

Bible Studies

The Call of Elisha

Read 1 kings 19v15-18

Elijah was a truly great prophet, yet even the best of people have their failures and their weakness. From the heights of Mt. Carmel, where Elijah had called down fire from heaven and seen a whole people turn back to God. Where he had prayed and seen a three year drought broken. Elijah had slipped, he had run for no other reason but fear and is now found bitter and disillusioned on Mt. Horeb, the Mountain of God.

Often in the midst of our greatest triumphs we find defeat, this we must guard against.

God reminds Elijah that he is not alone nor is he God's only hope (as he seems to believe) He is sent back to do three things, the most significant of which (and the only one he actually did,) was to appoint Elisha to be his successor.

The prophecy

Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. 1 Kings 19:17

This threefold prophecy explained God's plan for the restoration of His people. Something Elijah seemed to think was now impossible. God always has a plan.

Hazael was king of Aram (Syria), Israel's natural enemy.

His sword is the sword of War and of Judgement. 2 Kings 8v12-13

Jehu was to be King of Israel, a good king (mostly). He destroyed Baal worship

His sword is the sword of Justice and Zeal for God. 2 Kings 10v16,30

Elisha's sword was different, he never killed anyone but it was no less effective.

His sword was the sword of the Word and the Spirit.

Isaiah 11v4b

Hosea 6v5

Matthew 10v34

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Elijah seemed to think he was Israel's only hope, but God is not tied to one man or one method. God always has His 7000. When we think we are indispensable, we make ourselves eminently dispensable.

How might this effect us?

The Gospel does not finish with us. God always has His eye on the next generation - so should we.

The Call

Read 1 kings 19v19-21

Elisha means 'God is Salvation.'

What was Elisha doing when he was called?

What would 12 yoke of oxen suggest about his family?

That Elisha took his turn at the plough tells us what about him?

Some of us sense that God has a call for us and we waste years waiting to find what He has for us to do. Not so Elisha, not so the disciples, they were called at work.

Consider Ecclesiastes 9v10 & Luke 16v10-12.

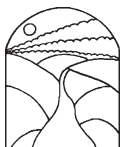
It has been said 'God calls busy people' is this true?

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What significance's did Elijah's Cloak have? (1K18v46,9v13,2K2v8,13,14)

Elisha understood it as a call.

It symbolised friendship.

It symbolised coming under Elijah's covering and protection.

It symbolised Elijah's anointing and power.

For us what would the cloak be symbolic of?

Was Elisha eager or reluctant? cf Psalm 110:3

We read that Elisha downs tools and runs after Elijah. Do not hesitate in God's call.

Do you think Elisha might have been in some way prepared for this moment?

Compare 1 Kings 19v20 with Luke 9v59-62.

Maybe Jesus had Elisha in mind when He spoke these words, as if to say that the service of the kingdom is much more urgent than that to which Elisha was called.

But Lot's wife gives us the example of those who look back, not Elisha. For the man to whom Jesus spoke, saying goodbye to family was an excuse to delay, or even not go at all. In Elisha's case he was simply honouring his parents.

What excuses are good enough for you not to follow Christ?

If you accept an excuse, then there will always be one to accept.

Elisha took the oxen he was ploughing with and slaughtered them cooking them with the wood from the plough (I bet his father was ecstatic!) Then he gave a farewell banquet.

What was he doing?

What have I done?

"Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?" 1 Kings 19:20

These were surely dangerous times to be a prophet. Not a time to leave the safety of a well off family.

Elisha did not go back nor did Elijah want him to. **So what does it mean?**

The choice to follow had to be 100% Elisha's choice. God has the right to call even reluctant disciples but man does not have the right to force others against their will. For me this sentence speaks of the awesome nature of the call to follow. It is a divine call and carries with it divine responsibilities. It is not something to be taken lightly. To follow Jesus is an all encompassing thing, it will at some stage cost you everything. Elijah knew the cost of following. A prophet cannot chose when, where, or if he will speak God's word, he can only obey.

The prophecy stated that Elisha should be Elijah's successor in the prophetic ministry. **What in fact did Elisha become?**

It appears that Elisha was Elijah's attendant for some 10 years.

How do you think those 10 years served Elisha?

What lesson does this have for us?

It is human nature to want everything now, to grasp the prestigious role. After all it was prophesied. Elisha had to learn his calling. Zec 4:10. Always take the opportunity to learn from those around you. God gives you the abilities for the tasks to which He calls you but that does not mean you do not need the instruction of those who have already been there and know the calling.

What does this story tell us today?

Luke 5:11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Bible Studies

Elisha - A Double Anointing

Read 2 Kings 2v1-18

It would appear everyone knows what is about to happen, the company of prophets, Elisha and Elijah, but the subject is not to be discussed.

Three times Elijah tells Elisha to stay while he goes on three times Elisha refuses.

Why did Elijah tell Elisha to stay?

Is it possible that this was some kind of test?

Why did Elisha refuse?

There is a hint here of Jacob wrestling with God, "*I will not let you go unless you bless me.*" Gen 32:26. Elisha had been faithful in following and serving Elijah some 10 years, he was not about to leave him at the end.

Is there a lesson for us in this?

The prophets said to Elisha "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" A literal translation of the Hebrew says 'from over your head'. This could imply the physical way that Elijah went up, but also that today Elisha would be the one with the prophets authority. Elisha was not going to miss what he had been waiting for 10 years.

The two prophets cross the Jordan, the area where Moses had died. It is not until here that Elijah asks, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" Had he waited at Gilgal, Bethel or Jericho the question would not have been asked the blessing not imparted. For such blessing come to those who stay close to their master.

God gave Solomon a similar opportunity 1 Kings 3v5. Jesus also used the same kind of expression, Mark 10v51. The Bible says that God will give us the desires of our hearts. The question is are those desires godly.

What would you ask for?

Are you asking for it?

You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:2b-3.

Mark 10v36-38 is an example of this.

What did Elisha ask for?

This require thought, we immediately think that Elisha is asking for twice as much of the power of the Holy Spirit as Elijah had. After all this passage is clearly about receiving the Gifts and Anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Did Elijah have the power to dictate how the Holy Spirit would come upon Elisha?

It is the Father we ask for the Holy Spirit not Elijah, notice also that spirit here is without a capital letter.

What was the double portion of Elijah's spirit?

Deut 21v17

The inheritance of the double portion belonged to the first son, the others just got a single share. Elisha is asking to be Elijah's successor as prophet, what he was first called for and what the company of prophets already acknowledged he was to become.

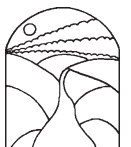
If it was prophesied that you would receive a gift, would that obviate the need to pray for and seek after that gift?

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Why was this a hard thing?

Maybe the difficulty was not in Elijah recognising Elisha as his successor, but in Elisha filling the role?

The next perplexing thing is the condition Elijah requires of Elisha.

What was the condition?

Why was this necessary?

It is required of those called for spiritual tasks to see what others cannot see.

F.B.Meyer writes, '*had we been there, we should probably have been unconscious of anything, save the sudden disappearance of the Prophet.*' To be a prophet you must see through the eyes of a prophet.

2 Corinthians 4v18

Hebrews 11v1

Hebrews 11v27

Romans 4v17

This does not mean Elisha made up what he saw rather he saw what was invisible, he saw through the eyes of faith, he saw spiritual realities.

Examining a painting by Turner, a woman remarked that she had never seen such colours in real life, the artist replied 'no madam, but don't you wish you could?'

An artist can see what others cannot, so must the man and woman of faith.

What did Elijah cloak represent?

Elijah was the second man to be translated and not see death (who was the first?)

The mechanics of how this happened are irrelevant. Twice a whirlwind is mentioned, (caught up in the Spirit as Daniel or Philip were?). A flaming chariot is also mentioned which could mean an angelic chariot as Angels are consistently associated with fire. (Seraphim means flaming ones).

Cowley refers to Elijah as *the second man to leap the ditch, where all the rest of mankind fell*. It reminds us that death is not our goal but that which lie beyond death, of the immediate presence of God. Philipians 1v23. Also of the Rapture that awaits those are alive when Christ returns.

Evidently Elisha felt nothing of this double portion, no new power, no tingling sensation, no rush of the Lord's presence. It is not until he stands before the Jordan, in need of the anointing that was so evident in Elijah, that he found the reality of the impartation. When they see the river part the company of prophets recognise that Elisha is God's anointed servant.

Did Elisha receive a double portion? Whether it is coincidence or not we do not know but the Bible records twice as many of Elisha's miracles than Elijah's.

We have noted that the significance of this passage for us has to do with receiving gifts of the Spirit.

If so what can we learn from Elisha?

We must seek and persevere, as believers we are to ready to stay at Gilgal, or then at Bethel, or finally Jericho. Ready to stay with the others when we must press on following our master.

We must ask for what we desire, and desire what is right. We must not assume that everything will come automatically because it is preordained.

We must prepare ourselves in service to our master as Elijah did.

We must act in faith, seeing things from a spiritual perspective.

We need not expect to feel it, (though we may,) but step out in faith as Elisha did.

Bible Studies

Elisha Two Miracles

Read 2 Kings 2v19-22

Jericho is one of (if not the) oldest cities in the world. The reason for this is it's position. It sits in the rift (Jordan) valley, the climate is warm even in winter. It was on a main road between Syria and Egypt, and afforded good hunting and pasture. The Jordan valley is the lowest point on Earth, the air pressure makes breathing a little easier, giving a sense of serenity and peace. Jericho today is a real oasis and still a city of Palms as it was in Biblical days.

Why was the Water bad? Joshua 6v26, 1 Kings 16v34

Jericho had only recently been rebuilt (14 years) before that it had been a partial ruin for c400 years. We know that there was some kind of settlement during this time. 2 Samuel 10v5.

In light of this was Elisha action more than just to do with water?

There is today a spring called Elisha's spring, from which I have drunk. This is claimed as the one Elisha healed. Clearly it was not the salt that physically healed the water, but the faith and obedience it represented. The incident is reminiscent of the bitter water at Elim, in Moses day. Exodus 15v23-27

Two interpretations



What was cursed is now blessed.

There are times when we may have deliberately disobeyed God, or simply make wrong choices and miss His will.

Can you think of any examples?

Does this mean that you will never know God's blessing?

What must we do?

We must repent and obey Him now.

Abraham disobeyed God when Ishmael was conceived, but this did not stop God from providing Abraham with Isaac, God even blessed Ishmael. When Jonah obeyed God his evangelism was still blessed.

Psa 30:5 For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Which of these is true?

Because I have disobeyed.

I may as well keep on disobeying because continuing a sin is no worse than committing it in the first place.

It doesn't matter if I am disobedient because God will accept me back when I repent.

Since I disobeyed God, He has finished with me so there is no longer any hope and no point in repenting.

God will bless me if I repent and do what is right now.

God has a hundred ways to turn my failure into blessing.

Since God has forgiven me I will not have to live with the consequence of my action.

Consider Joel 2:25, Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28

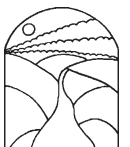
The best example of all this is Israel. Israel went through many rebellious times when they turned from God's will, even serving other gods, but when they repented God always drew them back and blessed them again.

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Renewing the Heart

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:23

This ties in with the similar account at Elim, the bitter water is the bitterness of an unforgiven life. The Salt is the Gospel message. Mark 9v50. The Gospel renews the heart and heals it's corruption so the it can again be productive.

What does it mean that the heart is the wellspring of life?

Matthew 12v33-36, 15v18-19, Luke 6v45.

How do you guard your heart?

1 Peter 2v11, Philippians 4v7, Luke 12v15.

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. Hebrews 12:15

In John Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit was like a spring welling up inside us. James warns that the mouth is like a spring of water, bitter and fresh water cannot come from the same spring.

Read 2 Kings 2v23-25

This is a passage that offends many people. *Our faith is all sweetness and light - far be it from God (or Elisha) to do such a thing.*

Elisha went from the School of the Prophets in Jericho to the School of the Prophets in Bethel.

What else was in Bethel? 1 Kings 12:28-29.

These were set up by King Jeroboam to stop the people worshipping God in Jerusalem as the law prescribed. They were Idols, but they were also a deviant way to worship God. God was very displeased, 1 Kings 13, 14v9. I cannot imagine that Elijah or Elisha were silent on the subject. Consequently I imagine neither of them were too welcome in Bethel. The School of the Prophets probably put up with this behaviour all the time. The prestige and finical income from the golden calf would have been large. The true prophet threatened all this. (Paul got into trouble in exactly this way in Ephesus. Acts 19v26-29)

Such a large group (42+) were probably not there by accident. They were probably sent to make Elisha unwelcome and, if possible, keep him from entering the town. If this is all true, we can see why such a judgement came down on them. it was a judgement on the whole town not just the youths.

Go on up - Is a term of contempt, but it could also be their way of saying ' *why don't you go after Elijah and we will be rid of both of you* '.

But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. 2 Chronicles 36:16

"Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm." Psalms 105:15

It is a serious thing to mock God's anointed, or to make fun of those who speak His word.

A New Testament perspective

Read Luke 9v52-56

Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Luke 6:28

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:19

Why the change?

Bible Studies

Elisha- Widows oil

Read 2 Kings 4v1-7

Most of the New Testament miracles had a specific purpose, theological or evangelical to them. This miracle seems to have been preformed purely on compassionate grounds to meet a desperate need.

We have already read much of the company or school of the Prophets, a group who when the nation turned from God remained faithful to Him. I cannot imagine such a group as being only concerned with themselves. I imagine they saw their task as halting the nations apostasy by their example and their teaching.

Does being a servant of God make us immune from tragedy?

What was the woman's plight?

In Biblical times her sons and the widow herself, could be taken into slavery as payment for a debt. They would remain slaves for the next six years, or until the next year release. Exodus 21v2. (We also know this was not always observed.) During this time a relative could pay to redeem them. In fact it was his obligation to do so.

Is it right for a Christian to get into debt? Romans 13:8

We do not know how he got into debt, so we will not judge him, it could well be that it was a result of the persecution under Jezebel.

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3:17-18

Four simple lessons

The Women had to ask.

She had to ask and to state her need.

God uses what we have.

Elisha asked her first what she wanted then what she had. God uses what we have, this may be possessions or it may be talents. These things are only used when they are first given to God.

Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied. The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Exodus 4:2-3

How do these two stories compare?

God's provision requires an act of faith.

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. James 2:17-18

How did she show her faith?

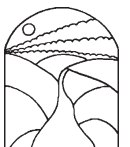
What would have happened if she had got just a few jars?

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The miracle came in the pouring.

Open wide your mouth and I will fill it. Psalm 81:10

This is so often true in receiving God's provision. Especially in receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit or giving a prophecy. Until you start doing what God calls you to do you never know His power to help you.

Can you think of a similar story in the NT (feeding 5000)

Why did she go to Elisha to ask what to do?

Maybe she recognised it was not her oil!

How do you think this story applies to us today?

What are the vessels?

What is the Oil?

What is the need?

The Jars had to be empty and clean.

Empty of what?

Clean from what?

Three principles (Courtesy of A.Maclaren)

Desire

To be filled we must desire God's fullness

You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:2-3

God does not force himself on us, He does not give unless we desire.

God will not make you holy unless you desire holiness.

He will not make you wise unless you are eager to learn.

It is our capacity to receive that determines how much God gives us. Our desire must be real and strong, not weak and indecisive. It must be steadfast. *But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. James 1:6-8*

Expect

To desire is one thing, to positively expect God to fill us is another. Often our expectations fall far below our desire. Our low expectation of God limits His supply.

Read Luke 11v7-9

Why did the man not give up?

Expectation, like desire opens the heart.

How does low expectation limit God?

Obedience

Desire and expectation go only so far, we can desire and expect what is not right for us. We ask *with wrong motives*. James 4v3. We must obey God and walk in the light. If we do this our desires will be godly. The area of obedience is another were we can be *double minded*. One moment our desires are Godly, the next we run off after some sin.

Bible Studies

Elisha - Naaman

Read 2 kings 5v1-3

Who was Naaman?

Aram (Syria) was Israel's natural enemy, during this whole period there was intermittent war between Israel and Aram.

For me the most important character in this story is not a king, commander or prophet but a slave girl.

She took the opportunity.

She exercised faith.

She sowed the seed.

If you compare her with the king of Israel or Gehazi, Elisha's servant, then she stands out as an example for us to follow.

She could not heal Naaman, but she knew who could!

And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" Ester 4:14

It is by no means clear that the disease indicated here, is what we know as leprosy. The Hebrew indicates a skin disease, but the word is not used exclusively of leprosy. Epidemiologists are uncertain whether leprosy was known in the Middle East at this time. However in the heat of the Mediterranean, all skin diseases were treated with extreme suspicion and subjected to quarantine. This was the end of Naaman's distinguished career.

Read 2 Kings 5v4-7

Why was Naaman sent to the king not the prophet?

What was the Kings reaction? Why?

What was his conclusion about the reason Naaman had come?

The king faced with an impossible situation resorted to despair. Is such a situation despair is always at hand, a snare for the unwary, we should resort to faith. By the way the kings conclusion, that the king of Aram was out to provoke a war was unfounded. Human nature tends to invent the worst and exercise paranoia. Faced with trouble it is easy to make unfounded conspiracy theories, we must guard against this.

Read 2 Kings 5v8-11

What was Elisha's response to the king?

You can imagine Naaman and a large entourage arriving outside Elisha's modest dwelling. We have to understand that what Elisha did next was very strange.

Naaman was a very important man. He deserved respect. He deserved to be met personally by Elisha.

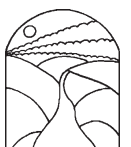
Instead what does Elisha do?

Why did Elisha act this way?

What was Naaman to do?

Seven in Scripture is the perfect number the number of completion. It pertains to divinity.

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| Faith Rating. | 1 to 10 |
| Servant Girl | □□□□□□□□□□ |
| King of Israel | □□□□□□□□□□ |
| Elisha | □□□□□□□□□□ |
| Naaman | □□□□□□□□□□ |



Read 2 Kings 5v11-12

What was Naaman's reaction?
What had his expectation been?

The Jordan is still a remarkably unimpressive river. In biblical times, at the end of summer it could dry up to almost nothing.

Were the waters of Jordan of special spiritual effectiveness?

Do you think Elisha deliberately chose a demeaning way for Naaman to be healed?

Why? James 4v6, 1 Peter 5v5

Naaman's problem

He had a false understanding of how God would act.
His pride stopped him from doing what God required.
He did not want to obey God or Elisha.

Do you think these are still problems for us today?

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. James 4:10

He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD. 2 Chronicles 36:12

It is recorded that Jesus *learned obedience*. We too must learn to be obedient to God. Sometimes God tests this obedience.

Had Naaman refused to bathe would he have been healed?

If we refuse to humble ourselves will we receive from God?

Read 2 kings 5v13-14

Another servant who acquits himself well.

What was the servants argument?

This servant is another role model for us. We must encourage one another to be obedient to God and to ditch our pride.

Faith Rating. 1 to 10

Naaman's Servant

What was the effect of bathing?

I imagine that after Six dips in muddy Jordan Naaman's condition was unchanged, obedience had to be completed.

In Scripture what is leprosy a type or symbol of?

Going down to the water
Going to make myself real clean
Seems so long since I felt holy
Guess Naaman felt the same.

Got no Jordan in this country
Can't count much more than five
And I don't believe that seven's
Going to make my soul alive

Seems I've been around a long time
Found no prophet got no cure
Now you say 'go bathe in Jesus'
Only way to make me whole.

Adrian Snell

How do we bathe in Jesus?

How does this make us clean?

Assuming this story refers to salvation identify the factors it contains.

Bible Studies

Elisha- Gehazi's Fall

If you don't remember the story of Naaman, look over the passage to remind yourself. 2 Kings 5v1-14

Read 2 Kings 5v15-16

A Changed man.

Naaman is cleansed, but he has also learnt some very important lessons. His whole attitude is different. Like the Samaritan that Jesus cured of Leprosy, Naaman comes back to thank Elisha. Luke 17,12-19. Elisha would not see Naaman before, his pride had to be broken first, besides it was God who had to take center stage, Elisha had to stay in the back ground. Now he welcomes Him.

What two things does Naaman do?

Why did Naaman offer a gift?

Why would Elisha not receive the gift?

We do not know the reasons. Naaman could have offered the gift in pure gratitude, or to solve his conscience, or because he was treating Elisha as he would a pagan priest or magician.

If it was one of these last two possibilities, then Elisha's reasons for refusing are obvious. He was not about to take glory for what God had done, nor by accepting a gift was he going to let Naaman think he could buy healing.

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Matthew 10:8

The Bible says that a workman is worthy of his hire but we must never become hirelings.

Read 2 Kings 5v17-19

Imperfect faith

In verse 15b Naaman makes a confession of faith in God. His healing was complete but his faith was not.

What defects do we find in Naaman's faith?

Naaman's request for two mule loads of earth seems strange. His intention was either to worship God on the soil or to use the soil to set up an altar. While he has acknowledged that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. He still thinks that God is somehow a local deity tied inextricably to the geographical land of Israel. Like bottled water from the Jordan it is a kind of superstition.

It is so easy for faith to degenerate to superstition.

Can you think of any examples?

Naaman's next request was as much political as religious, as Commander of the army he would have had to take part in the rituals in the temple of Rimmon. While he will physically comply his heart will stay true to God.

Is this all right?

Can what we do outwardly and believe inwardly be separated?

Can you ask God for the forgiveness of a sin in advance?

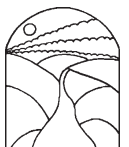
Elisha does not sanction or condemn, nor was he asked to, he just says Go in Peace, Doubtless his prayers were that Naaman would find courage when the time came to stay true to God.

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Read 2 Kings 5v20

Do you think Elisha was *too easy* on Naaman?

Sometimes we are tempted to put conditions and restrictions on people that God does not impose.

This could be true in salvation;

You can't be a Christian unless...

forgiveness of a sin;

I won't accept your apology until...

acceptance in Church;

You can't come in here unless...

True, there are standards, but they are not subject to our opinion of what is right and proper, rather on God's love, grace and holiness. Gehazi thought he knew better than his master. Sometimes we think the same.

Read 2 Kings 5v21-24

What was Gehazi's true motive?

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God. 2 Cor 2:17

Like always, temptation started in the thought life. Regulate desire and you control conduct.

Is it possible that by asking for a gift it was Gehazi that let Naaman off lightly?

Read 1 Timothy 6v5b-11

What's the difference between *godliness is a means to financial gain* and *godliness with contentment* ?

What should our attitude to money be?

What sins did greed cause Gehazi to commit?

Read 2 Kings 5v25-27

Elisha knew. Often God revealed these things to Elisha, although he did not always. 2 Kings 4v27. In extreme cases God still does. Even when no one else knows God does, and after all He is the one who matters.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:14

The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden. 1 Timothy 5:24-25

What did Elisha mean when he said "this is not the time...?"

Elisha had a whole perspective that Gehazi did not even know existed. Gehazi did not see a problem with receiving Naaman's gift. For Elisha God's will always took priority over personal gain.

How could it be so for us?

Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. John 7:6

It is ironic that Naaman is cured and Gehazi becomes a leper.

Gehazi's sin was great, so was his punishment. It reminds us of Ananias and Sapphira. In a sense the outward leprosy was a sign of an inward leprosy, the greed of Gehazi's heart. Maybe if the inner leprosy could be healed there would be hope for the outer one.

Bible Studies

Elisha at Dothan

Read 2 Kings 6v8-14

Again Aram is at war with Israel. It is not always easy to work out what King is on the throne in these passages. The leading contender in this case is Joram, while he was not a good king he was not all bad either, at least he listens to Elisha.

What spiritual gift is the prophet exercising?

The king of Aram sends a force by night to capture Elisha. They surround the city of Dothan, which is 15km north of Samaria the capital of Israel.

Did you notice a flaw in the kings logic?

Based on this why didn't Elisha run for it?

Read 2 Kings 6v15-17

We assume that Elisha's servant is still Gehazi. He is mentioned in chapter 8 so he was still on the scene.

Is this surprising? How do you account for it?

The might not yet have taken effect, he may have repented and been healed or this section of Kings may not be in strict chronological order.

What was Gehazi's response?

What was Elisha's response?

Why were they different?

Yes, Gehazi was taken by surprise when Elisha wasn't. Yes, Elisha had a faith Gehazi had not grasped. But he also had a depth of experience in the Lord that led him to know he could trust God.

Gehazi had to learn faith, Elisha set an example.

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. Titus 2:7

What example should you set for those younger in the faith than you?

What did Elisha do?

Firstly he said "Don't be afraid" an oft repeated line in Scripture and one we need to take note of. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 2 Kings 6:16

2 Chronicles 32v7-8

Isaiah 55v10

Romans 8v31

1 John 4v4

Secondly he prayed a very short prayer. "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." 2 Kings 6:17. He did not give him a Bible study or a motivational talk.

When did this heaven army arrive?

What is clear is that they were already there. Gehazi suddenly got to see them.

The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Psalm 34:7

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Can you imagine the look on his face?

Do we know for sure that Elisha saw the angels?

The miracle was not the presence of the angels but that for a moment they were seen.

We have already learnt in this series of studies that the servants of God must see things that others cannot see. They must have a spiritual sight, the eyes of faith. They must look at God and not the problem.

Concentrating on the problem brings fear, hopelessness, depression and defeat. Concentrating on God brings faith, hope, encouragement and victory.

When I am afraid, I will trust in you. Psalm 56:3

Can you think of any examples?

2 Corinthians 1v8-10 springs to mind, or the time Paul and Silas were in prison. We do not live in denial. We know and acknowledge the problem, but we also know and acknowledge God and God is bigger than the problem. Romans 4v18-21.

The wonder is, not that we should sometimes be afraid, but that we should ever be free of fear if we look only at the visible facts.

The world says seeing is believing we say believing is seeing. Maclaren.

For this spiritual sight we must also have our eyes opened.

Read 2 Kings 6v18-23

Were the angels used to deliver Elisha?

What were they there for?

It is speculated that this blindness could have been a kind of confusion rather than literally not being able to see. They did not have a clue what was happening. Either way it must have been a comical sight.

15 km's later they arrive in Samaria and their eyes are opened. They must have got an almighty shock.

Why did the king want to kill them?

Why did Elisha forbid him?

What was the outcome?

God always seems to have something more going on than we expect. He used one problem to solve another. And in the reverse of what we normally expect to happen everyone had a nice cup of tea and went home.

This gives us a practical example of what Jesus meant when he told us to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us.

When we do this what range of outcomes might we expect?

And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,' declares the LORD, 'and I will be its glory within.'
Zecheriac 2:5

What can we learn from this story?

Bible Studies

Elisha & The Siege of Samaria

Read 2 Kings 6v24-33

What was the state of the City and it's people?

What was the kings response?

Who did the king blame?

What would have been a better response?

As the city ran out of food and even the most unappetising meal sold for a fortune, morale sank and people began to do what at other times would be unthinkable. The king was at his wits end, "If the Lord does not help you where can I get help for you" he was in the same boat as everyone else.

We may suppose that Elisha had been telling the king to wait for the Lord. But the king was through waiting.

Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD. Psalm 27:14

Are you ever impatient with God?

The king tore his clothes in despair and anger, he would have been better to rent them in repentance.

Elisha obviously trusted God for he was still in the city and still meeting with the elders. What were they doing? Were they praying?

Read 2 Kings 7v1-2

Elisha predicted that within 24 hours food would be in abundance and sell for a normal price. This was clearly impossible. The kings attendant pointed this out. *Even if the heavens rained down corn, even if manna fell as in the desert.*

Did God have to open the windows of heaven?

'Unbelief is a sin by which men greatly dishonour and displease God and deprive themselves of the favours He designs for them' Matthew Henry.

Just because we cannot see how something could happen does not make it impossible. With God all things are possible. Matthew 19v26

Read Mark 9:23

Elisha did not tell how it would happen, if indeed he knew himself. God very rarely spells out His methods in advance.

Does not knowing how make it harder to believe?

It is almost as if God is saying "stand back and be amazed".

Why did God wait until they were desperate?

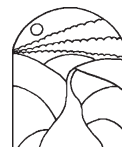
The LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, slave or free. Deuteronomy 32:36

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Read 2 Kings 7v3-16

What happened to the Aramean army? v6-7

The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion. Proverbs 28:1

What was the lepers logic?

(Jewish tradition says these lepers were Gehazi and his three sons.)

What did they do?

Why did they report it to the King?

Why did no one in the city notice the Aramean's had fled?

What was the Kings assumption?

The Aramean's have fled leaving everything too heavy to carry, including their food supplies. All the King has to do is go get the food and sell it to the people.

So where is the miracle?

The miracle is two fold; only that Elisha knew what would happen (or at least that something would happen) and only that God caused the Aramean's to hear a sound.

Were these big miracles?

Track the river of life to it's source and you will find God.

We may think it a wonder that an entire army could be routed by just a sound, that they would be so fearful that they would not even check to see if the Egyptians and Hittites were there. Stranger things have happened. God used this trick more than once (2 Kings 19:7), but it is also a favourite of the Enemy. He makes us hear some doubt or rumour or lie and as a result we quit whatever good work we are doing in God's service.

Can you think of any examples?

What can you do to counter this tactic?

Read 2 Kings 7v17-20

The doubter got his comeuppance and God's word was fulfilled.

Why was he judged so harshly?

Two Lessons

Some people try to find scientific explanations for the miracles of Scripture. Others seem to get very disappointed when God uses understandable or human methods. I think we should just let God work any way He wants.

1

The first lesson is never doubt that God can do what He has promised. Just because it seems impossible, that it would require a supernatural extraordinary miracle does not mean God can't find an easy way to do it. Faith is so simple. We do not have to work everything out.

Sometime we are frightened to think through how God will achieve something because we then think that it stops God from doing it that way.

Is this a valid argument?

Do we need to work out how God will do something?

2

There is an allegory in this passage. The lepers stand for Christians who discover the Good News of deliverance.

What happens next?

Then they said to each other, "We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us." 2 Kings 7:9

In what way would this be true for us?

Read Ezekiel 33v1-8

Bible Studies

Elisha, Hazael & Jehu.

Elijah's unfinished tasks

¹⁵ The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him." 1 Kings 19:15-18

It was only Elisha that Elijah anointed. We now find that Elisha anoints Hazael and Jehu and that as the penultimate acts of his ministry, which the Bible records.

Why such a long delay?

What does this tell us about prophecy?

Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right." John 7:6

For us the time is always now, not so for God. Isaiah 5v18-19. We must wait for God's timing, which is sure and perfect.

For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. Habakuk 2:3

What should our attitude be waiting for God to fulfil His Word?

- Force it to happen as soon as possible.
- Figure out God's will just do it, and do nothing.
- Wait actively for God, then seize the moment.

Read 2 Kings 8v7-15 The sword of Hazael

Ben Hadad was Israel's arch enemy. Yet he would seem mild compared with his successor. The Gift (40 camels) was rather large for a simple Yes or No. Maybe it was intended as an incentive for Elisha to heal him.

Why did Ben Hadad turn to Elisha? It is interesting how people, when they are desperate, forsake their own gods and look for the truth.

Was Elisha deceitful?

Did Elisha condone Hazael behaviour?

What Was God's purpose in Hazael? 2 Kings 10v32

God gives us the freedom to sin, He even knows that we will sin and can prophesy such. Eg. Peter's denial of Christ. But that is never an excuse for our sin.

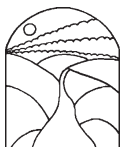
Hazael was clearly a butcher, his act of murder seemed to open up a side of him that became increasingly ruthless. Sin opens the door to more sin.

It is said that it is more likely that a person should never sin than that he would sin just once.

Often our attitude to sin is 'just one', does it ever stay that way?

Read 2 kings 9v1-13 The sword of Jehu

Elisha also arranged for Jehu to be appointed King. The King of Israel at this time was Joram, son of Ahab and Jezebel (The worst King/Queen Israel ever had. 1 Kings 21:25). Immediately, Jehu did two things to fulfil prophecies that had been given through Elijah.



He destroyed the family of wicked Ahab. 1 Kings 21v19
He killed Jezebel 1 Kings 21v23

Jehu said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD." 2 Kings 10:16

After that he assembled all the prophets of Baal in their temple, declaring that he intended to worship Baal, like never before. After he sacrificed he had the army slaughter all the priest of Baal and destroy the temple. 2 Kings 10v18-27.

Is zeal for the Lord enough?

Romans 10:2

Romans 12:11

Galatians 4:18

Sometimes our zeal is misguided, sometimes our outward zeal is a cover for an inward life that we are unwilling to yield to God. I suspect it was this way with Jehu.

What is God saying?

Two bloody kings. One an enemy of God, one a worshipper. One destroying from outside, one from inside. Both achieving God's purposes.

There are many passages in the OT that seem to us to be very bloodthirsty. In comparison with the morals of the day, even the passages of the OT that we may object to stand out like beacons of light.

God did not order Hazael's actions nor Jehu's slaughter of the prophets of Baal, but He certainly used them! God did order the destruction of Ahab's family as a judgement for their sins. How can we understand a loving God doing this?

For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die. Ezekiel 18:4

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

The Bible makes it very clear that we all deserve to die for our sins. God is not love in a wishy washy, wouldn't hurt a fly way. He is love, against the background of the awful consequences of sin, His righteous judgement and His right to destroy the soul that sins. God's judgement on sin in the OT stands out as an example of what will be on the day of Judgement. In light of that His mercy and patience now are incredible. It is God's judgement that makes His love all the more powerful.

So when you... do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? Romans 2:3-4

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

What was God's purpose for Hazael and Jehu?

God clearly intended to purify the nation, He did this by two forces; without and within.

What are these two forces as applied to us?

Perhaps this is a warning for us. God wants to purify us as he purified the Nation of Israel. We must be as zealous as *Jehu* and purge the sin from within. Or he will send a *Hazael*, to bring us to the point where we are willing to deal with the things within us.

This sounds frightening, but God is not unjust or vindictive, He is patient with us. But sooner or latter He will deal with the sin in our lives.



The Jehu attitude Matthew 5v30

The Hazael effect 1 Peter 4v17

Bible Studies

Elisha & the arrow of Victory

Read 2 kings 13v14-17

Elisha has been a prophet in Israel for some 60 years. He is now old and on the point of death. Jehoash is King at this time, he is described as an evil king v11, but seems to have been one of the better, evil kings! Again Israel is under pressure from the Assyrians. This is obviously the motive behind Jehoash's desire for an audience with Elisha.

Where has "My Father, My father, The chariots and horsemen of Israel" already been used? 2 Kings 2:12

What is the similarity in the context?

Any ideas what it could mean?

The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD. Proverbs 21:31 For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory." Deuteronomy 20:4

The phrase "the Lord God Almighty" (KJV Lord of Hosts) translates the Hebrew LORD of Armies. (Either of Israel or of Heaven). The idea is that only God can bring victory, this He did through the prophetic utterances of the prophets. When Elisha died, what hope would there be for the defence of the Land?

Do we ever put too much reliance on the man and to little on God?

What can happen when the man of God moves on?

What did the arrow shot from the window represent?

Why did Elisha put his hands over the king's hands?

The Arrow represented victory over the Aramians (Assyrians). When Elisha covered the king's hands he could have been doing several things. Imparting an anointing, expressing that Jehoash's hands would do Elisha's work, or telling the King that God could be with him the same way He was with Elisha if he would trust Him.

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

As such shooting the arrow was a symbolic act, it had no efficacy in itself. We can sometimes get carried away with such symbolic acts. Or conversely we may discount them as irrelevant or as superstitious.

Can you think of any areas of church life where we practice such things?

Often it is good to respond in a physical way to the Lord, eg. Walk to the front of the church, put your hand up etc. Even though these things can be easily discounted they often have great significance in them.

How do these kind of actions help us?

On a much deeper level, Baptism, Communion, laying on of hands are also symbolic of awesome realities.

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Read 2 kings 13v18-19

The imagery of the first passage is clear, but why did Jehoash have to strike the ground with his arrows? Why was his failure to continue, (when Elisha had given him no indication that it was required of him,) so reprehensible? Why should this failure be carried so directly across to defeat on the battle field?

Any Answers?

It is clear that Jehoash is being tested. It is equally clear that he is unaware that this is a test, and, that he failed.

Do we always know when God is testing us?

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. James 1:12

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. Exodus 16:4 (also Jeremiah 11:20)

Jehoash's Failures

1

Jehoash was give the promise of victory. But the promise required a response from him, to show that he would take this promise for himself and act on it.

What did his response show?

2

The accounts of Elisha have given us a criterion by which to judge Jehoash. When Elijah told Elisha to quit following him would he? 2 Kings 2v2-6 After Naaman had emersed himself 6 times and nothing had happened did he quit? 2 Kings 5v14

Jesus told a parable to make the same point. Luke 18v1-8.

We must have the same zeal and tenacity for the things of God.

3

You cannot help geting the impression that Jehoash only struck the ground (a very foolish and pointless thing for a king to do) to keep the old prophet happy. He had no passion for the promised victory. This directly explains why he did not receive the complete victory that was available to him.

What does this incident tell us about Jehoash's characture?

The point of this passage is not that Jehoash's failure in a seemingly insignificant test caused him to miss out. Rather, the test revealed the deficiencies in his inner person. It was these deficiencies that caused his failure on the battle field.

What should we do when we see such deficiencies in ourselves?

A curse on him who is lax in doing the Lord's work! A curse on him who keeps his sword from bloodshed! Jeremiah 48:10

In the words of the old hymn, *where duty calls, or danger, be never wanting there.* The last verse of the parable in Luke 18 says. *"However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"* No one is entirely sure what Jesus ment by this, maybe the above helps us to understand. Will he find those who shrink back when the command is to advance?

Read 2 Kings 13v22-23

What was the end of the story?

Who succeeded Elisha as prophet? Elisha unlike Elijah had no direct successor Joel a prophet in Judah seems to have ministered over the latter part of Elisha ministry. Thirty years after Elisha death, Hosea, Jonah and Amos all emerged.