

## 2 Kings 2:7-25

Ch 2 deals with the preparation of Elisha for the departure of Elijah and the empowering of God's Spirit upon his life. And the transition in his life is made from being simply the man who poured water on Elijah's hands to being the premier prophet of the nation. And we took note last time of the contented nature of Elisha in that "behind the scenes," "no attention," type position of just being a servant. There is a theme that's woven through the scriptures regarding God's raising up of an individual, and generally speaking He's looking for an individual of humility, who's concerned for *God's* glory rather than his own, and one who is faithful to the task committed to his trust. When Jesus was teaching the parable of the talents in Matt 25 He was speaking of certain servants who were entrusted in this case with a certain measure of money, each according to his own ability to invest and deal, no one given more responsibility than they could handle. And ultimately the point was that those who were faithful with what had been entrusted to them were promoted, but those who were irresponsible and unfaithful were *demoted* and done away with. And Jesus said, "*For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.*" Matt 25:29 Elisha was one who was faithful, desired to serve God, for the glory of God, and God is about to give him a promotion; an "abundance" if you will of spiritual responsibility. We've mentioned it before; you know what the reward for faithful service is? More service, an abundance of responsibility and accountability because God has counted you faithful. And when service is your ambition, there will always be a place for you in the work of God. God is searching for willing vessels to serve Him, and if we're willing to be *prepared* for that service, He's willing to *empower* us for that service.

That's where we left off last time, receiving a bit of practical application of the process that Elisha went through during his time of preparation for the empowerment of God's Spirit. You recall what they were, 1<sup>st</sup> they were found at Gilgal, the place of purification, the circumcision of the flesh life, that place where the children of Israel were circumcised before any battle or victory would be won in the name of the Lord. For you and me the bible mentions the need to circumcise our *ear*, being careful what we listen to, what we take in, that we might have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to us. Because what we *listen* to has the propensity to affect our *lives*. If you're receiving trash talk, or rumors, it can change your whole life, the way you act and react, Jesus said, "...*take heed how you hear.*" Luke 8:18 Circumcise your ear. 2<sup>ndly</sup> The bible mentions the need to circumcise our lips, the things we say, are we building up with our words, or tearing down? Jesus said, "...*by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*" Matt 12:37 and Again, "*Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.*" Matt 15:10-11 Then He clarified that statement by saying, "...*those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man,*" Matt 15:18-20 How the flesh needs to be cut away from the things that we say. Finally the bible mentions the need to circumcise the heart, our attachment to the things of this world, to the flesh that are in our hearts, the things we love and how we love them, God's Word exhorts us to circumcise the foreskin of our hearts.

Why? Because God is always searching our heart, and you and I want a heart that's free of the flesh, because the flesh will destroy your life, physically and spiritually. That's Gilgal, the place of purification. Next was Bethel, the place of *realization*, realize that God wants to bless your life and give you His Holy Spirit, that's Bethel. Then they went to Jericho, the place of *confrontation*, God gives us His Spirit so that we might be the witness He's called us to be, so that we won't back down in intimidation, but rather we'll be bold in times of confrontation.

Finally they came to the Jordan, that place of *expectation*. Step out in faith and trust that God having done the work of purification in you, having brought you to the place of realization of how He wants to bless you, you're clear on the purpose of why He wants to give you the empowering of His Spirit, now expect Him to do it, trust Him for His Word, all you have to do is ask, as we'll see. Elisha has been through all these places, he's been faithful to stay *with* and keep his eyes *on* Elijah regardless of the distractions and temptations to just stay where he was at rather than press on, people telling him just to let Elijah go and all, but they're pressing on together.

#### Vs7-8

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time we've seen waters part in our study of scripture. Moses outstretched his staff over the Red Sea as the Egyptian army approached with Mountains on either side and no way of escape and the waters parted and the nation crossed on dry ground. Some 40 yrs later Joshua by the command of God had the priests lead the way stepping out into the Jordan, carrying the Ark of the Covenant and as the soles of their feet entered the waters by faith trusting God to move in the miraculous the waters heaped up and they crossed over on dry ground. And now here Elijah and Elisha standing before the Jordan, needing to get across, Elijah takes his mantle, rolls it up, smacks the water, and it divides this way and that, they cross on dry ground. What do these 3 events have in common? #1 In each case God was leading, #2 In each case it seemed to be an impassable, impossible situation, #3 God faithfully followed through in each case making away to His glory where there seemed to be no way.

What I want you to see is that there are times when God will lead us to or *into* what seems to be impossible or impassable situations. Why, because He wants to increase your *frustration*? No, because He wants to increase your *faith*, bringing you to that place where nothing short of a miracle will get you through, and through that God teaches us to *trust* Him, that there's nothing too hard *for* Him and no matter how high the odds may be stacked against me I can always depend *upon* Him. God always brought them through the waters that apart from Him would've overflowed/overwhelmed them and otherwise destroyed them. We read in Isa 43:1-2 "...*thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you'*" It's like we learned Sunday morning, sometimes our circumstances seem insurmountable, but God is larger than any problem we may have. He created the Heavens and the earth, the sea and everything in them, is there anything too hard for God?

But there are also some differences in these 3 events, primarily the way that God went about doing the work. The end result was always the same, deliverance, victory, the Lord did the work, but the *way* He did the work was distinctly different in each case. Moses = “Stretch out your rod over the Sea.” Joshua = “When the priests step out into the waters they will part.” Elijah = “Roll up your mantle and smite the waters.” The point here being that God demonstrates His faithfulness to you and me persistently with consistency, but we’re not to get lost in the method, we’re to keep our eyes on the master. If every time waters parted in the scripture it was by someone stretching out a rod over them, we’d be all, “That’s the key, grab the rod, hold it out.” But the key isn’t in the method, its in the master, we’re to depend upon J.C., not the methods or the manner by which He works. Jesus never performed a miracle the same way twice. Because He knows our nature, we’d try to emulate His method in hopes of the same results, and if we got the same results we’d completely leave Him out of the equation and take care of it ourselves. But God wants us to stay turned towards and tuned into Him.

#### Vs9-10

Now we often get confused with Elisha’s request here but we need to understand that Elisha isn’t saying, “I want to be twice the prophet you are!” However it is interesting that if you track the miraculous things done through Elijah you find 7, and if you track the signs done through Elisha you find 14, exactly twice the amount. But be that as it may that wasn’t what he was asking for, the idea behind the double portion is found in Duet 21:17 whereby the 1<sup>st</sup> born son was to be the principal heir to his fathers estate receiving a double portion of the inheritance over the other offspring. So in 1 respect we could see Elisha here asking Elijah to acknowledge him as the principal heir to the prophetic office he’s held over the nation asking to be the one who now serves the Lord by ministering to the Lord’s people in manner like Elijah. And that’s true, he’s ready to serve in a greater capacity, he’s proved himself faithful and he’s prepared to step up to the plate in that capacity. But really Elisha already knows that he’s been called to take that place, that was demonstrated the moment Elijah threw his mantle on him, and he began to follow him. So more than that, what I see in this is that Elisha is saying, “I recognize that what’s gone on through you is not by might, nor by your power but by the Spirit of the Lord, and if I’m to be stepping up into your position, I need the power of the Holy Spirit upon my life.” He recognizes that the *work* of the Lord is to be done by the power of the *Spirit* of the Lord. Elijah is his spiritual father, and if he’s to inherit his ministry, he needs the Spirit at rest upon him in a similar manner.

Elijah says, “You’ve asked a hard thing.” What does that mean; is hard for God to give His Spirit to Elisha? No, some see this as Elijah saying, “I have no control over whether or not God is going to use you, in a manner that reflects how He used me so how can I confirm that? You’re asking something that’s difficult for me.” But it also may be true that Elijah is telling Elisha that *he’s* asking to be placed in a difficult position, he’s asking for something that will be hard for him. It’s like, “Are you sure you know what you’re asking for? It’s not all limelight and popular vote of the public opinion doing what I do.” Yeah some spectacular things happened, but it wasn’t all it let on to be from the outside.

Ravens came to feed him, but it was during times of famine and starvation, fire fell from heaven against the king's men, but they were coming to arrest and more than likely execute him. God spoke to him by the still small voice, but it was during a time of suicidal depression and despairing of life. The life that God uses, be it a prophet, or a pastor, or whatever isn't easy. Sometimes it looks attractive, but times can be tough, always under scrutiny, always someone's enemy, people are at times demanding, insensitive, people are struggling with substance abuse, marital problems, problems being single, people going through devastating times, and they're looking to you, which is why you have to look to Jesus, not to mention the fiery darts of the wicked one that are always seeming to be hurled from one direction or another towards you or your family. And obviously God's callings are God's equippings and I'm not *complaining*, simply *explaining*. I love what God has called me to do, but that's why the average life expectancy of the pulpit ministry in our country is about 2-3yrs. Guys go in expecting to be popular, to be the center of attention, to have blessings bestowed upon them, to be the authority, a respected leader. But then reality sets in, as people we complain, people rebel, they gossip, and they take. So the disillusioned pastors first wise up, then get fed up, and finally they give up. "So you want to be a prophet used of God... you've asked a hard thing Elisha, you won't have a huge fan base, and times will be tough for you." But he says, "If you see me when I'm taken from you, than God's going to do the work, if not He's chosen to go another route."

Now there's kind of a neat parallel happening here, a "type" if you will in that Elisha, Elijah's disciple is following him close. He knows that what's happening in his life is by the power of the Holy Spirit and he wants to be used in that capacity. But Elijah tells him that the Holy Spirit won't come upon him until he's 1<sup>st</sup> gone and he'll know it's going to happen if he sees him ascend into heaven. Meanwhile Elisha has been being prepared these yrs and during these last moments to receive the passing of the baton to carry on the work in an even greater capacity, not quality wise, but quantity wise. Sound familiar? Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive the Spirit after He departed and that they would do even greater works, not quality wise, but quantity wise than Himself. Meanwhile they were being prepared for the ministry by Him, and when He ascended they saw it, but they kept their eyes on Him, ultimately through the course of their preparation refused to be persuaded from following Him and after Jesus was taken from them, that is when He ascended into Heaven, the Spirit came upon them and the work of God carried on through them.

Vs11-12

Tell me that wouldn't blow your mind? Walking along chatting about life and then...out of nowhere a chariot and horses of fire "blaze" right between you and a sudden storm like disturbance whisks your friend right off the ground and like that he's gone! and The reason we read that he saw it was not only for affirmation of his calling but this chariot of fire probably wasn't visible to the human eye, this was a peek into the spiritual realm like there in ch 6 where Elisha prays for *his* servants eyes to be opened so that he could see the fact that those who were with them were more than those who came against them.

But we have this phrase, “The chariot of Israel and its horsemen.” and The idea there is that chariots and horsemen were the strongest aspect of military might and national defense. But Elisha is crying out that the most powerful aspect of Israel’s might and defense was just removed from the scene in Elijah. The point being that a man of God is of more value defensively to a nation regarding its security than all its weapons of war. Be it through his counsel or intercessions and prayers, his directing people to seek the Lord, trust in the Lord and all the rest. Because God is the defender of the righteous, and a shield about His people, so Elisha is saying that Israel just lost a great treasure in Elijah, that he was of more value to the nation’s preservation than anything the military or any other thing might be.

Vs13-14

Couple of things here, #1 we notice that the mantle didn’t fall across his shoulders, it fell to the ground, Elisha had to make a conscious decision to walk over and pick it up understanding all the responsibility and accountability before God that it entailed. He didn’t have to do that, God had called him *to* it, had confirmed that He’d be there for him *in* it, but God still gave the choice to follow through *with* it. He could’ve said, “You know, now that I think about it, it is a hard thing, the stakes are too high, my life will be too transparent, and I just don’t want everyone knowing my business.” But he didn’t do that, he wanted all that God had for him, so he picked up that mantle and he stepped up to the bank of the Jordan. Now he’s staring at it, and this question could mean a couple of things. It could mean, “Lord are You truly here for me in the capacity you said you’d be?” “My heart is turned toward You, tuned in and attentive *to* You, now show Yourself strong on my behalf.” Or it could be that he’s saying for the sake of the sons of the prophets that were kind of checking out the situation to affirm to them that God was with him now in the capacity that He was with Elijah. “Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” and He smacks the water and they roll back and the answer is shown, He’s with Elisha just the same.

Either way you want to see it, its fine with me, but the point is that the secret behind the strength of Elijah is the Lord God; it’s not Elijah himself. Elijah might be gone, but the Lord God is still moving.

But the other thing I want you to notice is that the last miracle Elijah performed became the 1<sup>st</sup> miracle Elisha performed. The point being that often times if you’re in leadership positions those whom the Lord brings under you will often take on the same basic nuances *of* you when it comes to the methods and manners by which they minister. And that’s something you do well to be mindful of, if the people around you were the same type Christian *as* you, would that be a good thing in your eyes or a not so good thing. If you’re short tempered and harsh, they’ll become harsh towards those around them, if you’re gracious and longsuffering they’ll generally mirror that towards others. Paul said, “*The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*” Phil 4:9 He told the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitated Christ, and again, “*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.*” Phil 3:17 A disciple will naturally mirror in many ways the one whom he discipled.

And that's a basic application we can draw from this, Elisha retraces his steps that he took with Elijah in the reverse order, repeating for himself what he'd seen/heard and learned in Elijah. The bible says, "*Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*" Heb 13:7 So be mindful of that as you're around peers and other people, exercise love, not liberty that they might mirror the Christ like qualities of your life.

#### Vs15-18

Isn't it amazing how we can hear and proclaim the Word of God so boldly and confidently in one moment and then falter in our faith in the next? These are the same guys that just earlier told him that God was going to take Elijah away from him that day, now they're all, "Well, maybe he's in the hills, or disoriented somewhere in some valley." Kind of an interesting thing to think about God isn't it, that he just tossed him up in the air and then put him somewhere in a helpless state that he's all-alone in. But sometimes God's Word is so plain, but then we doubt, they badgered him so long that he began to falter himself, like he'd left his master out there all alone. He knew in his heart that he went to be with the Lord, but finally he said, "Fine, go look!" Then they came back all, "I guess what God said was true..." Elisha said, "I tried to tell you." God's Word will always prove true, at times our faith tends to falter, but God's Word always remains true, if God says it, He'll do it.

#### Vs19-22

They come to Elisha and they say, "Man this is a great place to live, but the water is contaminated and it kills everything it comes in contact with, we can't drink it, use it for our cattle or farmland or anything else." "Get me a new bowl, put salt in it." Elisha finds the source, casts in the salt and speaks the word of the Lord, "I have healed this water, from it there shall be no more death, no more barrenness." and Notice that till *this day* the water remains healed, it was a permanent work. Here's the gist, God's purifying work of grace in you, is eternal. Water in and of its self is good, but when contaminants get into it, it defiles it. Now the bible speaks of the Word of God as water, and in and of its self its pure, but when impurities are added into our lives along with the word it pollutes the word so that it's unfruitful in our lives. Remember the parable of the soils, there was one soil that the seed of God's Word was sown into and Jesus spoke of it being choked out by thorns, and the explanation was that the word goes into the human heart just fine, (in that case) but the cares of this world, the desire for riches and other things enter into the mix and choke the word out so that it becomes unfruitful.

There was nothing wrong with the word, but the additives corrupted it, carnality, the desire for riches, and other things that took priority over the word that made it unfruitful. And if we desire the water to be healed so that we're fruitful once again, the impurities need to be eliminated. Elijah went to the source, which kind of takes us back to the foreskin of our hearts. Salt speak of that purifying, preserving affect. Remember Jesus said, "*You are the salt of the earth;*" Matt 5:13 and Again, "*Have salt in yourselves,*" Mark 9:50 In this illustration Elisha is the new, never before used vessel whom God is pouring forth the preserving/purifying effects of salt from.

Today you're that vessel, if anyone be in Christ he is a *new* creation, and God wants to pour forth salt from you to bring purity into the otherwise barren and fruitless world we live in. The bible says, "*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt,*" Col 4:6 God wants to use your life to bring healing to a hurt and dying world.

Vs23-25

What can I say? I guess those smart mouth punks shouldn't have disengaged their brain before they engaged their mouths. ;0) But it might make you feel a bit better to know that the word youths, would probably be better translated young men. It's the same word that used of Joshua when he was serving Moses, Joseph when he was 30, of the young men who rescued Rahab the harlot before Joshua took the city, and over and over again its translated young men. So don't think these are 7-8yr old boys. These are young guys fully accountable for what they're doing. And what they're doing is ridiculing the prophet of God and all he stands for, this is an offense if not blasphemy towards God. And the fact that these bears mauled 42 of them (Which is doesn't say if they were killed or not, but they were mauled) speaks to the fact that there may've been quite a little uprising that had banded together against Elisha. He was probably in fear for his life. Did he have a bald head? Who knows, they probably didn't know if he did or not, they were insulting him, disdain and belittling him and were probably quite hostile in their inflections towards him. "Why don't you get out of here like you say Elijah did? Just leave us alone." and Its like they're scorning him as an outcast. The bible has no issue with baldness, but the law required lepers to shave their head when leprosy was on their head and they were outcasts of society and though biblically there was no problem with baldness culturally it was looked down on.

But the point here is that to come against God, and reject the message of the Word of God is to bring unbearable condemnation and wrath upon yourself.

So the transition is made, Elijah is gone for the time being, but the Lord God of Elijah is still at work and Elisha is now the premier prophet in Israel.