

Miracles of Elisha, Message 2

by Ed Miller

God's preparation of Elisha is a model for our own lives, illustrating the importance of desire, focus, and faith in living a life like Jesus.

Duration: 1:16:21

Scripture: John 2:23

Topics: "Faith And Miracles", "Gods Provision"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of keeping our focus on Jesus, regardless of distractions or challenges. He discusses the concept of picking up the mantle and how it signifies the beginning of a new life. The speaker then delves into the life and ministry of Elisha, highlighting four miracles that demonstrate what can be expected when one embraces the Lord. These miracles involve the themes of thirst and receiving according to one's readiness. The sermon concludes with the miraculous filling of trenches with water, showcasing God's power and provision.

Transcript

How we should praise the Lord. There's another one. Not use notes, just speak from my heart.

We need to really praise the Lord for what he does in the hearts of our young people. We need to support them and hold them before the Lord. It's awesome.

It's awesome. As we come to the study of God's Word, there's a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable. And the word indispensable means that we cannot do without it.

We can't take it for granted. We can't overlook it. We can't forget it.

It's indispensable. And that is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. We have a miracle book.

It's given by the breath of God. It's God breathed. It's inspired.

It's from heaven. It's the Word of God. It's the Word of the Lord.

And only the Lord can interpret this to our heart. Only he can show himself through this precious, precious book. Let me share one Bible verse with you and then we'll look into the Word back to Elisha.

Recently, my heart was moved in John chapter 2 and verse 23 and 24. It says, Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in his name, observing the signs which he was doing. If the passage ended there, it would mean one thing.

But it didn't end there. Listen to the next verse. I'm going to back up again.

Many believed in his name, observing the signs which he was doing. But Jesus, on his part, was not entrusting himself to them, for he knew all men. What a terrible thing to come to a weekend like Asherah and believe on his name and observe the signs he's doing.

With the possibility that though we entrust ourselves to him, he won't entrust himself to us. Because he knows our hearts. Because he did not need anyone to testify concerning man, he himself knew what was in man.

Any place but in the presence of God, we can fake it. Any place, we can get away with it. But don't play with the Lord, brothers and sisters.

We're going to call out and ask God to reveal himself. We want self-disclosure. We want God to make himself known.

And it's possible that he won't disclose himself to us, because he knows what's in us. He knows our heart. What a shame if he doesn't disclose himself to us.

He doesn't disclose himself to everybody. May God reveal himself. Let's pray and ask the Lord to deliver us from the kind of belief that would not allow Jesus to commit himself to us.

Father, we thank you for your precious word and your many, many promises. That you would meet those who would come, trusting the Holy Spirit to open the eyes and to illumine the heart and to unveil the Savior. And Lord, we call upon you now and we ask you to disclose yourself.

We pray that we might be able to believe in such a way that you would commit yourself to us. Oh, work it in us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

I'll ask you to open your Bibles, please, to 2 Kings, if you would. And chapter, well, for now, chapter 1. We're looking this weekend at this marvelous servant of the Lord, Elisha. The man who looked like Jesus.

The one who was a friend to the helpless. The one who cleansed the leper. The one who multiplied loaves.

The one who raised the dead. The one who communicated life after he himself was dead. The one that reached out to the Gentiles.

The one that came unto his own and his own received him not. The one who knew what was in man. This man that looks like Jesus.

And we're looking at him because God has called you to look like Jesus. And he's called me to look like Jesus. And so it's possible if we study in seed form this Old Testament illustration of a man who looked like Jesus, maybe we can pick up a secret or two on how God creates a person like that.

Now, you're not in the dark. And so I'll be very candid and tell you, there are not many Elishas in the church. There are not many Elishas.

People, men and women, who look like Jesus. This morning we looked at some of the principles that we call sort of preparation or the preliminary thing. The man who looks like Jesus.

This is not optional. The man who looks like Jesus must be prepared as God prepared Elisha. The way we've divided this up is we're going to look two lessons at the man and then two lessons at the message that that man held.

The man that looks like Jesus is the Christian. And the message is the gospel. And so nothing could be simpler.

What we're going to look at this weekend is our Lord Jesus Christ and the grace of God. That's what it's all about. That's what we do every HaShua.

We just yell in different places. It's the same message. It's always the same message.

Let me just review the principles. I won't develop them that we looked at this morning. If God is going to bring a man to look like the Lord Jesus, a woman, the first truth is this.

It's the first thing recorded in Elisha's life. The first record we have. And that is that God visits us by His grace unsolicited.

He was not expecting it. God just showed up. And when God shows up, man must respond to that.

And that's the very first principle. The grace of God came to Elisha and through the instrumentality of Elijah laid the mantle on his shoulders, called him. And he responded in an unquestioning surrender.

A willful, total, joyful laying down of everything so that he could respond to the grace of God. That was the first principle. The second principle that God worked in his heart and is indispensable in anybody who's in any degree serious about being like the Lord Jesus, we just summarize it in one word.

Well, we use many words, but any one of these words. He has to have desire. He has to have thirst.

He's got to want it. God's not going to force anything on anybody. They've got to desire it.

And Elisha had a passion for what was called the double portion or the double blessing. I was talking to Jake just before we came up here and I was moved by one of the things he said. And he said, I fear that one of the greatest things missing among God's people is desire.

God has so much more to give than we want to receive. I don't know if you're familiar with the author Frederick Faber. He's real good.

He's real bad. It depends on what you pick up. Anyway, in his poetry, he's real good.

The lack of desire is the ill of all ills. Many thousands through it the dark pathway have trod. The honey, the wine of predestinate wills is a jubilant pining and longing for God.

Well, Elisha had that jubilant pining and longing for God. And without that, there can be no person who is like the Lord Jesus. And then finally, we looked at the last principle illustrated in chapter 2, verse 10.

Elijah said, if you see me when I'm taken, it shall be so for you. And it has to do with focus. It has to do with vision.

It has to do with seeing. Not with these eyes, but with these eyes. And he had a desire to be alert to the spiritual world, to the invisible world.

And he was called to a tremendous task in the midst of amazing distractions to keep focused. You want to be like the Lord Jesus? That's how Elisha started. You have to respond to the grace of God and you have to want it.

And you have to determine purpose in your heart that I will be focused on the spiritual reality. That's how it all began. And you see how those principles are fundamental and foundational principles.

You can see why God starts there. Responding to His grace, having a desire in your heart for God's best to be poured out in your life. Being willing to look beyond this world and see, focus on the Lord.

Those are fundamental things. When we closed this morning, I called attention to the fact that that was the starting point of Elisha's experience. It wasn't the goal.

It wasn't something that they were moving toward. There are many, many wiles of the devil. And I think two of his tricks that he pulls on those who have some earnestness to really know the Lord and go forward with the Lord.

The devil loves to make a goal out of a starting point. He just delights to do that because if he can make a goal out of a starting point, you'll never begin. It's always out there.

Someday I'll be surrendered. Someday I'll be filled with the Spirit. Someday I'll trust the Lord fully.

Someday I'll be sold out. Someday I'll desire God's best. And it never comes.

That's why it's a starting point. You say, well, I hope at the end of Joshua to have those three characteristics. Totally surrender to the Lord.

A great desire for God's best in my life. Focused on the spiritual world. Well, if you desire that at the end of Joshua, you better have it at the beginning of Joshua.

Because it's a starting point. And then just in passing, the other clever trick of the devil. If he doesn't make a goal out of a starting point, he makes byproducts to become goals.

And a byproduct is not a goal. Christ is the goal. The knowledge of the Lord is the goal.

Rest is not the goal. That's a byproduct. Joy is not the goal.

That's a byproduct. Peace is not a goal. That's a byproduct.

Gifts are not a goal. That's the byproduct. Holiness is not a goal.

That's a byproduct. Don't run after those things. You run after the Lord and those things come.

You run after those things, you miss the goal and the byproduct together. Oh, may God deliver us from those terrible wiles. But in the connection with Elisha, we're talking about this idea that the goal is, don't

make a starting point a goal.

When we left off in our discussion, I was pointing out the difference, and this is where we'll begin tonight. The difference between having the mantle of God on your shoulder and having the mantle of God in your hand, appropriated, claimed by faith. The mantle was on Elisha's shoulders before he surrendered to the Lord.

The mantle was on his shoulders before he expressed any desire for a double portion. The mantle was on his shoulders before he ever was called to be tested with his spiritual vision. But when he picked up the mantle, he had already surrendered to the Lord.

You can't have the mantle in your hand until you've totally surrendered to the Lord and responded to His grace. Until God has put in you a passion just to know Him, to have His best in your heart. And that God has worked in you that determination to be focused.

No matter what the distraction, no matter how great the whirlwind, no matter what's breaking all around me, I'm just going to keep looking to Jesus. Then you pick it up, and now, life begins. Now I know some of you, this is all review.

Because you have already picked up the mantle, and your life has begun. Well now, this evening, what I'd like to do, this is our next look at the man. Now, let's just look at the life and ministry.

If it's in fact true that I have embraced it, I've been through those other principles, what will my life and ministry look like? And in the first chapters, he lays down four stories, four miracles, and in those miracles, he just lays out, if you've really done it, this is what you can expect in your life. So we're just going to sort of look at the overview, then Lord willing, tomorrow we'll begin and break it down and look at the details of that. In chapter 2, and verse 14, we have the first of four miracles.

Let me just sort of lay them out before you. We have that first miracle of crossing the Jordan, and then we have the second miracle where he heals the waters of Jerusalem. The third miracle where he curses the children of Bethel and the bears come out of the woods.

And then the fourth miracle in the wilderness, where the trenches were dug and God gave a supernatural supply of streams in the desert. Those are the first four miracles that take place in Elisha's life. Now that's a lot of ground to cover in one evening, and so once again, I'll just tell you, I'm going to try just to touch the revelation of the Lord.

I regret that we must leave so many wonderful things behind, but again, we're not doing 2 Kings. We're looking at God's heart in the life of this wonderful servant. Now when I call the crossing of the Jordan the first miracle, after he picked up the mantle, you understand how I'm using the word miracle.

What we talk about when we talk about miracles, when God does some supernatural thing and for a moment suspends the laws of nature and that kind of thing. I told you this morning that he had a complete surrender. Well, you know that's a miracle.

That's a miracle. And you know he desired the fullness of the Lord. That's a miracle to desire that.

And he was focused without distraction. That's a mighty miracle. So when I say this is the first miracle, I know there were other miracles, but I'm talking about the kind of miracle that you can see with these eyes

where God does something very wonderful.

Chapter 2 verse 8, if you'll look there please. The last miracle that Elijah did was the first miracle that Elisha did. 2 8, Elijah took his mantle, folded it together, struck the waters, and they were divided here and there so that the two of them crossed over on dry land.

And it was right after this that when Elijah was caught up that the mantle came down and Elisha picked up the mantle. Verse 13, and he also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah? And when he also had struck the waters they were divided here and there and Elisha crossed over.

Now what truth is illustrated, what summary truth is illustrated by the opening of the Jordan there? And the answer is this, what can I expect in my life if God makes me an Elisha, if I pick up the mantle? And I think the first answer illustrated by the first miracle is this, I can expect God to open the way before me. I can expect a life of faith. And what you see at the beginning is what was true in his whole life in ministry.

God began right away, as soon as he took that mantle, now God began to supernaturally open up the way before him and remove hindrances that were otherwise in his way. No obstacle can stand in the way of someone who has learned to pick up the mantle. Who has appropriated the Lord by simple faith.

Then God begins to open up his way. Now where is Elisha going? And the answer is he is going to minister to God's people. That's where he's going.

Oh, it took a mighty miracle of God to bring him to the place where he could minister to God's people. It's always a mighty miracle when God calls you to minister to his people. God has to open the way, he has to dry up the hindrances and remove all the obstacles.

If I'm prepared by God as Elisha was, I can expect what happened at the beginning to be characteristic of my whole Christian experience. Not just at the beginning. You may say when Elijah was alive, Elijah opened the Jordan River by his faith.

And now he's gone and so Elisha is going to open up the river by his faith. Look at verse 14. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and he struck the waters and he said, Where's the Lord, the God of Elijah? Elisha's not trusting Elijah or Elijah's faith.

Where's the God of Elijah? See, we might have the idea that faith will dry up the river. Faith won't dry up any river. God will dry up a river but faith won't.

It's not faith. Some people have faith in their faith. They just trust their trust.

God doesn't call you to trust your trust. He's called you to trust the Lord. He's called you to trust in Jesus.

Call me to trust in Jesus. And that's what Elisha did. As you know, this is not the first time God opened the Jordan River.

About 500 years before this, God had already opened up the Jordan River in the days of Joshua. 500 years before when God opened up the Jordan River in the days of Joshua, he didn't use a mantle. What did he use that day? He used the ark of God.

And it wasn't to bring one man over. It was to bring a whole nation over. You see, the ark was God's picture of Christ for the group.

The mantle is God's picture of Christ for the individual. By this miracle, God was saying, Elisha, you've chosen to follow me and you've embraced me. And now I'm going to open the way before you and I want you to know that the God of the distant past is your God.

I'm the same God that opened the river for the group 500 years ago. And now I'm going to open the river for you. Elisha could have thought, because God called him to minister to the northern tribes, he could have reasoned this way.

Well, now how in the world am I ever going to get across the river? Because the southern tribes, they have the ark. And I don't have the ark, so I can't get across the river. Elisha, that's no excuse, because when you don't have the ark, you have the mantle.

The ark is for the group and the mantle is for the individual. Someone here might say, well, you don't know what I go through. My family is not trusting the Lord.

I'm not from a Christian family. That's no excuse. You have the mantle.

It doesn't matter what the group is doing. You say, well, you don't understand my church. I'm not following the Lord.

That's no excuse. You have the mantle. You say, well, America's turned from the Lord.

What can we expect? I'll tell you what you can expect. Pick up the mantle. God will open the way for the individual, even when the group doesn't follow.

And right away, Elisha is learning that God is going to open the way, that God can be trusted, and that the path will be a supernatural path. I'm not going to take the time to do it, but I have an idea. If I did it, it would be successful.

I have an idea that I could start right in the front row, and I could go row by row, and person after person could testify it's true. When I embraced the Lord in His fullness, He began to open the way. He began to open doors and remove obstacles that I could not believe.

And probably it would be very profitable to just do that, and not even finish the message. It would be such a rich testimony time. And that's the first, what will my life look like? Testimony after testimony after testimony.

God did impossible things. And when He did it, don't forget, I said there's not many Elishas around. When He did it, the 50 sons of the prophets were standing on the banks with their mouths opened wide in amazement, and their eyes opened wide in amazement.

Elisha is remnant. They're rare. Somebody that is serious about just wanting the Lord.

And when somebody just wants the Lord, the other Christians stand around and go, they can't believe what God does for you. And the doors got opened and the rivers, God dries up for you. And they can't understand it.

And that's the beginning of such a life. As the first miracle summarized the kind of life you can expect, the next miracle summarized the kind of ministry you can expect. Elisha had a supernatural life now, a miracle life.

And he also had a miracle ministry. If I'm serious and I've picked up the mantle, what will my ministry look like? If you're serious with the Lord and you've picked up the mantle, what can you expect? God gives us three stories. Three miracles.

These are the first four miracles that happened in his life. And they tell the story. Where are you going to find Elisha? What's he going to be doing? Who's he going to be ministering unto? What's his ministry going to look like? And so God gives us these stories.

Let me give three characteristics of what you can expect illustrated by these miracles. Number one, chapter two, verse 19. And the men of the city said to Elisha, Behold now, the situation of the city is pleasant, as my Lord sees, but the water is bad and the land is unfruitful.

And he said, Bring me a new jar and put salt in it. And so they brought it to him. And he went out to the spring of water and he threw salt in it.

And he said, Thus says the Lord, I have purified these waters. There shall not be from their death or unfruitfulness any longer. And so the waters have been purified to this day, according to the word of Elisha, which he spoke.

Let me sort of just give you the truth and then break it apart. What will the man of God, what will his ministry look like? Well, I think the principle illustrated here is that God is going to use him to bring spiritual blessing. He's going to remove the curse and bring the blessing of the Lord.

It's a very positive story. Now let me retell the story and fill in some of the background. The place we're talking about is Jericho.

And it's the same Jericho that Joshua marched around. And at the end of the war, that seven year war, a curse was put on Jericho by Joshua. Do you remember that? A curse was put on Jericho 500 years before.

It's recorded in chapter 6, verse 26 of Joshua. Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, Cursed before the Lord is any man who rises up and builds the city of Jericho. With the loss of his firstborn, he'll lay the foundation.

And with the loss of his youngest, he'll set up the gates. Well, people were afraid of that curse for many years. A hundred years went by.

Someone says, let's build Jericho. They said, oh no, don't build Jericho. There's a curse on that.

You're going to lose your firstborn as soon as you start. And you're going to lose your youngest child at the time you finish. And so hundreds of years went by and Jericho was not rebuilt.

But in the days of Elijah, when Ahab was king, and Jezebel was queen, and idolatry was rampant, and God was put aside, they scoffed at the curse of God. And someone came up with the bright idea, let's rebuild Jericho. The record of that is in 1 Kings chapter 16.

And I'll just read verse 34. In his days, Hile the Bethelite built Jericho. And he laid its foundation with the loss of Abiram, his firstborn.

And he set up his gates with the loss of his youngest son, Segal, according to the word of the Lord. That word was 500 years old. God remembered his word.

And the man who tried to rebuild it, he lost two of his sons in the building of Jericho. But now it's rebuilt, and so let's move in. And so they moved in.

And they started to live there, and it was wonderful. Except the curse went beyond the death of two children. Evidently the curse was on the city itself and on the water supply.

Chapter 2 of Kings, 2 Kings verse 19. And the men of the city said to Elisha, Behold, the situation of the city is pleasant, as my Lord sees. But the water is bad, the land is unfruitful.

Now that word translated unfruitful, it can be a little bit misleading. Don't get the idea that the water is bad, the land is unfruitful. That if you went to Jericho, it would be a desert, it would be a desolation.

That's not how it was at all. Depends on what time you'd go there. That word translated unfruitful, literally means the ground casts forth its fruit.

The fruit didn't come to fruition. It's the Hebrew word for miscarry. It miscarried.

If you went to Jericho in the spring, you would be very deceived. Your eyes would be deceived. If you went to Jericho in the spring, you would find green grass and green leaves and buds on the trees and blossoms on the trees.

But as the fruit came closer and closer to the harvest, it would suddenly miscarry. It would begin to wither. It would begin to rot, and it would fall rotten to the ground.

Year after year this happened. It looked so good on the outside, but everything miscarried. That sad story kept repeating itself every season.

Barrenness, miscarriage, abortion, death. There are some people like Jericho, like the city of Jericho. They look pretty good to these eyes and all around, people who observe them.

But they get so tired from miscarrying. They get so weary. They want to do it, and they seek the Lord, and it's going to work, and then it doesn't work.

And there's no fruit in their life. So they come to the altar, and they sign another card, and they raise their hand, and they cry, and they go in the counseling room, and then they go back. And then it's death again.

And it doesn't work, and they sin, and they go out, and they have no victory in their life. And it's barren over and over and over again. Those people will seek out Elisha.

That's his ministry. That's one of the first characteristics of his ministry. Those kind of people that look so good, that desire fruit, but don't know what to do.

They're going to hunt out Elisha. And that's what happens in the record. They won't go to the 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

It's interesting to read that the sons of the prophet had set up a Bible school right here in Jericho. They didn't go to them. They didn't go to the Bible school, because when you have that in your life, that's the big secret.

I don't want anybody to know about that. I want them to see my buds, and see my leaves, and see my blossoms, and think I'm doing pretty well in the Lord. And then I'll go backstage, and I'll cry.

And I'll weep, because I know there's something awfully wrong. And then one day, I'll hear about Elisha. The man who looks like Jesus, and I'll seek him out.

And so they go to the man of God. And the man of God will always do what the man of God did here. Let's talk about it.

The cause of their barrenness. The cause of their constant miscarriage. Their cause of not being able to produce fruit to fruition.

It was way down deep in the spring. In the source. On the inside.

Now the man of God has a ministry to those who look like Jericho. Verse 19. When the men of the city said to Elisha, Behold, now the situation of the city is pleasant, as my Lord sees.

But the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful. The situation was perfect. Jericho wasn't situated in some desert.

Wasn't on some mountaintop. It was a perfect situation. It had a perfect climate.

It had a great water supply. But the spring. The source.

The essence of it was messed up. How many people like Jericho have a great situation? Great church. Great church background.

They're situated wonderful. It shouldn't be happening. And yet in their lives.

Barrenness. And so the ministry of the man of God is going to be blessing. It's going to be removing the curse.

But watch God's method. Because God's method here is everlastingly the same. First of all, the man of God always goes to the polluted spring.

He doesn't chop off weeds at the surface. He doesn't deal with some symptom. Somebody comes to him and says, I'm having a real struggle over this immorality in my life.

The man that looks like Jesus goes right to the spring. He knows what's wrong. You see, if they had gone to the sons of the prophets, I don't think they would have gone right to the spring.

The man of God always goes right to the spring. To the heart of it. And then the man of God always throws salt in the spring.

Now I know there's some evidence to believe that salt is a picture in the Old Testament of God's Holy Spirit. And perhaps it is. Leviticus chapter 2 and 13 says you couldn't offer a sacrifice to the Lord unless you offered that sacrifice with salt.

And there are passages that talk about a covenant of salt. And maybe others see more than I see. But I'm inclined to think more in the line of we're identifying with a rejected Savior King.

When we identify with Christ, did you ever hear the expression, put salt in the wound? And how that's used. When someone says, oh, you're just putting salt in the wound. That means you're doing more harm than good.

It's an amazing picture here that God would cure impure water with salt. Let me give an illustration so you know exactly what I'm saying. Situation.

A woman is being badly treated by her life partner. Maybe she's being terribly abused, brutalized. She needs help.

So let's say she goes to the sons of the prophets for help. I wonder what they would say. They would say, your husband needs help.

I suggest counseling. And then they would set up a counseling session because that guy needs help. He's messed up and he's doing bad things and he needs some help.

And then I also suggest perhaps that you read these books. These are wonderful how-to books and perhaps they would help you. And then maybe in the counseling session he would be asked some heart-searching questions about his childhood.

Were you ever nursed as a child? Was there asbestos in your kindergarten bucket? I don't want to play with this. But that's not the spring. That's not the source.

That's not where Elisha goes. Elisha goes and he throws salt in the spring. And so the same woman comes.

Man of God, you've got to help me. My husband is abusing me terribly. What should I do? Look to Jesus.

Salt in the spring. Don't tell me that. Give me something practical.

Just look to Jesus. That's the only answer the man of God has. And it's salt in the spring.

And the drug addict comes and says, what should I do? And he says, look to Jesus. And he goes right to the spring and he gives the real answer, salt. Look to Christ in reality.

The guy says, you've got to give me more than that. I want to be practical. You're not helping me.

Don't keep saying, look to Jesus. The man of God says, all I've got is salt. That's all I have.

And to make it worse, you're not going to put salt in it and tells you to look to the Lord and then he says, now wait and see. And some people just throw their hands up in despair. That's no answer.

I need something better than that. Stop giving me that. What can I expect if I really lay hold of the mantle? I can expect God to be opening supernatural doors.

I'm going to start a miracle walk. What can I expect in my ministry? I can expect those who have been embarrassed by their barren life to seek me out and to say, look, I can't find help. There's a problem.

It looks great. Everybody, I fooled everybody. They all look at it and think I'm doing great.

I'm not doing great. I keep aborting. I can't bear fruit.

What's wrong? And he'll go right to the spring and he'll put salt in the spring and he'll say, now wait. And blessing will come. That's the blessing of the Lord.

That's the first miracle and that's what the man of God can expect in his life. I'm going to ask you to look at the second miracle, please. Because this is a little different.

23. He went up from there to Bethel as he was going up by the way. Young lads came out from the city, mocked him and said, go up, you bald head.

Go up, you bald head. My son Daniel, you know him? Some of you do. He shaved his head.

Bald. He's bald as bald could be. And he's got that verse on his wall.

He called that his favorite Bible verse. Go up, you bald head. He absolutely militated against the text on that anyway.

And when he looked behind him, he saw them. He cursed them in the name of the Lord. Two female bears came out of the woods and they tore up 42 lads of their number.

What can I expect if I'm serious about the Lord? You say, a ministry of blessing. That's part of it. Here's the other side.

A ministry of cursing. A ministry of cursing. Negative.

In Jericho, he removed the curse, but here at Bethel, he brings the curse. Now, if you have a King James Version, you might be confused at the wording of verse 24 there. There came forth two she-bears out of the woods and tore 42 children of them.

The word children might make you think of little kids. Little children. What happened here was not playground teasing.

It wasn't somebody calling names, making fun of the prophet. Maybe they were little children in the midst. Maybe there weren't.

I don't know. I know the word that's used. Solomon was 20 years old when he applied it to himself.

And remember when Samuel gathered the sons of Jesse? And they all stood there. He's going to anoint the king. There, the same word is used.

And he gathered all the lads, all the children of those sons. And so, probably they were teenagers or better. Probably they were maybe in their young twenties.

And it wasn't just boys calling names, saying, you know, go up, you bald head. Go up, you bald head. Actually, in the Septuagint, you familiar with that? That's the Greek Old Testament.

They have an added verse in there, in the Septuagint. And it says, and they pelted him with stone. See, we don't have that in our translation.

We just say, oh, you bald head, you bald head. There weren't 42. It says, out of their number, 42 were tore up.

There were more than 42. We don't know how many. This was not just a little band of kids making fun of a prophet.

This was a gang. And if you believe the Septuagint, they were stoning him. And probably this whole incident rescued him, saved his life.

I don't know that for a fact. But I know that it was more than little brats. In verse 23, when they said, go up.

Go up, you bald head. Evidently, that's a reference back to when Elijah went up. And he went up.

And they're saying, why don't you go with him? What are you doing coming up here? We don't want you up here. One reason I know that is because it took place in verse 23 on the way to Bethel. You say, Bethel? Doesn't that mean house of God? Not in this day.

Not in this day. That was house of God when Jacob had his vision of the Lord and saw the Lord. And he called it house of God.

But if you read 1 Kings and chapter 12. We're not going to look at it. But if you read 1 Kings chapter 12, you have the record of how they had set up a golden calf in Bethel.

And they had turned, in fact, the prophet in Hosea and in Amos, they wouldn't even call it Bethel. They changed it to Bethaven. And so instead of Bethel, it was Bethaven.

Bethaven's house of vanity. It's a terrible thing when the house of God becomes the house of vanity. And these were rejecters.

They didn't want the prophet. They didn't want the message. They didn't want the Lord.

And they had their golden calf up there. And the man of God was walking right into the stronghold of Satan when he went up there. And they said, get out.

Go up. We don't want you. Go away.

What can I expect as a man of God if I'm going to look like Jesus? I can expect those who are open and say yes to God to be blessed. I can expect those who are closed and say no to God to be cursed. That's also part of our message.

Some of my commentators try to blame Elisha for being a big meanie. For calling bears out of the woods. He didn't call bears out of the woods.

He just said the Lord curse you. He didn't have any control over bears. God did that.

God did that. Now if he hadn't said that I curse you in the name of the Lord. Let's just say he said nothing.

And all of a sudden bears came out of the woods and attacked those people. Evidently they tried to help each other. It's why 42 of them.

Two bears getting 42 of them. They probably tried to help each other. But if that just happened you'd say what a terrible tragedy.

Did you hear what happened on the way to Bethel? Two bears came out of the woods. But now it's not just a terrible tragedy. It's a judgment of the Lord because God was brought in on it.

And so that's also part of the message. In my natural heart I want to be a blessing. I don't want to be a cursing.

But I'll tell you sometime God calls us to that. A blessing to those who say yes. A curse to those that say no.

Remember I told you this is seed form. Listen as I quote the fully developed form of this. Same truth.

2 Corinthians 3 verse 15 and 16. We are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved. And among those who are perishing.

To the one an aroma from death to death. To the other an aroma from life to life. Who is adequate for these things.

God loves the rejecters at Beth-Avon. He'll even set up a school of the prophet there. He'll send the man of God there.

But if they continually say no. Then as a stern necessity of his holy character. There must be judgment.

There must be judgment. There's one more miracle. Let's look at that and we'll wrap it up.

What can I expect? If I really lay hold of the Lord and his mantle. I can expect God to open up the path before me. And do supernatural things for the rest of my life.

He'll open the way. What can I expect? I can expect that God's going to use me for blessing. And my life that looks like Jesus.

Will be an attraction. For those who are barren. Who are fruitless.

And who really need somebody. To minister to the spring of their life. And put salt in the spring.

I can also expect to be a curse. There's another miracle here. And for a while I didn't understand how this miracle fit in.

It didn't fit with what I'm talking about. It didn't fit with what followed. I think I see a little connection.

I must admit there's a lot of fog on this. So bear with me. But I think at least this much is clear.

If I'm right. In chapter 3. This truth is illustrated. The man of God.

Will be available. He'll always be there. To bring restoration.

To those who have messed up. See they're not going to find much comfort. Among the sons of the prophets.

Christians sort of look down. You blew it. You messed up.

But the man of God will always be there for that person. That has blown it. In chapter 3. The spotlight goes on a Christian.

I use Christian. Old Testament. Forgive me.

A believer. A man of God who has messed up terribly. In fact this is the third time.

This guy has messed up. And what makes that so bad. It's the third time he messed up on the same sin.

And every time he messed up. A prophet was sent to him. To rebuke him about this sin.

His name is Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was from the south. He was a good guy.

But he made an unholy alliance. He linked up with the wrong crowd. He identified with the ungodly.

Twice out of the three times. It almost cost him his life. And he didn't learn.

He joins forces with two ungodly kings. Jehoram from the northern kingdom. And then with the ungodly king of Edom.

I'm not going to deal with the whole chapter. It's too long. We don't have time.

I'm not even going to touch on whether I think it's a righteous war or an unrighteous war. It's unrighteous. But I want to home in on the unholy alliance.

That this man made. Jehoshaphat had no business connecting up with these two kings. In verse 7. He not only associated with them.

He went in and sent word to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah. Saying the king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you come with me to fight against Moab? And he said, I will go up.

I am as you are. My people are as your people. My horses are as your horses.

And so with these eyes. When the armies got together. You couldn't tell who's who.

They all looked alike. My people are like your people. And my horses are like your horses.

And my chariots are like your chariots. And we're one. And we're all together.

And every now and then a Christian. Gets in with the wrong crowd. And his horses look like his horses.

And his men look like his men. And if you look with these eyes. You say, I don't know if he's saved or not saved.

I don't know if he's a Christian or not. He's hobnobbing with the wrong group. He's involved with the wrong crowd.

He's in with the wrong people. And that's the situation you have here. And no one looking with the natural eye.

Would be able to tell the difference. They look alike. The godly look like the ungodly.

And as the story develops. The three kings who looked alike. Jehoram, Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom.

Went out to solve a problem that wasn't a problem. Well in their eyes it was a problem. Moab had become a little problem.

And refused to pay a tribute. So they're going to deal with what they think is the problem. But God is dealing deeper.

And he's going after his child who's messed up. That's what this chapter is all about. That one guy.

Jehoshaphat. He's in with the wrong crowd. You can't tell the difference.

He looks the same. God is looking deeper. Chapter 3 verse 8. He said which way shall we go up.

And he answered the way of the wilderness of Edom. And so the king of Israel went with the king of Judah. And the king of Edom.

And they made a circuit. Seven days journey. There was no water for the army.

Or for the cattle that followed them. They all had a common enemy. Who is your enemy? Answer.

Moab that's our enemy. No it isn't. Because God's going to engineer the situation and change your enemy.

God says your enemy is thirst. You're not going to die from Moab. You're going to die from thirst.

And they got down in the south and they sent out a recruiting band of men to look for water. And they went seven days. They found nothing.

Animals are dropping over dead. The soldiers are tired. Everybody's dying of thirst.

And the whole three armies are ready to die of thirst. And now this compromiser. Verse 11.

Jehoshaphat said. Is there not a prophet of the Lord here? That we may inquire of him by the Lord. You know you say better late than never.

God brings them to the wilderness. God brings them to the place where they're about to die of thirst. And with these eyes you can't tell the difference.

I look at A. I look at B. I look at C. They look the same. But in one of them there is a bubbling on the inside. In one of them way down deep there's a spring.

And it begins to cry out. And in the wilderness and in the desert. He begins to say.

Isn't there somewhere a prophet. A man of God. And I'm suggesting that one of the ministries of the man of God.

He's going to be available. For that one who has messed up terribly. They have nowhere else to go.

They need somebody that looks like Jesus. They need somebody that looks like the Lord. And this man now who's in this unholy alliance.

And from the outside you can't tell the difference. On the inside God has now stimulated that thirst. And suddenly Jehoshaphat.

Though he may look like them. Shows that he's not like them. And in the day of trouble he calls out for the prophet.

This is where Elisha comes into the picture. Elisha is just there. He's just available.

What's he doing down there? Why did he go down there? He's just there. He's just available. Everybody has their own idea and I have my own idea.

I have no way to prove this. I think he's down there. I think that bear thing.

You know that. A heart like his. That had to tear him off.

That had to tear him off. I went to school at Moody Bible Institute. And we had down the hall from us somebody who had been mauled by a bear.

And oh my you should have seen their face. Unbelievable. I've never seen anything like it.

And he gave a testimony on how God used that. That was a glory scar for him. Because it brought him to the Lord.

It was a wonderful thing. But if I were Elisha and bears came out because I cursed. And 42 of them were torn up and mauled.

I would say this is just me. It's not in the Bible. This is just my guess.

I got to get away. I just got to go meditate. I got to go somewhere.

And I think he just went down to the desert. All by himself. And set up a tent.

Some people say well he was just following the army in case they needed him. I don't know if that's the case. I just think he just was so hard.

I've been studying this man. I know his heart. And I think he just wanted to get away.

But he's there. God arranged it. It doesn't matter why he was there.

He's there and God arranged it. And so now they come to him. Is there not a prophet? And when these three kings arrive at the tent of Elisha.

You say how'd they know he was there? Again I'm only guessing. Remember when they sent out that group to look for water? They looked out and said what's that down there? A tent. Who's in the tent down there in the wilderness? That's how they found him.

And they came back and one of the soldiers said I know there's a prophet out here. Remember that guy that used to wash Elijah's hands? He's out there. And Jehoshaphat said he's a man of God.

Let's go. And so they went to his tent and with these eyes. With these eyes.

My horses look the same as your horses and my men look like your men. And we're alike and we're all together. And they go and stand at the tent.

Listen to what Elisha said. Verse 13. Elisha said to the king of Israel.

What do I have to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother. And the king of Israel said to him no. The Lord's called these three kings together to give them into the land of Moab.

Elisha said as the Lord of hosts lives. Before whom I stand. Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah.

I would not even look at you nor see you. With these eyes. You couldn't tell the difference.

But the man of God saw the difference. Because he wasn't looking with these eyes. He was looking with these eyes.

I wondered when I read this why Elisha didn't just. Do what one of the sons of the prophets would have done. And sort of lectured him.

What in the world are you doing with this guy? You know his mother's Jezebel, his father's Ahab, their idolater. What are you doing with this crowd? You shouldn't be here. Didn't you learn two times before? What's wrong with you Jehoshaphat? He didn't say a word like that.

In fact. He encouraged it. And he said I see in this man.

A godly man. That's why they seek out the man of God. Because they're not condemned.

The man of God's not going to tear him down. He's not going to condemn him. He messes up.

He gets all involved. He's with the wrong crowd. He's got an unholy alliance.

Where's he going to go? He's going to get beat up. In many places in the church. Where's he going to go? He needs somebody.

That looks like Jesus. And so he comes to the man of God. And the man of God says.

Your heart I wouldn't even deal with. I wouldn't even look at you. If it weren't for this man.

You say how does he know the difference? The Lord. It's the insight that the Lord gives. It's what hope he gives.

And he gives this wonderful miracle. Now I don't have time to deal with all that happened here. I wish we had more time.

Verse 15. Bring me a minstrel. Oh my.

Jeff I hope you understand. How God has used music. To prepare the heart to receive a revelation from God.

That's what this is all about. Bring me a minstrel. I need music.

I need to be prepared to receive a great word from God. And here's the word he receives. Because God has seen the thirst.

Even though he's messed up. Even though he got involved with the wrong crowd. Even though he's connected and alive in a wrong way.

Down in his heart there's a thirst. And so the miracle is going to be about thirst. And God gives the word.

And he says go out and dig trenches. Dig holes. After being thirsty for seven days.

How would you like that assignment? What's a hole? What's a trench? It's nothing. It's a hole. It's a receiver.

And God lays down a principle here. That he's going to develop in the story of the cruise. The woman's cruise.

He lays it down here. He advances it in the next story. And the principle is this.

You tell them Elisha. That I am ready to give him as much as they're ready to receive. You dig one hole you get water in one hole.

You dig five holes you get water in five holes. You dig ten holes you'll get water in ten holes. I'm ready to give as much as you're ready to receive.

Very similar to the woman. Go out and borrow vessels. Not a few.

God said I'll fill every one you borrow. I'll stop when you stop. What a lesson he gives.

And then as you go on in the story. As it gets winding up. What happens is that a miracle of God takes place.

Right at nine o'clock in the morning. At the time of the sacrifice. Every one of those trenches that they dug was filled with water.

No sign of wind or sound of rain. It was just a miracle of God. And God filled it up.

And you know how more victory came out of that. And how the enemy thought it was blood and all of that. And they thought they had destroyed each other.

I'm not going to get into that. The point I want you to see. Is that this man who has messed up so terribly.

Has come to the man of God. And the man of God said all you can give God. Is a hole.

Is an emptiness. Is a nothing. Is a receiver.

Say I have nothing to give God. Yes you do. Dig him a trench.

He'll fill it. You bring God the ability to receive. The more you receive the more He's going to give.

At the end of this story. It's very very interesting. If any of you want to discuss it.

Privately we'll discuss. Because those last verses are tough to understand. I think I have a little bit of light on it.

But what happened is. God broke the alliance. And His man went home.

And the rest were judged. God was only concerned about that man. We close.

And here's how we close. With a review. Listen.

If I've really laid hold of God. What can I expect? I can expect a miracle walk. All the days of my life.

God's going to open the way before me. If I really lay hold of God. What can I expect? I can expect God to bring into my life.

Those who are barren. That I might bring down the blessing of God for them. By putting salt in the spray.

What can I expect? For those that say no. I can expect that God will bring His judgment. And for those that have messed up.

I can give them a word. God is ready to meet you. The problem is not the problem.

They thought the problem was Moab. We got Moab everywhere. The problem is not your husband.

The problem is not your wife. The problem is not your job. The problem is not your finances.

The problem is not your health. The problem is not your school. The problem is not your personality.

The problem is not your lack of opportunity. Your problem is not the past. Your problem is not the present.

Your problem is thirst. The desire to go after Him. Him, and that's the problem He wants to solve.

Oh, may God call out of us, Elisha's. Now, someone say, well, you know, everything you're saying sounds so good, but I haven't finished wrestling with God over the surrender issue, so I'm not Elisha. The mantle's on my shoulder, but it's not in my hand.

And I have not yet asked God to fill me and to pour His life into me, and I'm not focused. Because I get so distracted with everything. I'm not Elisha.

All right, then find an Elisha. Maybe you're Jericho, you're barren, and you've fooled everybody. And they look and go, oh, what a nice situation, what a great city you have, and how wonderful are your blossoms.

And you know there's no fruit. Seek out one of these men of God. Seek out an Elisha.

Let him pray with you. Let him put some salt in your spring. Maybe you've messed up, and you got into an unholy alliance, and you're associated with the ungodly in an unhealthy way, and you're afraid someone's going to condemn you.

Find somebody that looks like Jesus, and they're going to see down inside there's a thirst that God has put there. Restoration. Come on back.

If you're not Elisha, at least find one, so that God can meet you this weekend. If you're one of the sons of Bethel, and you're just playing with it, and in your heart you're mocking everything, I feel sorry for you.

Let's pray.

Father, we just ask that You would raise up the Elishas, men like You, men who can trust You to open the way before them, men and women who have a ministry of curing forever the barren land for receiving those who need full restoration, bringing them back to You. Lord, will You work that in our midst even this evening? And Lord, we know that from time to time You use us to bring the stern message of warning and judgment. Work all these principles in our heart, we ask in Jesus' name.

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