to receive it. Even though Naaman urged him to take it, he still refused. Later he told Gehazi why:

Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? 2 Kings 5:26

God had important plans and goals in this event and it did not include the prophet's reward. This was an important opportunity for Naaman to give all the glory and gratitude toward God which is exactly what initially occurred.

Naaman determines to take some of the earth of Israel back to Syria. Although many have conjectured why, no real answer is given. Some think it had to do with the instructions regarding how Israel was to make an altar, others that the land of Israel was where God dwelt with his people and he wanted some of that "land" where he lived. Whatever the case, he affirms that he will never sacrifice to any other God but the LORD.

So Naaman said, "Then, if not, please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth; for your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord. 2Kings 5:17

The next clause has some very perplexing questions. Although he will worship the LORD, he will not stand up against the idolatry of his king. He knows enough about the attitudes of the King of Syria to offer this plea/excuse.

18 Yet in this thing may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon — when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord please pardon your servant in this thing." 19 Then he said to him, "Go in peace." So he departed from him a short distance. 2 Kings 5:17-19

Does Elisha's reply "go in peace" denote approval? From the words of Jesus' later it would appear that such could not be the case. Any form of idolatry was reprehensible to God. But at this state in Naaman's development, Elisha is either told not to intervene, or the matter is simply passed over in silence.

Gehazi's Greed

It is evident from the subsequent punishment he received that Gehazi had been overcome with the lust of covetousness and greed. The manner in which Elisha had rejected this offer should have alerted him that there were good reasons for not taking anything. At the very least he should have trusted Elisha enough to ask him why before acting. But instead of asking Elisha his reasons for giving up such a wonderful opportunity, he took matters into his own hands.

But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the Lord lives, I will run after him and take something from him." 21 So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, "Is all well?" 2 Kings 5:20-21

It seems from his thoughts that he believed Elisha had made a mistake which he would rectify. That talent of silver and change of clothes had captured his imagination much as the Babylonian garment, silver, and wedge of gold and had Achan(Josh 7:20-21).

That he began his conversation with Naaman with lies that drug Elisha into his plan proved his guilt. First, Elisha did not send him. Second while two men many have arrived from the mountains of Ephraim, it had nothing to do with the request Gehazi now made. That money and clothing was not

destined for Elisha or the two men from Ephraim.

And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me, saying, 'Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.'" 2 Kings 5:22

Naaman's gratitude is still strong and he is very happy not only to give him what was requested, but to double the amount of silver and then have his servants carry them back with Gehazi.

So Naaman said, "Please, take two talents." And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed them to two of his servants; and they carried them on ahead of him. 24 When he came to the citadel, he took them from their hand, and stored them away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed. 5:23-24

He places the "reward" that he had done nothing to earn in his own house. He had no intention of telling Elisha at that point. As soon as he came into his presence, Elisha began to question Gehazi. How his heart must have dropped with the first question: "Where did you go, Gehazi?" He should have and probably did know that lying was futile. He wasn't lying unto a man but unto God. But backed into a corner with no way out, there were only two choices to admit his guilt and plead for mercy or lie and try to cover it up. He chose the latter and wrong choice.

Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, "Where did you go, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant did not go anywhere." 5:25

Here is an interesting insight into the workings of inspiration. Elisha's heart went with him and he witnessed exactly what occurred as Naaman saw him and came back to meet him. This dealt with the first lie he had spoken to Elisha. Then Elisha condemned the act itself. The work of Elisha was to rebuke Israel with the "double portion of Elijah." This all consuming task left time or effort for nothing else. It was not the time "to receive money clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants." There was a reason why Elisha had refused the reward. The healing of Naaman was an act God had initiated for His own glory and His own purposes. It was not proper or seemly for Gehazi to seek for a reward when it was neither the time or the place for such things.

Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? 27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever." And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow. 5:25-27

The punishment severe, but clearly fit the crime. The wondrous power that God had revealed in taking the leprosy from Naaman Gehazi had sought profit. Therefore the power that removed it from Naaman would place it on Gehazi. The punishment was swift as it came immediately.

A similar warning was sent by Jehovah God himself to Baruch the servant of Jeremiah:

The word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the instruction of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, 2 "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: 3 'You said, "Woe is me now! For the Lord has added grief to my sorrow. I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.'" 4 "Thus you shall say to him, 'Thus says the Lord: "Behold, what I have built I will break down, and what I have planted I will pluck up, that is, this whole land. 5 And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold, I will bring adversity on all flesh," says the Lord. "But I will give your life to you as a prize in all places, wherever you go.'" Jer 45:1-5

The Work of Elisha

After a quick story of a prophet who lost an axe head in the Jordan and Elisha was allowed to use God's power to restore it, Elisha becomes involved in the wars between Israel and Syria. Remember these wars were the result of Israel's unfaithfulness as a means of seeking repentance and rejection of idols. But in mercy, God allowed Elisha to alleviate some of Israel's suffering. Like Elijah with prophets of Baal, God seek to show the difference between His prophet and the false prophets of Baal.

In this case, the king of Syria was sending raiding parties into Israel seeking to destroy small groups. Each time this occurred, Elisha sent word to the king of Israel and every time the king checked, his information was exactly correct and tragedy was averted.

Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, "My camp will be in such and such a place." 9 And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there." 10 Then the king of Israel sent someone to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice. 2 Kings 6:8-10

The king of Syria assumes it is a traitor in their midst, but someone revealed that it was Elisha the prophet. Where Naaman is at this point is not revealed. But the king is angry and wants to capture Elisha.

Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?" 12 And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." 13 So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him." 2 Kings 6:11-13

He dispatches a great army to capture Elisha and because God is seeking glory among the nations and in Israel, He does an amazing thing through the agency of Elisha. First, the king surrounds the village and Elisha's servant becomes aware of the danger.

Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. 15 And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

Elisha then reveals that the servant has nothing to fear because there are more people ready to fight for them than there are Syrians. He prays for God to open his eyes so he can see what Elisha already sees.

So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 2 Kings 6:14-24

Is this a vision similar to that which we read about in Revelation, Daniel and Ezekiel, or is this a true picture of what was around them? It is difficult to answer this question. Elijah was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot and that was not a vision, but a true reality. Later Gabriel will speak to Daniel about these matters.

Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. 21 But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince. Dan 10:20-21

These are most likely the 12 legions(6,000) of angels Jesus spoke of to His apostles.

But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? 54 How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" Mt. 26:52-54

After he shows these things to his servant, he prays again that God would strike the Syrians with blindness. He then tells them that the real man they seek(the king of Israel) was not in this city, but that he would take them to this man.

So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, and said, "Strike this people, I pray, with blindness." And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. 19 Now Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." But he led them to Samaria. 6:18-19

After leading them into the city of Samaria, Elisha again prayed that God would open their eyes.

So they could see where they had been led.

20 So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, "Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and there they were, inside Samaria!

The powerful nature of this event was seen both by the King of Israel and the people of the city of Samaria, along with those who had been led there who went back and reported it to the King of Syria. Israel's king is impressed enough to ask the prophet what he should do and then fulfill that command. Syria's king is impressed enough to stop sending bands of raiders into Israel.

Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" 22 But he answered, "You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." 23 Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel.

Elisha - 4

Samaria is Under Siege

This event does not stop the king of Syria from his desire to destroy Israel. Nor does it cause Israel to repent and turn from evil. God allows the king of Syria bring his entire army against Samaria and allows Samaria to become desperate because of lack of food.

And it happened after this that Ben-Hadad king of Syria gathered all his army, and went up and besieged Samaria. 25 And there was a great famine in Samaria; and indeed they besieged it until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and one-fourth of a kab of dove droppings for five shekels of silver. 2 Kings 6:24-25

One event tips the scales and leads the king to act. In a situation similar to the one Solomon proposed, a woman confesses to the king that they have eaten one baby and now the other will not give up her baby.

Then, as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, "Help, my lord, O king!" 27 And he said, "If the Lord does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or from the winepress?" 28 Then the king said to her, "What is troubling you?" And she answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' 29 So we boiled my son, and ate him. And I said to her on the next day, 'Give your son, that we may eat him'; but she has hidden her son." 6:26-29

This leads the king to tear his clothes revealing he is wearing sackcloth to seek favor from God. But his response to this event shows the shallow nature of his faith as he blames the whole thing on Elisha and wants to put him to death.

Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he tore his clothes; and as he passed by on the wall, the people looked, and there underneath he had sackcloth on his body. 31 Then he said, "God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today!" 2 Kings 6:30-31

Elisha is also in the city of Samaria sitting with the elders and already knows the king's intent before the messenger arrives.

But Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. And the king sent a man ahead of him, but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, "Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent someone to take away my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" 33 And while he was still talking with them, there was the messenger, coming down to him; 6:32-33

God then revealed to Elisha that the siege would end within a day and that at that time food would again become inexpensive. The messenger expresses doubt and Elisha proclaims his doom: You will see it, but will not eat of it.

Then Elisha said, "Hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord: 'Tomorrow about this time a seah

of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria." 2 So an officer on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, "Look, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, could this thing be?" And he said, "In fact, you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it." 2 Kings 7:1-2

That night, God sent a delusion to the army of Syria and thinking they were about to be attacked, had fled from their camp, leaving everything behind.

For the Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses — the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!" 7 Therefore they arose and fled at twilight, and left the camp intact — their tents, their horses, and their donkeys — and they fled for their lives. 2 Kings 7:6-7

The very next morning, four lepers decided that they would surrender to Syria to either be killed or allowed to live. They arrive, but no one is there.

3 Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, "Why are we sitting here until we die? 4 If we say, 'We will enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die." 5 And they rose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians; and when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise no one was there. 2 Kings 7:3-5

At first they decide to gather personal profit, then think better of it and bring the new to the city of Samaria.

And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried from it silver and gold and clothing, and went and hid them; then they came back and entered another tent, and carried some from there also, and went and hid it. 9 Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household." 2 Kings 7:8-9

The king believes this is some type of trap and doesn't want to leave the city so a delagation of a few men are sent and find it exactly as the lepers had said.

So the king arose in the night and said to his servants, "Let me now tell you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we are hungry; therefore they have gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, 'When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.'" 2 Kings 7:12

13 And one of his servants answered and said, "Please, let several men take five of the remaining horses which are left in the city. Look, they may either become like all the multitude of Israel that are left in it; or indeed, I say, they may become like all the multitude of Israel left from those who are consumed; so let us send them and see." 14 Therefore they took two chariots with horses; and the king sent them in the direction of the Syrian army, saying, "Go and see." 15 And they went after them to the Jordan; and indeed all the road was full of garments and weapons which the Syrians had thrown away in their haste. So the messengers returned and told the king. 7:13-15

When the city hears this new everyone rushes out to gather some of the spoils and in the process the man who had doubted the day before was trampled and Elisha's words were fulfilled.

Then the people went out and plundered the tents of the Syrians. So a seah of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord. 17 Now the king had appointed the officer on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate. But the people trampled him in the gate, and he died, just as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him. 18 So it happened just as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, "Two seahs of barley for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour for a shekel, shall be sold tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria." 19 Then that officer had answered the man of God, and said, "Now look, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?" And he had said, "In fact, you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it." 20 And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate, and he died. 2 Kings 7:13-20

The Shunammite Woman

The relationship between the Shunammite woman and Elisha again appears in the Scripture. The account takes us back seven years to the moment just before the famine that just ended occurred. Elisha had warned her then that this famine would last for seven years and that she should leave Israel until it ended. After it ended, she decided to return and petition the king for her land to be returned.

Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, "Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the Lord has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years." It came to pass, at the end of seven years, that the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went to make an appeal to the king for her house and for her land. 2 Kings 8:1-3

After the famine ended there are some events in the Scriptures placed there to reveal to us how God can act in ways beyond man's ability to comprehend. We call this God's providence because He is intervening in the world of men, but not in a direct or supernatural way. There is nothing in this event out of the ordinary except for the timing. In this case, a conversation between Gehazi and the king of Israel happens to discuss Elisha's miracles. At the very moment he was speaking of the Shunammite woman, she appeared seeking help from the king, who was so moved he gave her even more than she asked.

Then the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me, please, all the great things Elisha has done." 5 Now it happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored the dead to life, that there was the woman whose son he had restored to life, appealing to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life." 6 And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed a certain officer for her, saying, "Restore all that was hers, and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now." 2 Kings 8:3-6

This is very similar to what happened to Mordecai the same day that Haman was coming to seek his life, forcing him to honor Mordecai instead of destroying him (Est. 5-6).

When a man's ways please Jehovah, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Pr. 16:7

Elisha Fulfills Elijah's First Task

When Elijah stood before the Lord at Mt Horeb asking for his task to end, God gave him three duties.

anoint Hazael as king over Syria. 16 Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. 1K. 19:15-16

Elijah's actual role in these three things was to do the last one and appoint Elisha as his successor. Elisha then fulfilled the other two. In this account, Elisha went to Syria and revealed to Hazael that he was to succeed the king.

It all began with Elisha traveling to Damascus and the king sending a large gift, asking if he would recover from his illness. There is no word on whether Elisha took the gift or rejected it.

Then Elisha went to Damascus, and Ben-Hadad king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, "The man of God has come here." 8 And the king said to Hazael, "Take a present in your hand, and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?'" 9 So Hazael went to meet him and took a present with him, of every good thing of Damascus, forty camel-loads; and he came and stood before him, and said, "Your son Ben-Hadad king of Syria has sent me to you, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?'" 2K. 8:7-9

The conversation between Hazael and Elisha is important because it fulfills the task God had given Elijah. He revealed to Hazael that he would become king over Syria and that he would conquer Israel and be victorious in his battles, which is exactly what God had told Elijah to do.

Then he set his countenance in a stare until he was ashamed; and the man of God wept. 12 And Hazael said, "Why is my lord weeping?" He answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel: Their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword; and you will dash their children, and rip open their women with child." 13 So Hazael said, "But what is your servant — a dog, that he should do this gross thing?" And Elisha answered, "The Lord has shown

me that you will become king over Syria." 2 K. 8:11-13

Yet there is a single verse in this account that has created no end of speculation.

And Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover.' However the Lord has shown me that he will really die." 8:10

Before we begin to seek to unravel this complicated passage, let's set the parameters. First, God cannot lie.

that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, Heb. 6:18

in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began Titus 1:2

Second, God is not tempted with evil and will never tempt others.

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. Jas. 1:13-14

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1Cor. 10:13

Third, lying is always a sin.

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Rev 21:8

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. Rev 22:15

Any attempt to interpret or harmonize this passage must take these foundation truths into consideration. If our interpretation violates these principles, they it is an error and false teaching.

So as we examine the verse, what does it actually say? There are two parts to the passage. First, God clearly told Elisha that he would recover. "Go, say to him, You shall certainly recover." So the answer to the query from the king is clear. You will not die from this illness. The illness itself would not have taken the life of the king.

It is the second portion of the verse that is difficult. "And Elisha said to him, However the Lord has shown me that he will really die." Only Elisha and Hazael knew the true meaning of these words. There are two possibilities. The first is that Hazael is to go back and lie to the king telling him he would recover when he was really going to die. But we know this is impossible. So what is the other possibility.

Remember, Elisha had not come to Syria to advise the king, but to anoint (appoint) Hazael. Hazael was to learn that he would become the next king at this interview between himself and Elisha. That information, joined with the wicked and selfish heart of Hazael, led to the second part of this passage. Hence while the illness would not take the life of the king, and he would surely recover from the illness, God had shown Elisha that the king was going to die. The inference is not that Hazael should tell him a lie. The inference is that Hazael is going to kill him. The rest of the account revealed that is exactly what happened. It was not the illness, but murder that killed the king.

Then he departed from Elisha, and came to his master, who said to him, "What did Elisha say to you?" And he answered, "He told me you would surely recover." 15 But it happened on the next day that he took a thick cloth and dipped it in water, and spread it over his face so that he died; and Hazael reigned in his place. 2 Kings 8:14-15

Elisha Fulfills Elijah's First Second Task

The second task God had given Elijah was to anoint Jehu king over Israel. Yet this time, not only is Elijah not directly involved, but neither is Elisha. Elisha gives very specific instructions. He tells him exactly where Jehu will be and what he will be doing. He is to give this message only to Jehu so he must ask him to go into an inner room. This time the anointing was to be literal. He was to pour oil on his head and then give God's message to him that he has now been anointed as king

over Israel. Finally, after these words he is to flee and spend no more time with him.

And Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets, and said to him, "Get yourself ready, take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth Gilead. 2 Now when you arrive at that place, look there for Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, and go in and make him rise up from among his associates, and take him to an inner room. 3 Then take the flask of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, 'Thus says the Lord: "I have anointed you king over Israel."' Then open the door and flee, and do not delay." 2 Kings 9:1-3

The only thing the young man adds are the words Elisha spoke to Ahab after the death of Naboth when Ahab sought his vineyard and Jezebel had him murdered.

*Then he arose and went into the house. And he poured the oil on his head, and said to him, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I have anointed you king over the people of the Lord, over Israel. 7 **You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. 8 For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; and I will cut off from Ahab all the males in Israel, both bond and free. 9 So I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. 10 The dogs shall eat Jezebel on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her.'**" And he opened the door and fled. 2 Kings 9:6-10*

Death of Elisha

Evidently the final revelation made to Elisha was that his own sickness would lead to his death. When the king of Israel arrived, he quoted the very words that Elisha had at the death of Elijah.

And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. 2 Kings 2:12

Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!" 2 Kings 13:14

Instead of this being a time when the king of Israel laments with Elisha, Elisha takes control and again works as a prophet. Using a parable of a bow and an arrow. First he has Joash shoot an arrow and the king