

## *“The Prophet Elisha”*

### **A Walk Through the Old Testament - Class 16**

Various Scriptures

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**Jeff:** Our gracious and great heavenly Father, we thank You and praise You for who You are and for having revealed Yourself to us in the Son. We're thankful for Him, that He came to exegete You, the Father, to us, and that with the help of the Holy Spirit who now resides in all believers, that One who has opened our eyes to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and brings glory and honor to Him. Father, we thank You for who You are. You are the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And we rejoice in You and are so thankful that You came to redeem us when we were yet Your enemies. Father, as we gather here now we are mindful of the fact that we are here under Your word, which is the best place to be. We thank You that our lives are lived under Your authority. And we ask and pray that You will continue to use this Word of yours to shape our lives, and not only to shape our lives but those with whom we come into contact on a daily basis.

And Father, that brings our families to mind, especially in light of Thanksgiving. We are so thankful for the people that You've put in our lives, as we're thankful for the way in which You've made them a blessing to us and us to them. And Father, we think especially of our children and our grandchildren. We think of their lives and ask that You will unite them to Yourself. We pray that You'll draw them into a relationship with you. And if they are in that relationship, we pray that You will strengthen the cord. And Lord, we ask that they will grow strong in the Lord. Father, we pray that You'll use us in that process.

Lord, we also think about those close to us, and we think about the situations that they are dealing with. We think about Paul's mother Leah. Lord, we certainly ask on her behalf. We pray that you'll make her well. We pray that she'll be able to have mobility, and that she'll be able to enjoy the life that she lived before the stroke. We also pray for Kevin's sister Marianne. Our hearts are really heavy to think about the situation. And we do pray that you would bring about a remedy to it. We know that it may be and that it may not be through doctors. We know that You can do all things through whatever means You choose, and so we pray for that. But we also realize that our plans are not Your plans. So we pray that You'll bring us contentment through whatever providences come our way. We pray that for Marianne. We certainly pray that for Kevin's wife's friend Donna. And Father, we just pray that You'll bless her, and we pray that You'll strengthen her. And Father, we pray for healing on her behalf as well.

Father, we certainly pray for Bruce, and we're thankful for his life and for the way in which You've used him over the years. We pray that You would continue to use Him. We pray that he would be able to battle the Parkinson's. We certainly pray that You would take it away. We know that You're able to do that. Lord, we pray that You'd make him useful in the lives of others, especially in the Bible study that he enjoys teaching. And we pray, Father, that You would strengthen his relationship to his wife. And Lord, bless them.

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And Lord, we certainly pray for our brother Sig and especially for his wife Nancy. We're thankful for the chemo being over, and look forward to her healing. We look forward to the CAT scan and we pray for the result of that. We pray, Father, that You would remove the cancer; that is what we pray. But Lord, we also ask that You would use whatever means You desire. And if You desire to use surgery, we humbly submit to it. But Lord, what we really pray for is for Sig and Nancy. Whatever the outcome of the cancer, we pray for them to have contentment as they walk with You. And we pray for them to find their greatest joy in you despite outward circumstances. And Father, as they walk through this time of great humiliation, help them to remember that they, just like us, are no better than the Master who walked the path of humiliation Himself. Father, we pray that You'll bring healing. But we pray most of all that You'll bring a sense of Your presence to their lives throughout this. And Father, we pray that You will bless our study. And Lord, as we give ourselves over to You and Your word, we pray that You'll have Your way with us. And we pray that You'll be at work in us. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Okay. So let's get to work this morning. And you know, I figured that attendance is probably going to be low because it's the day after a holiday. And so, brave men as you are, I decided that why should I talk about Judah and Israel? *(Laughter)* You've been so faithful to come. *(Laughter)* And I thought, you know, that surely we can stay within the parameters of our walk through the Old Testament and do something enjoyable. And then I thought to myself, you know, in the providence of God we are right at the place where we could look at the life of Elisha. And so I thought to myself, let's just take a detour. And instead of looking at the divided kingdom, let's look at a prophet who was alive during the divided kingdom, and let's look at his life.

And I have a reason for looking at his life. And so I decided that I'd give you 17 reasons! No, I'm just kidding! *(Laughter)* I won't do that. But I thought we would do this today. I thought we would look at an introduction, and I'll tell you why we'll look at Elisha's life. We're going to look at several stories from his life. We're going to look at *one with a strange ending, an example of being the church under age, Naaman the leper and the lesson that we learn, to watch and pray*, and then *the God who cares*. We're going to learn about these things today as we look at the life of this prophet.

Now why in the world would I want to do this? Well, the introduction is going to take care of some of that. So let's think about that for a minute.

When we look at the Bible, one of the things that we realize is that there are types. There are types in the Bible. And when you think of a type, you really ought to think of a form. And you ought to think about that form giving us something of a shadow of what the actual thing will look like.

So for instance, you know, I don't know about you. But about this time of year Christmas begins to come into play. And I very much like Christmas cookies coming into play. So one of the things that I know is happening every time this time of year comes around is that on the counter in my mom's house there will be these types of these forms—forms of bulbs and forms of trees—and they're like a type. And the dough will go

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inside the type. And it will get popped out of there, and then the actual antitype will be there, and it's the cookie itself. *(Laughter)* Okay, and so this is the idea of types and their fulfillment, which are called antitypes.

Well, Elijah and Elisha are types. And what's really very interesting is that their whole ministry is a type of the coming of Christ. And if you sort of lay Elijah and Elisha sown over top of the New Testament, what you find is that Elijah is very much like John the Baptist. In fact, if you'll remember, Jesus says that his is *“the Elijah who was to come.”* And Jesus is very much like Elisha. Elisha is much greater than Elijah in terms of what he does and how he's prefiguring Christ. And so there's a sense in which Elijah and Elisha prefigure John the Baptist and Christ. And so I won't say much more than that.

But let me also say that I think it's very interesting when you think about what's happening in the context of the Old Testament. You have to ask yourself why Elijah crossed the Jordan? Remember when he makes his way to the Jordan and crosses it and then the chariots come to get him? Do you remember why he crosses the Jordan? Because he wanted to get to the other side. *(Laughter)* I couldn't resist that. I just couldn't resist it!

**Don Nemit:** You and Don. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Sorry, Don. *(Laughter and sighs)*

**Corky Semler:** Come on! I got up for this? *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** All right, all right! Okay, so he crosses the Jordan River. And obviously he's taken up in his chariot. Why did he cross? Well, we know the answer to that when we come to Elisha, because Elisha parts the Jordan and then goes to Jericho. And what does that remind you of? The Conquest. And so what we find is that there's a sense in which we find a reenactment of the conquest of Canaan with Elisha.

Now I'm not going to spend a lot of time here. But that ought to bring back for us memories of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus in the Jordan River, and then Jesus going into the land and beginning to bring His conquest. And so I think there are significant ties between the life of Elijah and Elisha and the life of Jesus. And so I think that there's a really neat story here. I also want to bring this into play for a minute.

If you remember right, do you remember what happens with Jericho? Jericho is destroyed. Do you remember that Jericho is destroyed? But this is what the men of Jericho say to Elisha. *“Behold, now the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees. But the water is bad and the land is unfruitful.”* In other words, that word *unfruitful* means “causes barrenness.” The water is bad, and in the land there is barrenness.

Now why is that? Well, I told you that Jericho was destroyed. But you're saying to me, “Well, wait a minute. Jericho is here, and the elders of Jericho have come to Elisha and talked to him about the water of the land.”

Well, go back in your memory to Joshua chapter 6 verse 26. And if you want to go back to that text you can do that with me. In Joshua 6:26 this is what it says. *“Joshua laid an oath on them at that time, saying, ‘Cursed before the LORD be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundations, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates.’”*

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Now do you remember what happens? Go to 1 Kings chapter 16. In verses 33 and 34 this is what it says. *“And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before Him. In the days of Hiel of Bethel he built Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.”*

So what we find is, we find that the city of Jericho is under a curse. And it’s not surprising that when Elisha comes, the elders come out to him and say, “The water is bad and it causes barrenness.”

Now regardless of how we might interpret that, we need to understand that here Elisha crosses the Jordan in a dramatic way, like the Conquest. He comes into that first city that is conquered in the Conquest and was decimated. And a curse is on it and anyone who rebuilds. And the elders come to him and say, “Basically we’re under a curse.”

And what does Elisha do? He lifts the curse. And I don’t know about you, but just in that first portion of Elisha’s ministry, what you find is a beautiful picture of Christ’s conquest and what He came to do, lifting the curse of sin from us. And so I think that’s basically what we’re supposed to see, this idea of the lifting of the curse. So there’s a Biblical theology here that I think you can’t miss when you look at Elijah and Elisha.

But what I want to do is just to walk through some stories. Now I’ve selected a lot of stories. But the stories that I’ve selected are stories that help us to see that the ideas that are in the New Testament are not in the New Testament alone, but are in the Old Testament. And this is something that shouldn’t surprise us because, you remember, if I were to go up and put the covenants on the board, and I would put Noah on the board and I’d say, “This is the covenant of preservation,” and then Abraham on the board, and Abraham is the very first character, if you will, to come out of the stage of redemption which is now promised to be preserved. And then I would draw a line all the way up to Jesus and the consummation. And I’d say that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the exfoliations of the covenant of grace. And if I were to say to you, “How was Abraham saved?”, you would say to me, “He was a man of faith.” Galatians 3:6. He was a man of faith; he was saved by faith.

And I would say to you, “How is the New testament believer saved?” And you’d say, “By faith,” right?

The idea is that there is a thread that runs through all of the exfoliations of the covenant of grace that are simply this. We are saved by the promise of the Mediator through faith. And that’s the covenant of grace that works itself out.

So what I want you to see is that the ideas that are in the New Testament are embedded in the Old Testament. We see that in stories like the ones we’re going to see this morning.

So I want to look first of all at *a story with a strange ending*. And you can obviously feel free to interrupt me at any time if you have questions and comments along the way. But let’s look at this story first.

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First of all, *the situation*. You have to remember that this is after Ahab, just to contextualize it, and it's before Ahaziah. And it was in that time. Ahaziah is the son of Ahab. It was in that time that Moab rebels.

Now Moab was to the east of the Jordan River. And it was one of those satellite countries that was under the control of Israel for a time. And it rebels.

Now Jehoram reigns. And Jehoram is the brother of Ahaziah. When Ahaziah dies, Jehoram comes to power in the North, in Israel. Jehoshaphat, remember, is the king in the South. And remember, we talked a lot about Jehoshaphat the last time we were together. Jehoshaphat is a relatively good king in the South. And remember, he's related to the house of Omri, of which Jehoram is a part, through marriage. In fact, you'll remember that Jehoram's sister is Jehoshaphat's daughter-in-law, okay?

**Jim Hamilton:** We have to remember that.

**Jeff:** Yes, remember that. So now Jehoshaphat is visiting with Jehoram. And Jehoram says, “Look, Moab has rebelled. Now let's go and unite our forces and bring them under submission. It will help you. It will help me in the long run if the people see a united front of Israel and Judah, even if we're a divided kingdom.”

And Jehoshaphat was invited to do the same exact thing under Ahab. Remember Ahab? This was the friend you have where Ahab says, “Hey, let's go up and take Raimoth-Gilead.”

And Jehoshaphat says, “Well, is there a prophet in the land?” Remember that Micaiah finally comes forward and says, “You're going to die.” And Ahab says, “See, I told you! He never prophesies any good about me!”

And he says, “You know, let's do it anyway. Hey, I have a great idea. You dress like me!” (*Laughter*) Any way, what is Jehoshaphat doing? He's a guy who is devoted to the Lord. But his heart is always inclined to go in the direction to help, and sometimes to help not-so-good people.

And in this case Jehoshaphat responds to Jehoram and he says, “*I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.*” And you want to say, “Man, what is the matter with this guy again?”, you know?

**Transcriber's Note:** Jeff draws a map.

**Jeff:** Now just so you have a mental picture, here's the North, here's the South. This is Jehoram's territory. This is Jehoshaphat's territory. Moab is over here. They decide to go south and up through Moab to get to Edom. Now they go up through Edom to get to Moab. They go up through Edom and they're out of water. And so Jehoshaphat says what's characteristic of Jehoshaphat. “Is there a prophet we can consult about this?”

And you know, after the fact he's kind of marching everybody out. Now he says, “Is there a prophet?” And somebody says, “Well, yes. Elisha is in Shaphat.”

And this is what he says. “*The word of the LORD is with him.*” That's what he says. Jehoshaphat knows that the word of the Lord is with Elisha the prophet. And so they go and they consult Elisha the prophet.

Elisha the prophet is awesome. I should say this to you. They probably go up through the South because they don't want Edom to rebel. So they bring the king of Edom with them. So now there's the king of the North, the king of the south, and there's the king of

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Edom. And so these three kings go and they meet with Elisha. And Elisha says to Jehoram, *“What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your fathers, or again to the prophets of your mother.”*

Who is his mother? Jezebel. So his father and mother are Ahab and Jezebel. And to who is he telling them to go? “You go and consult the prophets of Baal. They’ll tell you what to do.” Don’t you love that? I mean, this guy is so big that you can’t put him in your pocket, right? He is not willing to be placed into this king’s pocket. He doesn’t care. I love that!

Anyway, he has regard for Jehoshaphat. “You know what? I’m going to tell you what you ought to do. I’m going to tell you what the Lord’s word is, but only because I have regard for Jehoshaphat.”

And so he prophesies. And he prophesies that there is going to be water. And he prophesies that there is going to be a victory, and so on. And then he says, “This is a light thing for the Lord to do,”. right?

There’s a strange ending to this story. Now the story is that they dig ditches and water flows into the ditches. And Moab comes out in the morning and looks. And they think, “Hey, these three kings went at each other’s throats. Why? Because the water looks red like blood.” And they think that there has been a vast slaughter among these three kings. And so they go running in to pillage and plunder. And they get their eyes wide open when they realize that it’s water. And these three kings descend upon them and crush them.

Now here’s the deal. I’ve got to read this to you. This is so strange. Look at this. 2 Kings chapter 3, verses 26-27. *“When the king of Moab saw that the battle was going against him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through the office of the king of Edom, but they could not. Then he took his oldest son who was to reign in his place, and offered him for a burnt offering on the wall. And there came great wrath against Israel. And they withdrew from him, and returned to their own land.”*

Isn’t that strange? The king of Moab tries to break through the Edomites. He can’t do it. They’re coming against him. So he takes his oldest son who is going to reign in his place and sacrifices him. And Israel has great wrath coming upon it immediately.

Now I don’t know about you, but I’ll tell you what I think about this. This is one of those things where I’m speculating, okay? And you’re going to find just as many speculations, or commentaries without any speculations as you can find with them. I think that what you have here is a reverse pagan gospel. In what sense? What you find here is that you find a sort of gospel kind of stuff, don’t you? You find the king, the pagan king, whose name means “savior” or “deliverer,” taking his son and sacrificing him to Chemosh so that Chemosh’s wrath will be averted. That has gospel-like overtones to it.

The question is why does wrath come upon Israel, such that they flee? And I’ll tell you what I think. I can only speculate at this point. But I think that the Israelites see the faith of the king of Moab. And instead of having faith in their God and in the sacrifices that their God, Yahweh, has provided, which take away wrath, they see this pagan gospel and wrath comes upon them instead. And they flee in the face of a pagan gospel.

That’s nothing new. I’m open to hear what you think of that. But in my mind this is one of those things that’s a crazy story that has gospel hints to it. But it actually works

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against Israel because at this point Israel is not believing in the gospel. So when they're confronted with a gospel like this, they encounter wrath. Bishop, you look like you're in deep thought.

**Bishop Rodgers:** It seems strange that God in any way would even support this terrible sin of child sacrifice. I'm totally perplexed.

**Brave Man:** Moab was Lot's incestuous son. And even in Isaiah God expresses remorse about having to judge Moab at that time. I don't think he could ever consent to it.

**Jeff:** Yes. I'm not sure what. But the interesting thing is this. Here's another interesting thing that you have to keep in mind. The sacrifice of the king's son is not efficacious for Moab. It is in one sense; Israel flees. But it's not efficacious for them in the most serious sense. But what happens is that the wrath of God comes upon Israel. It's not necessarily removed from Moab, except for the attack itself. But the wrath of God remains upon them in terms of the spiritual judgment.

**Corky:** I'm ignorant of this story; I'm not familiar with it. But it sounds like Israel is being punished for their lack of faith.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Corky:** That's pure and simple. They don't have enough faith to see through this. And so call it a type. The false type overrides their lack of faith. That sounds to me like that's what's going on.

**Bishop Rodgers:** Was Israel involved at that time in child sacrifice?

**Jeff:** Well, I think that was probably the case, because it talks about the Asherah. And the Asherahs were really bad—lots of homosexuality, and I do think there was sacrifice of children. I think the Asherah is often singled out as really bad.

**Kirk Ellerbusch:** Did you say that when they approached Elisha that Elisha said he would win, or no?

**Jeff:** Yes. The Lord was going to fill the trenches and provide the water for them, and also give them victory over the Moabites. Well, now that I'm saying that, I'm wondering if I've overstepped the prediction. The prediction is in 16. *“Thus says the LORD: ‘I will make this dry stream a bed full of pools.’ For thus says the LORD: ‘You shall not see wind or rain, but the stream shall be filled with water so that you shall drink, you, your livestock and your animals.’”* And also, *“This is a light thing in the sight of the LORD. He will also give the Moabites into your hand, and you shall attack every fortified city and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop up all springs of water, and ruin every good piece of land with stones.”*

*“The next morning, about the time of the sacrifice, behold, water came from the direction of Edom. So the country was filled with water.”* But look at verse 25. *“And they overthrew the cities. And on every good piece of land every man threw a stone until it was covered. They stopped up every spring of water,”* and so on. And so there's a sense in which they were fulfilling the prophecy. But it was after the prophecy is fulfilled, when Moab is sort of crushed and defeated, that he offers his son, and Israel finally flees. So the prophecy does come to pass. But it looks as if that when Moab is on its last legs that they do have some relief. It's a strange story.

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**Bishop Rodgers:** It seems to me that if the prophecy has been fulfilled, which it has, that there’s still plenty of good reasons why the Lord should have judged Israel.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Bishop Rodgers:** They don’t get to rejoice in the victory. They have to go home.

**Jeff:** They do. It’s a striking thing as to what sense home was.

**Bishop Rodgers:** That wasn’t declared yet.

**Jeff:** Yes. Bisha is the king of Moab. And like I said, that means “deliverer” or “savior.”

**Bishop Rodgers:** Very strange.

**Jeff:** Very strange. Okay, so in light of that I picked up some stories that give an example of faith. So I’m going to balance the faithlessness of Israel with examples of faith. And they’re obviously small examples.

You know how it was with Elijah when he meets up with the woman in the country of Baal. She’s about ready to die, and he says, “Go make me some bread.” And she does, and the flour never ends, and so on. So there are these examples, small examples of faithfulness throughout the land.

And the very first one is *the widow’s oil*. Now do you remember this? The widow doesn’t have any oil. She is the widow of one of the prophets. And she’s in debt. Remember that the collectors are going to come and take away her son. She’s in a bad way.

She goes to Elisha and he says to her, “Go collect some containers. And pour the oil that you have into as many containers as you can get.” And he says, “And don’t get a few,” right? And so she pours the oil into all the containers she has. She goes and sells the oil. And then she’s able to buy herself out of debt.

Now what’s the point of this? I think the point of this is understood when you contrast it with the king. Go with me to 2 Kings 13. This is when Elisha is on his deathbed. Elisha is on his deathbed. And the king of Israel comes to him. And this is what happens in verse 14. *“Now when Elisha had fallen sick with illness of which he was to die, Joash king of Israel went down to him and wept before him, crying, ‘My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!’”*

You know, that was just really kissing up, because that’s what Elisha said when Elijah went up into the heavens. And so I think he’s just trying to get into his good graces. And Elisha said to him, “Take a bow and arrow.” So he took the bow and arrow. *“And he said, ‘Draw the bow,’ and he drew it. And he laid his hand on the king’s hand. And he said, ‘Open the window eastward.’ And then he opened it. And then Elisha said, ‘Shoot!’ And he shot. ‘The Lord’s arrow of victory over Syria, for you shall fight the Syrians in Aphek until you have made an end of them.’”*

Now here’s the important part. *“And he said, ‘Take the arrows.’ And he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, ‘Strike the ground with them.’ And he struck three times and stopped.*

*“Then the man of God was angry with him. ‘You should have struck five or six times. Then you would have struck down Syria until you had made an end of it. But now you will strike down Syria only three times.’”*



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Now I want you to contrast that story with the one we just heard about the widow. The widow’s faith is great. You know, the widow goes out and collects as many jars as she can, and pours and pours and pours and pours and pours and pours and pours. And she is able to sell what she has to get out of debt. And the king of Israel, he’s just going through the motions, taking the arrow and striking the ground. And you see the lack of faith.

Even if we don’t understand all the import of striking the arrows and so on, they did. And you see the lack of faith on the part of the king versus the widow. And I think that’s the point of it. We’re supposed to reason with memory, so that when we read the story of the widow, we have her in mind by the time we get to the story of the king and the arrows. And we say to ourselves, “The widow had more faith than did the king at this point.”

So the widow becomes an example, but also the Shunamite woman. Remember the Shunamite woman? Elisha passes by her house. In verse 9 she perceives that he’s a man of God. Elisha says, “She has cared for us.” It’s interesting. My text says, “She is troubled after us.” In verse 13 that word can be translated *fear*. “She has a respect for us, such that she has troubled herself and cared for us so that’s she has rendered service to us.”

I think I was alluding this to you the last time I was with you. I want you to imagine this. Here’s the door, right? And Elisha is in the room. And Gehazi is standing at the door. And the Shunamite woman is standing on the other side of the door. And Elisha says to Gehazi, “*What shall we do for the woman?*” So he’s talking to her through his servant. It’s really interesting. He does the same thing to Naaman the leper. I think that Elisha must have been an eccentric sort of man.

But anyway, Elisha says to Gehazi, “What shall we do?” And Gehazi says, “Well, she doesn’t have a son.”

And so Elisha says, “Well, let’s ask the Lord for a son.”

And the woman says, “No no no, you’ve got to be kidding.” Then she had a son. And the next thing you know, the son is born. And you jump to the son after he’s a child, and he’s in the field of his father. “*My head, my head!*” Remember this? And he goes into the son and he dies.

And the Shunamite woman, she doesn’t say anything. She just packs up and she goes to Mount Carmel. And that’s a five- or six-hour trip from where she is. But she goes to Mount Carmel. And Gehazi comes to her. And she basically breaks through Gehazi and goes right to the prophet. And the prophet says, “Let her come to me. The Lord hasn’t shown me what the problem is.” And she tells him.

Remember that he sends Gehazi ahead with his staff, but the woman stays with him. They go back and he goes in. And he stretches himself out on the boy. And the Lord gives him the boy’s life. And so there’s a resurrection. And one of the wonderful things is that in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, we read that “*some received back their dead by resurrection.*” This is through the ministry of Elisha.

And so what do we see in the ministry of Elisha? We see the ministry of resurrection, which is again making us mindful of the Lord Himself and His ministry, and the hope of the resurrection that we have in Him. So you see this in these kinds of things.

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So *the church under age*. Let me just go through this one. This is the interesting story about the school of the prophets. They are very poor. And remember, these are seminary students. There’s a seminary out here in the wilderness. (*Laughter*) And these poor seminary students in the school of the prophets, they make stew. Somebody collects some bad veggies and throws them into the pot. There’s death in the pot. And Elisha is able to redeem the stew. And I think that the idea is preservation.

And then, when you think about the next story, it’s about the multiplication of the loaves. So I think that what you have in these two stories is both the preservation of the school of the prophets and the multiplication of the loaves, and thereby the multiplication of the prophets. And I think that what you find is that in the story God through the prophet Elisha is preserving his church through its head, through what would be the school of the prophets.

And I think you find a parallel when you get into the New Testament. The parallel is that Christ is the Head of the church. And He sends out His apostles and prophets into the church. And He is preserving and multiplying His church by doing so. Again, I think that it’s a parallel of what you see in the life of Christ. That’s a really neat sort of thing. The multiplication of loaves, who does that remind you of? That reminds you obviously of Jesus. Any questions about that? No?

*Naaman the leper*. I want you to think about this. Naaman is a general of the Syrian army. Remember that the Syrians were always giving Israel trouble. And they were up in the North. And they would come down and they would raid Israel in the North. And on one of these raids they picked up a little girl. And the little girl knows that Naaman has leprosy. And she says to the mistress of the house, “Boy, if he were back in Israel, there’s a prophet who can heal him back there.”

Now I want you to think about that from a couple of different angles for just a minute. First of all, if you were this little girl who had been abducted from your home, probably by the raid of this general himself, would you say, “Wow! I wish he were healed?” Or would you say to yourself, “Good! He’s getting what he deserves!” Right? I mean, that’s what you’d be prone to think. But this little girl does exactly the opposite. This little girl basically breathes out the gospel. “If he were in Israel, he’d be saved,” that sort of thing.

You know, it’s interesting. Martin Luther, in a letter that he wrote, (and I don’t know if it’s called “Against the Turks,”) but it’s about that situation where there is impending war. And one of the things he says in that letter to the German people is “to catechize our children, because if they get taken, they’ll at least have the gospel with them to spread when they’re in these warring nations.” And every time I’ve read that, that just gripped my heart. Luther was reminding his people to give the gospel to our children so that if they’re abducted from us, they can carry the gospel to other places. That’s amazing to me; it’s just amazing. And you know, you think about Luther and the love that he had for his children.

So the little girl is striking. The mistress goes to her husband and says, “There is a prophet in Israel who can heal you.” So he goes to the king of Syria. The king of Syria sends a letter to the king of Israel. And the king of Israel says, “This guy is trying to pick

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a fight with me!” (*Laughter*) Anyway, Elisha hears about it and says, “Tell him to come to me and see if there’s a prophet in the land.”

And the question I have for you is what did Naaman hear? You remember the story. He told him to go and wash in the river. “Go and wash in the Jordan River.”

And Naaman says, “You know, there are two other rivers back home that are cleaner than this one.”

What did Naaman hear? This is sort of a trick question. But it gets at the heart of something that I think is really important for us in understanding the gospel. Naaman heard “Go and do.” He didn’t hear what Elisha said, which was “Go and be cleansed.”

That’s a huge difference. And I think that what Naaman heard was the covenant of works—go and do. And what he didn’t hear was the covenant of grace, and that is go and be cleansed; go and be made whole and cleansed.

And so he is eventually cleansed. And I think it’s an example of hearing combined with faith. It’s a great example. Any questions? No?

Well, I’ve got a couple more. I’ll run through them quickly. The first one is *watch and pray*. It’s that great story of the king of Syria. He says to all of his men, “Now I wish somebody would tell me who has been in my bedroom listening to all my talk and then taking it back to the king of Israel, because he seems to know every move I’m about to make. And his mentor would say, “No, king; there are no traitors in your midst. This is all about Elisha the prophet. Elisha the prophet knows what you’re going to do because God is telling him! And every time we make a move, we’re routed.”

And so what do they do? They say, “Well, where is this prophet?” And they find out that the prophet is in Dothan. And so they go down to Dothan and they surround the city.

Elisha gets up in the morning with his servant. Probably not Gehazi, because remember that at the end of the Naaman story Gehazi ends up getting leprosy himself. I’ll bring that around in just a second. But it’s probably a new servant. And Elisha needs to break him in. You know, here’s the servant saying, “What are we going to do? All these Syrians are surrounding the city!”

And Elisha prays to the Lord that his eyes would be opened. His eyes were opened and he sees the chariots of fire and the angels surrounding the Syrian army.

And so then what happens is that the servant’s eyes are opened. The Syrians are struck so that they’re blinded. Isn’t that an interesting contrast? And then they are led to the king of Israel. Remember what the king of Israel says. “Should I kill them all?”

And remember what Elisha says. Elisha says, “No! Don’t kill them! Feed them and send them home.”

And here’s the striking thing about this. Go with me to verse 23 of chapter 6. “*So he prepared for them a great feast. And when they had eaten and drunk, they sent him away. They went to their master.*” And the Syrians did not come down with raids in the land of Israel. And happily ever after. No. Look at verse 24. “*Afterward Ben-Hadad king of Assyria mustered his entire army and went up and besieged Samaria.*” No lasting peace, right? There was a time of peace, but no lasting peace.

It’s funny that you see the kindness of God exercised for the enemy of Israel. But you see the enemy of Israel mount a siege within one verse. And here again the point is that

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you see the kindness of God to the foreign nations. God is telling them, “*Love your enemies.*”

**Don Nemit:** What I see in here is God’s kindness to the kingdom of Syria. And they saw it as weakness. People outside of Christianity see Christians as weak.

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s true.

**Don:** They say, “We’ll take advantage,” but they don’t know what’s coming.

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s right. But you know, the great thing is that here in the Old Testament you see loving your neighbor, right?

Okay, *the God of grace.* Elisha counsels the Shunamite woman. He says to her, “There’s a famine coming in the land. You’ll need to go wherever you can go in order to survive.” So the Shunamite woman goes for seven years down to the land of Philistia. That’s a striking thing in and of itself, that she is given permission to go anywhere she chooses. And she goes to Philistia, the land of the Philistines.

So she does. She goes there. What’s great about this story is that she’s in that land seven years. Gehazi makes an appearance. Has Gehazi repented? I don’t know. But Gehazi is with the king of Israel. And the king of Israel says, “Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done.”

You can imagine this, can’t you? The king is sitting on his throne and Gehazi is sitting there. “Oh man, you should have been there! There was this time with the Shunamite woman, and she didn’t have any children. And Elisha prayed, and next thing you know, her belly’s big. And she has this son, and years later her boy dies.” And he says, “Well, Elisha went up into that place that the Shunamite woman had made for him in her own home. And the boy was on his bed. And he stretched himself out on that body,” which is interesting, the gospel in itself. He takes upon himself the uncleanness of the boy and gives the boy life, right? There’s the gospel. “And that boy came alive.”

And Gehazi looks up and he says, “You’re not going to believe this. There’s the Shunamite woman and the boy who was raised!”

Now why do I bring it up? I bring this story up because this is one of those wonderful stories that reminds us that God orchestrates all the events of life. It’s one of those stories where if we were the Shunamite woman we would be saying to ourselves, “What is going to become of my land, and how am I going to live after this famine is over?” That’s what she’s in front of the king for. She wants her land back. Somebody has taken her land. And she’s probably in Philistia. And she’s thinking, “How am I going to get the land back?”

She gets back from Philistia. And she goes to the king to try to get it back. Now all the while, she’s suffering. You know, she’s experiencing the difficulties of the famine. She gets back home and she experiences the difficulties of having her land taken away. And she has to go over the bureaucrats in order to get the land back.

And think about it. These are the kings that killed Naboth in order to get his vineyard. These are the kinds of people that she’s going to get her land from. And she goes. And she’s got all the worries that anyone would have. And God has orchestrated it such that here is Gehazi telling the king about her and her son the moment they walk in the door.

Now you say, “If God can do that, then why did He bring the famine on the land anyway, and drag them all out of the country and have to make them go through all this

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rigmarole to get the land back?” I don’t know, other than the fact that we walk in the humiliation of Christ now. And it’s for us to be glorified later. So we’re learning Christlikeness in His humiliation now.

But along the way God is at every step, bringing about good for His people. I don’t know about you, but that’s the kind of story I need over and over and over again. I’m guessing you do too.

But these are good gospel stories found right in the Old Testament, reminding us that the Old Testament and the New Testament are sown together with the seed of the gospel. Well, let us pray.

**Don Maurer:** Jeff?

**Jeff:** Oh yes, Don?

**Don:** It seems that Gehazi must have repented and been healed of his leprosy in order to appear before the king.

**Jeff:** Well, it seems that way, right? I mean, that’s kind of the implication I think, that here’s a guy that repented, healed himself. Not that he healed himself, but he is healed because he repents. It’s striking.

**Don Nemit:** My last comment. What you were just talking about with Gehazi to the king, it reminds me of the Upper Room. My mind is drawing a blank.

**Jeff:** The fall of Judas?

**Don:** No. It reminds me of Thomas. “Do you believe because you see?” But anyway, he proved it. He said, “There’s the son. If you didn’t believe in this miracle through Elisha, there’s the proof positive, believing what God has accomplished. And again we see that what God has done He’s going to do again with the printing press.

**Jeff:** You know, the interesting thing is that you can couple that story with a story. Think about the king himself. Couple that story with the story that Jesus tells about Lazarus, right? Remember the rich man and Dives. Dives dies and goes to the bosom of Abraham.

**Don Maurer:** You mean Lazarus goes to the bosom of—

**Jeff:** Lazarus goes to the bosom of Abraham and the rich man goes to Hades. And remember that the rich man says to Abraham, “Send someone back.”

And remember what Abraham says? “If they didn’t believe the Law and the Prophets, they won’t believe a resurrected man who goes back.” And you know, you think about that in relationship to the king. Here is the king seeing a resurrected man. But these northern kings didn’t believe the word of the Prophets. So it’s an interesting thing. When you hear Jesus tell the story of Abraham and the rich man and Lazarus and you lay it over this story, remember that in Israel there were no good kings. There were no believing kings. So here is the Law and the Prophets rejected in the North. Here is the resurrected man come before him, the king, and he doesn’t believe. It’s a great story. But that’s all it is, a great story. Interesting, isn’t it? Anyway, that’s it?

Okay, let’s pray. Father in heaven, thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given. Thank You for these gospel stories that are throughout the Old Testament, reminding us that it is a seamless story. Father, we pray that You’ll bless us and strengthen us by Your

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grace. And we pray that You'll do this for Christ's glory and our good. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. (*Applause*)