

"The Death of Elisha"

Part 2

2 Kings 13:14-21

Introduction: In our last study of Elisha's life we looked at one verse which told of the sickness he had contracted.

Notice 2 Kings 13:14

We do not know how old Elisha was at this time, but we do know that the sickness he had contracted would be the sickness that would take his life. This however was not our focus the last time we were here. We looked instead at the king who came to his bedside when he was sick. Joash the king of Israel came and wept over Elisha when he was dying but it was not because he was losing a good friend. The reason is seen in the words spoken over Elisha by the king.

O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

Joash referred to Elisha as the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. This revealed how the king viewed Elisha. He saw him as the strength of Israel. Joash wept over Elisha because he believed that when Elisha died Israel would be conquered and he would lose his seat upon the throne. Joash had his faith in a man instead of resting his faith in the God of Elisha.

The point which we focused upon here was that Elisha lived his life in a way that when he was gone he would be missed. This is the way we too are to live our lives. This does not mean we compromise so that others will praise us, but it means we are to live lives of integrity so that others will see the hand of God at work within our lives. Let me share with you one more time the words of an unnamed writer:

"Let us seek so to live that even ungodly men may miss us when we are gone. It is possible for us in a quiet, unobtrusive manner, so to adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior in all things, that when we die many will say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," and men shall drop a tear, and close the shutter, and be silent and solemn for an hour or two when they hear the servant of God is dead. They laughed at him while he lived, but they weep for him when he dies: they could despise him while he was here, but now that he is gone they say:- "We could have better missed a less-known man, for he and such as he are the pillars of the good of others: they bring down showers of blessings upon us all," I would covet this earnestly, not for the honor and esteem of men, but for the honor and glory of God, that even the despisers of Christ may be compelled to see there is dignity, and a respect, about the walk of an upright man."

This now brings us to where we are tonight in our study.

Elisha's Last Prophecy

Notice 2 Kings 13:15

Elisha is now going to give Joash a prophecy which is meant to encourage him. He will do this through a parable. Here he commands him to take up a bow and arrows.

Notice 2 Kings 13:16

Elisha instructed Joash to grab the bow as if he were going to shoot it and when he did Elisha placed his hands upon the hands of the king. Now let us keep in mind that Elisha is THE MAN OF GOD so as Elisha places his hands upon the kings this is to let the king know the battle is the Lord's. God would be the One to give victory to Israel over the Syrians.

The point Joash needed to see here was that Elisha would die but God would still be God and He would still be the God of Israel. Elisha would die from a sickness, but the absence of Elisha would not hinder the power of the Lord. God would still give to Israel victory over the Syrians even in the absence of Elisha. Elisha's hands upon the king's hands was a statement of encouragement.

Notice 2 Kings 13:17

The king was commanded to open the window toward the east which was toward Syria and he was commanded to shoot an arrow. The arrow represented the arrow of the Lord's deliverance from the Syrians.

Now let me give you some background on the Syrians. They were a people whom Israel would have feared the most. They were extremely brutal and barbaric. This is one of the reasons why Jonah refused to go to Nineveh when God called him. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria and because the Assyrians were the enemies of Israel Jonah desired to see them destroyed. They slaughtered entire cities and carried the heads of those whom they conquered back to their own cities and formed pyramids with their heads. They would skin their enemies and stretch their skins upon the walls of their cities and all of this was done to deter anyone from attacking them.

These are the people whom Joash is facing and he sees Elisha as the strength of Israel because he was aware of how God worked His power through him therefore we can understand his concern as he understands that Elisha is dying. But Elisha has now given to him a prophecy letting him know that even though he will die God will still use Joash to conquer the Syrians.

Notice 2 Kings 13:17 again.

There is something here that we need to see. The arrow represented the Lord's arrow or the Lord's power for the battle was the Lord's, BUT Joash needed to do his part and he needed to lead the battle. Victory was promised but it would only come if Joash did what he was supposed to do. Joash could not sit back and do nothing. God would give the victory but Joash had to do his part.

Application:

This is a wonderful lesson for all of us. There are victories to be won all around us, but we must do our part. We cannot be slothful, but we must get up and move. There are people around us who need to be saved but we all know that faith only comes by hearing the Word of God. So that means it is on us to share the Truth of God's Word with those who do not know Him. We can pray from daylight till dark for a family member or a friend to get saved but until we do our part it will never happen. They cannot get saved without hearing the Bible.

It is like a farmer who prays for a good crop. He prays, and the rains come, and the weather is perfect for growing but nothing grows in the field. Why? He never went out and planted the seed. If he does not plant the seed, there will be no crop. The same is true in our service for the Lord. The battle is the Lord's, but we must do our part. Let me show you another picture of this from the life of Joshua.

Joshua 10:1-9

Now it came to pass, when Adonizedec king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them;

² *That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty.*

³ *Wherefore Adonizedec king of Jerusalem, sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying,*

⁴ *Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.*

⁵ *Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.*

⁶ And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us.

⁷ So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour.

⁸ And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.

⁹ Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night.

¹⁰ And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah.

¹¹ And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.

¹² Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

¹³ And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

The Lord promised to Joshua the victory, but Joshua was not slothful. He marched all night long to get to the battle. The victory was guaranteed but Joshua knew he still needed to do his part. Because of Joshua's diligence and his involvement, he was permitted to witness two miracles. One was the hailstones from heaven and the other was the sun standing still for an entire day. Joshua had faith in the promise which God had given him.

Notice 2 Kings 13:18

This was a test of the faith of Joash. Joash was to hit the ground with the arrows just as he would the Syrians. Joash struck the ground three times with the arrows.

Notice 2 Kings 13:19

Elisha became angry with the king because he only struck the ground three times when he should have struck it five or six times. Because he only struck the ground three times he would not completely destroy the Syrians but instead he would have victory over them three times.

As I look at this I ask, "What does all of this mean?"

This was a test of the faith of Joash. When he struck the ground only three times it showed his lack of faith. He should have struck the ground with great enthusiasm and even jumped up and down on the ground like he was destroying the Syrians and pounding them in the dirt. But the problem was he lacked faith. He was struggling to believe the prophecy which was given to him concerning victory of the Syrians. He lacked enthusiasm because he lacked faith. For this reason, he would come short of destroying the Syrians.

Application:

This is a great reminder to you and me of the importance of faith in the promises of God.

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

When we lack faith in the Word of God it has a direct impact upon the power of God within our lives. But there is more. When a believer lacks faith, it has an impact upon those who are around them. All of Israel would feel the consequences of Joash's lack of faith. Let me give you some examples of how a lack of faith impacts our lives.

1. Individually

Hebrews 4:9-11

⁹ There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

¹⁰ For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

¹¹ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

God has a place of rest for His people today and we cannot enter into His rest without faith in Him. This is not salvation, but this is the rest that we can enjoy in this life as we trust our Lord with every situation we face in our lives. When we trust in Him and we exercise faith in His ability to keep us and cause us to grow in the storms and the valleys

of life, we are then permitted to enter into His rest. We see a picture of this in the life of Moses and Aaron.

Numbers 20:7-12

⁷ *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

⁸ *Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.*

⁹ *And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.*

¹⁰ *And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?*

¹¹ *And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.*

¹² *And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.*

Moses did not believe that speaking to the Rock was enough, so he therefore struck the Rock. Their unbelief kept them from leading Israel into Canaan.

2. Corporately

Remember the report of the ten spies whom Moses sent out?

Numbers 13:30-33

³⁰ *And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*

³¹ *But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.*

³² *And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.*

³³ *And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.*

Let me show you the response of the people.

Numbers 14:1, 4

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

⁴ *And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.*

Now let me show you the consequences.

Numbers 14:28-33

²⁸ *Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:*

²⁹ *Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me.*

³⁰ *Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.*

³¹ *But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.*

³² *But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.*

³³ *And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.*

Conclusion:

Notice 2 Kings 13:20-21

This was evidence that God was still God even though Elisha was dead. Therefore, Israel was to trust in their God.

Application:

Let us learn from all of this that God's leaders die but God continues to raise men up to show forth His power. Let us therefore live by faith.