

Miracles of Elisha, Message 5

by Ed Miller

The sermon explores the life and ministry of Elisha, highlighting his call by God, his response to that call, and the message of pure grace, the mighty power of God, and revelation that he preached.

Duration: 1:10:44

Scripture: 2 Kings 13:14

Topics: "Divine Providence", "Faith Healing"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the inseparable connection between the man and the message of God. He emphasizes that the man and the message cannot be separated, yet in the final illustration, they are separated by the greatest possible distance. The preacher uses the story of Elisha to illustrate this point, highlighting the symbolic acts of shooting an arrow and striking the ground. The sermon concludes with the burial of Elisha and the miraculous revival of a dead man who touched his bones.

Transcript

Well, good morning. It's wonderful to be able to come up and share with you when the last words you hear is, Worthy is the Lamb. Bless God.

When the King was on the earth in His humiliation, He was the Lamb. Now, in His glory, the Lamb is the King. How glorious this is.

As we come to the study of God's Word, there's a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable. And that is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. We need to trust Him as we come to the Word, as we need to trust Him for everything.

Isn't it wonderful how the Lord guided in that children's program? Every year, He just seems to pull it all together. And the parts were so perfectly cast. But that's the Lord.

He does that. And you know, we were praying that the Lord would be able to work that for the children and the wisdom that He guided to be able to present all those stories. It's just so super how we praise the Lord.

And so we come to the study of His Word. It's the same thing. The same Lord needs to guide us.

Before we look into the Word, I want to share sort of a burden that I think is on His heart and just a little Scripture to illustrate it to get that indispensable principle again before you. Remember in the story of

Joseph in the Old Testament, son of Jacob, when he wanted so much to unveil his heart to his brothers? And as you come closer and closer to chapter 45, you get closer and closer to that time where he says, I'm Joseph. As Jesus wants to say, I'm Jesus.

Just to reveal Himself. And then fall on each other's neck. What a glorious picture that was.

Well, there's a very sad scene in chapter 43 of Genesis. And it's a sad scene because they're still strangers, Joseph and his brothers. But they're so close.

It is so close. And in that scene, we won't turn to it, but in that scene, they're actually sitting down eating and they're in the same room. And the thing that makes it so sad is they're in the same room, but they're at different tables.

And Joseph's at this table and they're at this table and they're still strangers. But they're being fed. And Joseph keeps getting up and coming to their table, feeding them, going back to his, going behind the curtain and crying.

He's weeping. And then he comes back out and he serves them more food and he goes and cries again. Brothers and sisters in the Lord, the whole purpose of our gathering is that God would disclose Himself to us, reveal Himself to us, and it would be a shame at the end of Ahasua to be that close and not at the same table.

To be in the same room. To be eating the same food. To be eating the same food from the same hand.

He's feeding us. And then walk out as strangers. If any man open the door, I will come in and sup with him.

He wants you in the same room. He wants you at the same table. So let's pray that God will clinch our time together and bring together all the loose ends as only He can do.

That we might behold Him again. Worthy is the Lamb. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank You again for every part of this weekend. How You ministered day after day and way after way. And we just glorify Your name.

Thank You. And now we ask You Lord in this closing session that You would take Your precious Word by Your precious Holy Spirit and enable us to be fed in our spirits from above. We pray Lord that You would reveal Yourself so that we could sit down with You at Your table and be fed by You and with You.

We want to see You. We want to know You. We want You to show Yourself to us.

And so we don't trust ourselves for this. We trust You. And we now wait.

We ask You to minister Christ unto us in a living way. Give us living light. We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. I know there are some here that haven't been here all weekend. And we're glad to have you and we are thankful for you.

And so just be patient. I'm just going to give the very, the broadest view of all in review, but it will be enough, I pray, to get back into the spirit of what we're looking at. Elisha in the Old Testament is like the Apostle Paul in the New Testament.

He's God's illustration of the Christian life. Elisha is God's illustration in seed form. The Apostle Paul is God's illustration in fully developed form.

Elisha is the man who went unto his own and his own received him not. He's the man that wept over Jerusalem. He's the man whose name means God is salvation.

He's the one who healed the leper, who multiplied loaves, who raised the dead, who by his death gave life to others. He looks like Jesus. He's the man that looks like Jesus.

And we've been studying Elisha as the man who looks like Jesus because we want to be people who look like Jesus. And by studying these stories, we can see God's heart. He has fossilized everlasting principles in redemptive history.

He's written these great truths in these stories so that we studying the stories can glean these great realities of God's heart. And so we've been looking at the man who looks like Jesus and the message that he has. The Gospel.

The message in the hand of the man who looks like Jesus. In our first two lessons, we focused on the man. In our last two lessons, we focused on the message.

In our first two lessons, we learned these great principles. The man who looks like Jesus is the man who's been called by God. God has put His mantle on his shoulder.

And he has responded to that call in an unquestioning, deliberate, willful submission and with joy. He's a man that God has planted in his heart a desire to be God's representative on the earth and to be open for whatever the Lord wants to pour on so that they can show Him, radiate, manifest Him to the world. He's a man that God has given vision, focus, to see spiritual reality and not to be distracted no matter what comes into his life.

That's the man that can pick up the mantle. The one who has that desire and has that response to grace, that surrender, and has that focus. He picks up the mantle.

And what does such a man look like? And what does his message look like? That's what we looked at in our second study. He has a supernatural life. From the moment he picks up the mantle, God has guaranteed to open the way before him.

And so he crosses through the Jordan and God opens up the way. What does his message look like? Sometime it brings blessing. Sometime it brings a curse.

He's always available to bring restoration to those that are seeking the Lord. That's the man. And then we spent two lessons looking at the message of the man of God.

What's the heart? What's the essence of the message of that man? It's a person. It's the Lord Himself. The message that He has, that we have, that all who look like Christ have, is Christ who is life and who is life abundant.

That's the message that he preaches. Last night we broke that down a little. What does the message look like? It's a message of pure grace.

And his illustration was forgiveness with Naaman. What does the message look like? The answer is it's a message of the mighty power of God. He does it all.

Illustrated by Christian servant. What's our message look like? It's a message of revelation where God opens our eyes. And his illustration was victory over the enemy.

It's a message that proclaims that God ever accomplishes His everlasting purposes. He's faithful. Faithful to the end.

Watching over. And it was illustrated by the restoration of the woman and her son and all that was theirs. That brings us then to our last look at this wonderful servant of the Lord and His message.

This is not only the end of His history. This is the end of God's revelation of His history. And what I mean by that is this.

God's not only telling us a story of a man who used to live and die. He's also writing a Bible. And so when He writes the Bible in these final events we not only have the close of His life but we have the close of the message.

God has written a spiritual truth here. And in a climactic way in a consummating way God takes everything He has said about Elisha and He wraps it up in these final events. And so that's what we want to look at.

God assisting. God helping us. For those who like to follow Logical Connection a simple outline here's what I'd like to look at in our final look.

First I want to look at the man. And then I want to look at the message. And then after I've done that I want to look at the man.

And then I want to look at the message. Is that too tough an outline for you? It's what we've been looking at all weekend. See the first time we look at the man and the message we'll be able to separate it.

Here's the man and here's the message. Our last look at the man of God and our last look at the message of God. It's going to be a summary look.

But the last time the last event it puts the man and the message so close together that I can't say alright let's rip it apart now here's the man and here's the message. And so our last look will be the man and the message. Together.

United. They're one. They're inseparable.

You can't take them apart. And strangely enough in this last illustration that God gives the man and the message are so one you can't separate them. And it's also the illustration that separates the man and the message in the greatest possible distance.

It's an almost unbelievable paradox. And may God give us eyes to see it. To get this before your heart I'd like to do just a little bit of the donkey work.

I try to do that on my own by myself and not burden you with it. But sometimes we need a little bit just to get into the flow. Now let me give you a general perspective of Elisha's life and ministry.

Sort of a timeline. Now Harry Alexander asked me last night if all of the events in Elisha's life are in chronological order. And that was raised because here we had last night the leper if you go chronologically in the presence of the king.

And some say well that can't be. So that must have happened before. And if you read all of the arguments some people think the kingdom was so far away from the Lord the king didn't even care about God's law and make it chronological.

Others say it happened before. There are four different I won't go through them. But there's four different events in Elisha's life that are clearly not in chronological order.

God has given us the story of Elisha in logical order. I can mention one because it's in the text that we're going to look at today. In 1 Kings 13 In 1 Kings 13, 13 and 14 In verse 13, Joash dies.

In verse 14 he visits Elisha the prophet. Now you know that's not in chronological order. And there are other events but God has given it in logical order because he's telling the story of redemption.

Let me give you sort of a timeline on this. It might surprise you to learn or to know that most of the record of what we've been seeing in this little play that was here and what we've been talking about most of that took place in about the first four or five years after Elisha picked up the mantle. When we come to chapter 13 and this final scene of Elisha a lot of time has gone by.

The least that I read was Elisha was about 80 years old. The most I read Elisha was 90 years old. You say, how'd they get these ages? Well, see we know the kings and we know how long the kings reigned and so they figure out from the kings that were alive when he was ministering how long he reigned.

And so he was between 80 and 90 years old now. Elisha was a full grown man when Ahab died way back in 1 Kings. And in this chapter that we're going to look at Joash comes to visit Elisha on his deathbed.

Sometimes he's called Jehoash. Sometimes Joash. It's the same guy.

You really have trouble going through these things. Who's wearing the white hat? Who's from Judah? Who's from Israel? Because the names are the same and sometimes they're the same at the same time reigning. And so you really need... That's why I praise the Lord for Lillian.

She loves to do that kind of stuff. And when I come to something like this I just say, iron it out. And she does.

And then I meet with her and she straightens me out and this goes here and this is there. And a couple of times she was wrong but not very often. She's pretty much right on it.

But the point I'm trying to make is that Joash didn't come to power until 53 or 54 years after Ahab died. And what that means practically is this. We haven't heard from Elisha for at least 45 years.

That's what that's all about. He has gone off into obscurity. I have no doubt he's still ministering somewhere knowing this man, knowing his heart, still bringing life to the needy, still available, still responding, and probably still working miracles.

But the Bible doesn't tell us about that. 45 years, almost half a century. We don't know if he's alive or dead.

I call attention to that because that's part of the last picture we get of the man that looks like Jesus. Usually he'll make quite a splash in his entrance into ministry. He'll launch out and God will greatly use him and he'll have notable miracles and God will call attention to those.

But if he's really a man like Jesus, like the old lamplighter, he's going to fade away. And the only thing that will be left behind are the lights that he lit along the way. It's physical miracles, healing the water and cleansing the leper and floating axe heads and raising the dead.

As you move on, that sort of gives way to spiritual miracles. Now those are spiritual too, but in other words, now we see Elisha predicting the future. And we see Elisha warning about the tactics of the enemy.

And we see Elisha praying for the servants of God that their eyes would be opened. And we see a story of Elisha when he's not even there and someone else is telling his testimony to somebody, and God is using that in a mighty way. Even in the first five years, he's been fading away and fading away and fading away.

And it's only at the end of the story he appears again in order that we might have this climactic look at the man that looks like Jesus. This summary look at the message that God has entrusted to him and to us as the servants of the Lord. Even in this final symbolic act, he doesn't work a miracle.

He just discovers the heart of God. I think some Christians think if they're really conformed to Christ, they're going to get more and more public as they go on in the Lord. And more and more visible as they go on in the Lord.

And their ministry is going to become more and more dramatic as they go on in the Lord. Brothers and sisters in Christ, understand the heart and the ways of God. We're followers of the Lamb.

And the Lamb always goes to the cross. Finally to glory, but He always goes to glory through the way of the cross. And the further you go on in the Lord, the more you're going to see to be a follower of the Lamb is not to get more and more public and more and more famous and more and more accepted.

It's the other direction as you identify with Christ in His suffering, His rejection, and His death. All across the Bible God has written the path of the King is the path of the King's servant. We can't expect more than our Master.

And Elisha is going to illustrate this. The exciting stories that we've been talking about, that happened a long time ago at the beginning of Elisha's life. But now as we go on, this man is fading and fading away.

Now, before we look at the final scene, I'm going to ask you to go right back to the beginning. Go back to 1 Kings 19 if you would. This is still, if you can stay with me, a little bit of the donkey work to get you in the direction of God's heart here.

Verse 14, 1 Kings 19, 14, Now these are God's words to Elijah, not Elisha. And the Lord said to him, Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram.

If you have the King James, it says Syria. It's the same thing. And Jehu the son of Nimshi, you shall anoint king over Israel.

And Elisha the son of Shaphat, of Abel, Mahola, you shall anoint as a prophet in your place. Elijah, with a J, was commanded by God to anoint Hazael over Syria, Jehu over Israel, and Elisha as a prophet in his

place. Now there's no record in the Bible that he ever did that.

Some think when he threw his mantle over Elisha, then that was the anointing. If so, it would be the first time a mantle was used for anointing rather than oil. I don't know if that's when he was anointed or not.

Some people think that Elisha just disobeyed God. And that he died out of fellowship with God. And they've got all kinds of proof for that, or so they think.

And they just say, you know, he didn't obey the Lord on that. He didn't do those three things. Didn't anoint those.

And he was out of fellowship, and that's why he had to go to heaven from the wilderness side of Jordan. Because he was all messed up by then. And he got fired, and Elisha took his place, and so on.

I think we ought to give this man the benefit of the doubt. Just because it's not recorded, doesn't mean it's not there. That he didn't do it.

The fact that his ministry began by calling down fire from heaven, and the first kings won, remember? Three times he said, if I'm a man of God, let fire come down. And it ended the same way. And if he was in trouble through his discouragement, he certainly was fully restored at the end.

And so I just, and it doesn't bother me if there was a double anointing. Because that's been done in the Bible. And so I don't know if he anointed.

The point I'm making is these three men, or these two men, and Hazael and Jehu anoint them. And they come up again now in Elisha's ministry. I assume that Elijah anointed them, but now we have another in 2 Kings, if you'll turn there please.

And verse 13. Eight. I can't read my writing, you can't read my mind.

Elisha told Hazael, the Lord has shown me you will be king over Syria. Now did that amount to an anointing? I don't know. But clearly with Jehu, chapter 9 verse 1, Elisha instructs one of the sons of the prophet to take a flask of oil and anoint Jehu.

And if you'll look down at verse 6, you'll see that it actually happened. Now what's that all about? And how does it lead up to the final event? You see, Elisha was called to be a prophet to Israel, to the ten tribes in the north, to the idolatrous tribes, to those that didn't want to hear, to those that said no to the Lord. And he was faithful to do that.

He went north. And he gave the message. But it seems like nobody was listening or few were listening.

And they were resisting and rejecting. And to deal with God's people, when the people keep saying no to the Lord and no to the Lord, then God's going to chasten them. And so to chasten them, He's going to deal with them from the outside and from the inside.

From the outside, He decided to use Syria and anoint Hazael the king over Syria. And He was going to use that foreign land as a whip, as a switch, to spank His people. And they would come down from the north, Syria, in order to deal with this rebellious people.

Part of God's dealings have to do with chastening from within. And so to deal from within, He said anoint Jehu over Israel. And I don't know if you've ever studied Jehu, but this was one wicked man.

He was a terrible, terrible person. And he was anointed to wipe out the idolatrous house of Ahab. And you can read the record, it will make your blood curdle.

When you see how cruel and how heartless this man was, how bloodthirsty, as he got this anointing from the Lord and went through and cleaned house in Israel. I don't want to take time to show you all the brutality that the foreign weapon, the foreign enemy, gave to Israel. And I don't want to take time to show the brutality from within.

I want to call attention to the man who looks like Jesus. And I think you'll see it if you focus on one verse. If you'll turn to 2 Kings 8-11, as he's anointing Hazael, this is the verse.

He fixed his gaze steadily on him until he was ashamed and the man of God wept. The man of God wept. You see, God had called him to minister to Israel.

And now God said, you, who I want to minister to my people, I want you to anoint Hazael. And I want you to anoint Jehu. And I've got to deal with my people roughly, harshly.

This man is a man of love. This is a man of compassion. But he's got to obey the Lord.

And as he anoints Hazael, like our Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem, he saw in advance not one stone left on another. He knew what was coming. And he knew as he anointed this man what this man was going to do with his army to God's people.

And it broke his heart. It broke his heart. For 45 years, we don't see the man of God.

And the next time we see him, he's weeping over Jerusalem. He's weeping because of something he has to do and he hates it. He doesn't want to do this.

But he has to do it and he anoints Hazael and the man of God wept. And then he sends his servants that go out and anoint him. And as soon as you put the oil on him, you run.

He didn't even stay. He just poured the oil on him and he ran. And one reason he ran was he was so anxious to start his dirty work.

As soon as the oil was dripping from his head, he felt assurance from God that he had the right to do it. And he went through and God's people suffered. It's been called in our society in this psychological age, tough love.

Well, that's sort of what it was here. He didn't have this attitude. I've been preaching now for almost a half a century and you're not listening to me? Let God judge you.

No skin off my nose. You're going to reject my message? You deserve what you get. That wasn't his attitude at all.

He wasn't hard. He was filled with the love of the Lord. The love of God was abounding in his heart.

And with a broken heart, he anoints Hazael, he anoints Jehu. This is one of the great evidences of a man that looks like Jesus, a woman that looks like Jesus. He begins to identify with Christ in His suffering.

With Christ in His cross. Not only by being rejected, but by being rejecting. Those who go on to be with the Lord and those who are followers of the Lamb, they're not only rejected, but in the name of the Lord, they're also rejecting.

Sometimes they have to be severe. But with a broken heart, they have to be severe. Sometimes the rod of the Lord has to fall.

And we try to protect God's people. We don't want them to be severely dealt with. But if you're like Jesus, you want whatever it takes to bring repentance.

Whatever it takes to bring them around. I think some Christian parents need to learn from God how to anoint Hazel and Jehu with a broken heart. And I think some elders need to understand what it means to anoint Jehu and Hazel with a broken heart.

Sometimes you've got to be tough. And sometimes you've got to be God's instrument of chastening. We must be willing to let God use us.

And so this weeping prophet, now after 45 years, God brings him back on the scene. He says, you want to know what the man that looks like Jesus looks like? Look at him. And he stands there.

This is our next look. And he just cries. He just weeps because his heart is so burdened for the people of God.

So that's our first look at the man. Our first last look at the man. He's fading away, fading away, fading away.

He comes on the scene and we see him with a broken heart. What's the message look like? Turn if you would to 2 Kings 13. When Elisha became sick with the illness with which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen.

Elisha said to him, take a bow and arrows. So he took a bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, put your hand on the bow.

And he put his hand on it. And Elisha laid his hand on the king's hand. He said, open the window toward the east.

And he opened it. And Elisha said, shoot. And he shot.

And he said, the Lord's arrow of victory. Even the arrow of victory over Syria. You'll defeat the Syrians at Aphek until you've destroyed them.

Then he said, take the arrows. And he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, strike the ground.

And he struck it three times and stopped. And the man of God was angry with him. He said, you should have struck five or six times.

Then you would have struck Aram or Syria until you would have destroyed it. But now you shall strike Syria only three times. A little more donkey work and we'll get to the heart of the Lord.

A symbolic act in two parts. Shoot the arrow. Strike the ground.

What's that all about? Let me give you the political background here. It's in the earlier chapters. After the anointing of Hazael and Jehu, quite a bit of time has passed.

And I'll tell you, Israel is bleeding. Syria has done a terrible work on Israel. And on the inside, Jehu has gone through and he has done a terrible work on the inside.

More than twenty years have passed and Israel has been beaten badly. This is the chastening of the Lord. The king who came to visit Elisha here, Joash or Jehoash, he's the grandson of Jehu.

Quite a few years have passed. After Jehu did his cleansing, his son Jehoahaz took over and after Jehoahaz, then now comes his grandson. So Joash is now the king in Israel.

Hazael of Syria, that the Lord used to chasten him from the outside, he's also gone. At this time, Syria was the number one political enemy of Israel. They had enacted a series of invasions.

First, they had gone from the north all the way to the south. Chapter 12 describes it. Victory after victory as Syria moves on and takes the Philistines down in the south.

Then they turn toward Judah as they're coming up north. Chapter 12 verse 17 talks about their move toward Judah. And they kept closing in and tightening the net as they attacked God's people.

You look in chapter 12 verse 17 and 18 and you'll see to stay alive, Judah paid a great tribute just to stay alive. They took all the sacred things and the gold out of the temple of the Lord and just paid them off just to stay alive. And then Syria made its move toward Jerusalem.

Chapter 13 verse 3 shows how over and over again God kept giving Syria victory after victory until the army of Israel is reduced. Look at it. Chapter 13 verse 7 He left to Jehoahaz of the army not more than 50 horsemen, 10 chariots, 10,000 footmen for the king of Syria had destroyed them and made them like the dust of threshing.

Brothers and sisters, don't read this history, la, la, la. Enter into it. Picture it as the United States.

What if our armed forces had been reduced to 10 chariots? That was their army. Reduced to 10 chariots, 50 horsemen, 10,000 foot soldiers. That's the whole army.

I'll tell you the situation was bad when Joash became king. Don't get the idea that Joash is seeking the Lord because he goes to the prophet's house. He's not seeking the Lord.

This is an ungodly man. He could care less about the Lord. Look at verse 11.

Chapter 13 He did evil in the sight of the Lord. He did not turn away from all the sins of Jeroboam. This guy's an idolater.

This guy's a wicked man. His purpose for coming to Elisha was all selfishness. He's a king, and he looks at his army.

He's got 10 chariots left. That's his whole army. And Syria's closing in.

And they're still wounded from the civil war that took place on the inside. This is a mess in Israel. And this king has now reduced his whole army.

He's just got a paucity of troops. He doesn't know what to do. He's devastated.

And his idea is this. He's up there in the Oval Office, and he looks out, and he sees his army, and it's all bad news. And Syria keeps coming and coming and coming.

And he thinks about the prophet. You know how people turn to religion when they're in trouble, these foxhole Christians? Or somebody, we're in trouble now, maybe the Lord's going to help us. And that's where he was.

This was his last hope. There's not one drop of evidence that Joash knew Elisha was sick. He had no clue he was sick.

At first, when I read it, I thought, oh, he's going to visit the sick prophet. He heard he was sick, and maybe he's going to pay him a little call. No way! That's his last hope.

Maybe Elisha can call on God or something, because we're in trouble. We have no army. We're going to be wiped out.

And so he goes down there, because that's his last hope. And what happens when a man knocks at the door, and he finds out that his last hope is dying? See, that was the situation. It's not only his last hope, but even that is dying.

And that's why he went to this prophet's house. He didn't know what to do, and now his last hope is dying. The last time a king knocked at this prophet's door was in chapter 6.32. Again, if you would, at verses 14 to 19.

Two parts to this object lesson. Shoot the arrow, verse 17. Strike the ground, verse 18.

Each part of that symbolic lesson, that symbolic act, told a story. And that story summarizes the entire message of the man that looks like Jesus. What's the truth behind the expression, shoot the arrow, verse 17? It's explained.

The Lord's arrow of victory. There's the explanation for that one. And so the first part of the object lesson is this.

Victory belongs to the Lord. It's the Lord's arrow of victory. Trust the Lord.

Look to the Lord. It's His victory. When He shot out east, I thought, why doesn't He shoot north? That's where Syria is.

What's He doing shooting out the east window? Well, He's shooting east because of, if you read the record, that's where Syria, as they're moving up, that was the scene of their last victory. So they're shooting in the direction of Syria. And it's the Lord's victory.

God was saying, that's always been My message. Look to Jesus. Look to the Lord.

It's His victory. It's Him. It's the Lord.

That was the first part of His message. All right, hold that a moment. What's the message behind strike the ground? Now, folks that study this are not 100% certain how this happened.

Some people think that He had a handful of arrows from His quiver, and the command was strike the ground. So He took the arrows in His hand and struck the ground. Others say, no, that doesn't fit the Hebrew.

The Hebrew in there, strike the ground, smite the ground, has to do with shooting an arrow. And as He shot out toward the east, the arrow of the Lord's victory, He was to lean out the window and shoot into the ground. Not at an enemy, but straight down into the ground.

Well, whether smite the ground means hit them with arrows, or shoot arrows into the ground, the principle doesn't change. It's the same principle whichever position you take. You say, what is represented by that? I think the earth.

Strike the earth. I think the earth represents the earth. I can't get too deep on these things.

I think it's the earth. I think it's the world. I think it's this world.

We have New Testament words. We talk about the flesh and the world and that kind of thing. I think what He was saying is, trust the Lord and smite the earth.

Don't trust yourself. That's what I think He was saying. If the world just represents the earth, the world, this world, smite that.

That needs to be smitten. You need to trust the Lord and stop trusting man. Put your trust in the Lord and have no confidence in man.

Are you familiar with the very center verse of the Bible? The very middle verse of the Bible. Right in the middle of the Bible. It's Psalm 118, verse 8 and 9. If you count verses before and after, exactly equal.

Now, I know verses came later. I'm not saying this is inspired. But listen.

Psalm 118, verse 8 and 9. The center verse of the Bible. It's better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It's better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.

Well, that happens to be the center verse of the Bible. I know it's the central message of the Bible. And I think it's the object lesson that Elisha's doing here.

Trust in the Lord. Don't put any confidence in man. Verse 16, when he told him to shoot the arrow out the window, this sick old prophet got up out of his bed and he went over and as the man pulled the string, the prophet put his hand on his hand and his hand on the string.

So now you've got two people. I remember trying to teach Lillian to play golf. And she would hold the club.

Of course, I was courting her at the time. And so, I had to teach her how to hold the club. First time I ever took her golfing.

I had a brand new driver. I never used it. Brand spanking new Spaulding driver.

And she threw it in the reservoir. She took a swing and it was gone. And there went my driver.

Some say that the prophet put his hand on the king's hand in order to illustrate that the king was in a situation where he had to put himself under the authority of the prophet. And now the prophet is the one

calling the shots. And he can't shoot until the prophet says shoot.

He can't let go until the prophet says let go. And this idea, it's amazing how many commentaries hold that. But I think it goes against the character of this man.

It implies that he's putting himself under the submission of the man of God. And there's nothing in the record. This is a wicked man.

And there's no repentance that I can see in his heart, in his life. And I can't believe he's submitting unto this man of God at all. I don't doubt when he said in verse 14, my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen.

I think he recognized that the strength of a nation lies in its spiritual leadership. And when he saw his last hope dying, he just went, oh no, now what am I going to do? Now even the prophet is dying. I think he recognized that.

But I don't think for a moment that this wicked king put himself under the submission. What was intended by Elisha putting his hand on that? I can't be 100% on this, but here's what I think it is. Elisha's saying, listen, for 50 years I've been ministering in this nation.

And for 50 years, I've only had one message. Trust the Lord and smite the earth. That's been my whole message.

Trust the Lord, don't trust man. Trust the Lord, don't trust yourself. Now here we go again at the end.

You want to hear the message again? Alright. Trust the Lord and smite the earth. And as he held it, I think what he was saying, he didn't use these words, but I think what he was saying is this.

You're not always going to have the man of God around to hold your hand. I think that's what he's saying. I've told you a thousand times to trust the Lord and don't trust man.

And I'm not going to be around to hold your hand very much longer. And I don't know how many times you have to hear that before you heed that for 50 years. To those who were willing, to those who were unwilling, to those who were hungry, Elisha had one message.

Look to the Lord, don't look to man. Look to the Lord, don't look to man. Shoot the arrow toward the Lord.

The Lord's arrow of victory. Smite the earth. Smite the earth.

You've got to learn to do it for yourself. In that connection, don't answer. How many times have you heard as some man of God stood before you and said, trust the Lord.

Stop trusting your wisdom. Stop trusting your strength. Stop trusting your own resources.

Look to Jesus. Smite the earth. We're not going to be around forever.

We're going to pass away. Men of God will stand up and a thousand times they'll tell you the same thing. Look to Jesus.

Don't trust yourself. But the man of God will not always be there to hold your hand. And when he's not there, what are you going to do? Has your last hope died? Oh, may God teach us this great lesson that

Elisha taught in his bedroom as he was dying.

By having two parts to the symbolic act, God was able to illustrate that it's possible to fall short of full victory. It's easy to say, look to Jesus. We love to say that.

Just look to Christ. How many times have you smitten the earth? It's possible to fall short of a complete victory. Verse 18, He said, take the arrows.

He took them. He said to the King of Israel, strike the ground. He struck it three times and stopped.

The man of God was furious. The last scene we have is this old prophet jumping out of bed and his face turning red. He's angry.

That's the last scene we have and he's gone. And so this great man who bleeds, who weeps over the people, he dies angry. And he's angry and he's furious because he knows that it's one thing to trust the Lord.

It's another thing to smite the earth. And God's people have a knack somehow to not want to smite the earth enough. We want to trust Jesus, but I want to trust me too.

And I want to trust my own wisdom and I want to trust my own strength and I'll help the Lord out. Smite the earth all the way. It's a terrible victory that only pushes the enemy to the borders where he can attack again another day.

We want nothing of that kind of victory. We want the kind of victory where the enemy is gone and he's done and he's vanquished and he's over and he's through and he has no more power in our life. We need to shoot the arrow.

It's the Lord's victory. And then God grace us to not stop smiting the earth because we can't trust ourselves. That's the summary of this wonderful message.

And we need to heed it. Our final look, and we'll wrap up with this. I want to show you the man and the message together, one more time.

I want to show you how entwined the man and the message, the man who looks like Jesus and the message of Christ and the grace of God, how entwined they are and yet how separate they are. This marvelous story. Verse 20.

Chapter 13. Elisha died and they buried him. Now the bands of the Moabites would invade the land in the spring of the year as they were burying a man.

Picture this in your mind. I don't know if you do that. I try to enter right in and get into the shoes of these people.

They are in the middle of a funeral service. As they were burying a man, they saw a marauding band and they cast the man into the grave of Elisha. And when the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.

Isn't that a passage in the Bible? Right in the middle of a funeral service. Ah! They're coming! What are we going to do with this guy? He's alive. That really happened.

It's an awesome scene. This is the scene where I said it's difficult to separate the man from the message. And probably they're more separated here than any place in the history.

As we come to the close of our time together looking at the man who looked like Jesus and the message that man embraced, I want to call attention to this climactic ending because it teaches us the unconscious influence of life-giving in the man of God. I call it a life-giving influence because Elisha died and after he died, God is still using him and those that come in contact with him are still receiving life. It's quite a dramatic scene here.

I wish I was there to see when that corpse touched dead bones and jumped up and ran out of the cave just in time to be attacked by the marauding men. All through the story of Elisha, Elisha never went out seeking ministry. He just was available.

He just lived. And they came to him. The widow came to him.

The needy came to him. The leper came to him. The hungry came to him.

The destitute... He just lived. He was just available. This time, he's completely out of the picture.

If you were tempted to give Elisha credit for some kind of ministry before, that temptation is gone now. You can't give him any credit for this one. He's dead.

Don't read that la-la-la because it's the key to everything. It's the clincher to the whole message. He didn't say anything this time.

He didn't do anything this time. He didn't touch anybody this time. Ceremonially, he's in the worst condition of all.

He's ceremonially unclean. And yet, when the corpse comes in contact... Now, you think spiritually as I say these words. I'm using just regular words, but think spiritually.

When that corpse came in contact with the dead prophet, he lived. You say, he's dead. Yeah, but what does that mean? He's dead.

Let me suggest what it means. One thing it means is... Now, think spiritually. He's free from the flesh.

They're just bones. Is that free from the flesh? He's free from the flesh. There's only bones left.

In his death, he discovered probably what he longed for all his life. As a Christian, he's probably saying, Oh Lord, I want to be free from the flesh. That's what I pray.

That's what you pray. That's what it means to be dead. He's free from the flesh.

What else does it mean? Well, it means he's living in the Spirit. Isn't that true? He's living in the Spirit. If ever there was a time he lived in the Spirit, it's now.

He's free from the flesh. He's living in the Spirit. He's finally entered into what it means.

Probably during his life, he said, Oh Lord, teach me, what does it mean to live in the Spirit? He knows now. You say, the man's dead. Yeah, he's free from the flesh.

Living in the Spirit. What's he doing? What occupies his days and his hours now? Where is he? You say he's in the cave. No, he's not in the cave.

Where is he? He is in the presence of the bridegroom lover of his soul. He's in union. Before, he used to say over and over again, The Lord of hosts before whom I stand.

He can say it now in a new way. The Lord of hosts before whom I stand. He is in the presence of the living Lord.

Now it's literal. Prophet in the presence of the Lord. Occupied day and night with Jesus.

Beholding His beauty. Worshipping at His feet. Enjoying the bliss of His unending company.

This man is wrapped up in Jesus. Do you remember what his message was? Jesus. That was his message.

And this guy, the messenger, is now fully enjoying the message. He died. He's free from the flesh.

He's living in the Spirit. He's enjoying the presence of the Lord. And that is the one that God uses in order to bring life to someone else.

When that corpse came in contact with the man who looked like Jesus. Do you know what happens when a dead person touches somebody who's free from the flesh and living in the Spirit and enjoying the presence of the Lord? I say, these two things, ministry and life, are so connected, but they're so separate. He has no clue about ministry.

He's not trying to minister. He's free from the flesh and living in the Spirit and enjoying the Lord. Someone comes in contact with him.

Boom! He's alive. He doesn't know anything about that. He doesn't know anything about that.

It's unconscious from his point of view. Let me ask this question. You open your Bible.

You read the 23rd Psalm. And something in the 23rd Psalm, maybe you hear Jeff's tapes on the 23rd Psalm, something blesses you. Does David know that? I mean, he wrote that.

Does he know when you get blessed about reading his psalms? Probably not. He's probably occupied with other things. You read the epistles and something that Paul said grips your heart.

Does Paul know that? You come in a situation in life and there's a storm and you remember Peter walking on the water and how he got his eyes off the Lord. You say, oh, thank you, Lord, for that story. I'm going to keep my eyes on Christ.

Does Peter know that that happened to you? Probably not. We know that one day they threw a corpse on Elisha and he rose from the dead. Elisha still doesn't know that.

We know that. He doesn't even know it yet. He may know it someday when Christ has His coronation and rewards are given to Him.

I don't think he knows it now. And that's the essence. That's the summary.

The man in the message. The Christian that looks like Jesus never looks more like Jesus than when he is conformed to his death. That's when the Christian looks like Jesus.

When he is dead. And then the last thing in his mind is ministry. He's not thinking about ministry.

He's not thinking about Christian service. He's not thinking about anything except Jesus. And he's wrapped up in the man and the message are one.

And he's wrapped up in the Lord and he just lives in the Spirit and he lives in the presence of the Lord and he lives free from the flesh and God keeps throwing people into his life, making contact with them and everybody that touches him lives and he doesn't even know it. That's the man that looks like Jesus. And that's the climax of the whole thing.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we come to another Joshua. We come to the end of another Joshua. But we come to the same place we always end and we always start.

It's the Lord. And may I encourage you in the name of the Lord to shoot the arrow and strike the earth. Trust the Lord and don't trust yourself.

Die. Die. Learn what it means to die.

And you won't believe someday how God will use your life. Unconscious. You don't have to know it.

You're just wrapped up in Jesus. You're just in His presence. You're just walking in the Spirit.

You're just being delivered and you're free from the flesh. And that's where you live in that world. And then others, and I think by the thousands, will touch your life and someday maybe you'll know.

It's not important. The important thing is that you be like Jesus and that you have the message of Christ and that they be one. Don't wait for heaven.

For heaven. For heaven. For heaven's sake.

Live heaven on earth. May God help us to know what it means to die. That's where the life is.

Let's pray. Father, thank You so much for Your precious Word. And now we would ask You, Lord, as we heard from this dying prophet this great truth, teach us that it's Your victory.

Grace us to smite the earth so we won't fall short of Your victory. Teach us to die that we might live in the presence of the Lord and that others who touch our lives might live. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Thank you.

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