

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev Chris Trinham

Elisha

No 2

Heavenly Blessing: Worldly Antagonism

Reading: Second Kings 2:7-25

There are many ways of looking at this passage. We can see it as a record of a tribal god, devoid of common morality and another good reason to reject the whole of the Old Testament. We can see it as the record of a coincidence that was given religious meaning by superstitious people, and therefore irrelevant to today. We can 'spiritualise' it by ascribing meanings pointing to a deeper spiritual life. We can sidestep the question and say that there are some things in God's word that are too deep for us (which is true), we had best leave them alone. Or, we can take this passage as part of God's inspired word, put it into its geographic, historic and textual context, understand the actions of the people and animals concerned and learn from them more about the nature of Him who is also our heavenly Father. We choose this option.

First, Revise the Story from 2 Kings 2:7-18 and notice these character traits of Elisha at that time.

v9 Elisha had requested to receive the spirit of Elijah, a second or successive portion. See Study #01.

v12 My father, my father (a word with wide application, thus: 'my master.') The chariot and horsemen were the military instruments of protection of the day. Elijah was seen as Israel's protector against her Aramean enemies on the northern border.

v12 Elisha tore his own clothes into two parts. Rending clothes was a demonstration, sometimes of grief, but here, the double portion. Taking possession of his mentor's robe was Elisha taking Elijah's status.

v14 Striking the waters was both a test to determine that the power of the Lord was really upon him and also a demonstration to the prophets gathered around. It seems but does not say so, that at first nothing happened. He struck again.

v14 'Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah' These words tell us that Elisha was unsure that his request had been granted. He was still acting the disciple. But the waters did part. Two strikes, waters parting - further symbolism.

v16 The prophets were not fully

convinced. They prevailed on Elisha to look for Elijah. He eventually consented because he was harassed until he was 'ashamed' or humiliated 'This word has overtones of being worthless' -Vine.

Thus we see an Elisha who aspired to leadership, awkward and unsure of himself, unaccustomed to the correct use of the gifts bestowed upon him and at first inexperienced in relating as a prophet both before his peers and with God, but also, a man of mild disposition.

Healing the Waters. This event is a beautiful cameo, rich in symbolism and meaning for the Christian today. This spring (see your introduction booklet), is north west of Jericho today and waters nearby farms. It was not so in Elisha's day:

the waters were bad, that is poisoned, contaminated, deceptive, useless. Naughty might be a good translation as they looked and tasted good but with did not nourish the gardens, **the land unfruitful.** this word means abortive or causing miscarriage. The trees set fruit each spring, but when the heat came and were irrigated, they cast their fruit.

Look my lord, a pleasant city, but poisoned water and bereft land.

So also, our Christian service can be unfruitful. We plan, prepare and pursue our ministry, but when things are

looking good, it all evaporates. We are discouraged. All that work, the sacrifice, the special effort, what's the point. Nothing works for me! Now that IS the point. All my effort comes to naught if it is not 'Christ in me!'

This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent John 6:29b.

In all our doing we must trust in Jesus who is the One who will, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, achieve God's purpose.

Elisha's answer was salt in a new earthenware pot. Earthenware is the 'adam', the man of earth. It was new, a newly made vessel by the redemptive work of Jesus. Salt in many places in the Scripture is a picture of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has sent His Spirit at Pentecost and He now dwells within each of God's blood bought children to reveal Christ in us. He does the work! He is our fruitfulness. There is no other way.

Elisha's confidence is growing. If this episode is instructive to us. It was more so to Elisha. He also was learning how to 'walk in the Spirit' who was upon him. It was now, "Thus saith the Lord" v21.

The youths of Bethel. Bethel means 'house of god.' Their god was a false god, an Egyptian style golden calf set up by Jeroboam (1K 12:28-33) as a centre of Baal worship, and the cult had it prophets (1K 18:16-20)

The young lads v28 were not small children, but university student aged* and most probably of a prophetic

This study is based in and quotes the NASB translation. *Young lads is from two Hebrew words 1. *Na' ar* A youth, from childhood to young man to age 30, but possibly a servant, and 2. *Qā tān* a diminutive of: quantity, size, number, age, importance or value, thus 'student' or maybe, 'rabble' etc. The geographic and historic context must guide our meanings selection.

school of Baal. They were there in force to oppose the newly recognised prophet of God, and the enemy since Elijah's rout of their number on Mount Carmel.

Their taunt was caustic and threatening ridicule. 'Bald head.' The term was insulting (Lev 13:40~) as he was still a young man. News of recent events had spread by 'bush telegraph' and the mob premeditated, came out in force to meet him. 'Go up' is possibly to go up to the priest for examination, or a reference to the Elijah's recent translation. Either way, they wanted Elisha out of their way.

Elisha's 'curse.' Curse means to 'make light' and from that as here 'treat with contempt.' But we do not know the words of that curse. What we do know is that God does not take a light view of those who attack his servants:

they *continually* mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, until there was no remedy. Second Chronicles 36:16.

A belittling of the servant is also a belittling of his Master.

God's response was swift and strong. He did not make light of the situation. His purpose for Elisha was incomplete. His was a time of terrestrial upheaval and instability. Animals react to pending storms and disasters, as did these animals. The timing was remarkable. Are you suffering for your Lord?

Remember Romans 12:19:

Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord.

Welcome Glen Park Gospel Church
Lower Road, Eltham North
Sundays 10.30 am

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