

Survey of the Bible 2Kings 2:14 – 9:1-37

Elijah has been taken bodily into heaven and now Elisha has been given the mantle of Elijah and his request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit has been granted by the Lord. The ministry that was given to Elijah by God has now been transferred to Elisha.

2 Kings 2:14 ¹⁴ He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over.

It's apparent that God is accomplishing this miracle of parting the waters to show Elisha that He is with him. And those who were watching at a distance would agree.

2 Kings 2:15 ¹⁵ Now when the sons of the prophets who *were* at Jericho opposite *him* saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

But then those sons of the prophets make an interesting observation about Elijah.

2 Kings 2:16 ¹⁶ They said to him, "Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men, please let them go and search for your master; perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley." And he said, "You shall not send."

Do any of these people think that Elijah was taken bodily into heaven?

No, like in the movie Star Trek, they believe that God has simply beamed Elijah to another location, probably to start his ministry somewhere else.

But how does Elisha respond?

2 Kings 2:16 And he said, "You shall not send."

Why does Elisha respond this way?

Because he knew where Elijah was taken to. He was there and saw the spectacle of the blazing chariot and horses and angels and Elijah being taken by a whirlwind into heaven.

But despite his protest the sons of the prophets insist that they look for Elijah and Elisha is hounded into complying.

2 Kings 2:17-18 ¹⁷ But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, "Send." They sent therefore fifty men; and they searched three days but did not find him. ¹⁸ They returned to him while he was staying at Jericho; and he said to them, "Did I not say to you, 'Do not go '?"

At this point it's apparent to these men that Elijah was not to be found and they immediately turn their attention back to Elisha as the man of God in Elijah's place.

2 Kings 2:19-22 ¹⁹ Then the men of the city said 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." ²⁰ He said, "Bring me a new jar, and put salt in it." So they brought *it* to him. ²¹ He went out to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'I have purified these waters; there shall not be from there death or unfruitfulness any longer.'" ²² So the waters have been purified to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.

Though Jericho is in close proximity to the Jordan River the waters in and around Jericho were bad enough to where the land was not able to bring forth the crops to sustain the people in an adequate way.

By the way, why might the waters around Jericho be bad?

Joshua 6:20 ²⁰ So the people shouted, and *priests* blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city.

Joshua 6:24-27 ²⁴ They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. ²⁵ However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. ²⁶ Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with *the loss of* his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with

the loss of his youngest son he shall set up its gates." ²⁷ So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.

So, there was a curse that was placed on Jericho by God that if any man rebuilt Jericho that his first born would be killed by God.

Well, was Jericho ever rebuilt, and if so was the curse enacted by God?

1 Kings 16:33-34 ³³ Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him. ³⁴ In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; he laid its foundations with the *loss of* Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the *loss of* his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

And it is exactly at this point that Elijah comes onto the scene to enact judgment on Ahab.

So, is it possible that the waters of Jericho have come under the curse of God as a reminder that God is still in control and His word is sure?

But God is also merciful and now that His prophet is on the scene He is about to reverse what could have been part of the curse placed on Jericho for the one who rebuilt it.

But there is another miracle at the hands of Elisha that is certainly controversial among some and it has to do with more of the ministry of judgment that was given to Elisha.

2 Kings 2:23-25 ²³ Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!" ²⁴ When he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore up forty-two lads of their number. ²⁵ He went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

Part of the controversy has to do with the people who were mocking Elisha and in particular how the KJV treats the Hebrew word *qatan*.

^{KJV} **2 Kings 2:23** And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.

Who wouldn't be upset if God destroyed little children for mocking Elisha. But the word *qatan* is not always used of children but of young people, in this case, young men. In fact, the NKJV acknowledges this.

^{NKJ} **2 Kings 2:23** Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!"

This is a better translation and the NIV uses the same word.

^{NIV} **2 Kings 2:23** From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some youths came out of the town and jeered at him. "Go on up, you baldhead!" they said. "Go on up, you baldhead!"

But even a youth designates that these young men were still young, probably in their early to mid teens. And as with many youth they do and say stupid things. In this case they mock the man of God with what might appear as a strange saying.

2 Kings 2:23 "Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!"

Commentators have been divided on what this saying might have implied, but what is not implied is its intent and that was to mock the prophet.

One explanation could have been that they were implying that he was not a man of God and that his ministry was unclean according to Jewish law.

Leviticus 13:40-44 ⁴⁰ "Now if a man loses the hair of his head, he is bald; he is clean. ⁴¹ "If his head becomes bald at the front and sides, he is bald on the forehead; he is clean. ⁴² "But if on the bald head or the bald forehead, there occurs a reddish-white infection, it is leprosy breaking out on his bald head or on his bald forehead. ⁴³ "Then the priest shall look at him; and if the swelling of the infection is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprosy in the skin of the body, ⁴⁴ he is a

leprous man, he is unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his infection is on his head.

And so, it might be possible that Elisha was in fact bald and these youth were suggesting that the reason was due to leprosy thus making him unclean, or he may not have been bald but they were implying that he should be bald due to his uncleanness. In any event these were words discrediting the ministry of Elisha and Elisha takes exception to this.

2 Kings 2:24-25 ²⁴ When he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore up forty-two lads of their number. ²⁵ He went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

According to verse 24 what was the least amount of young men that were involved in this incident?

42. And chances are there were many more. This was not a small band of youth but a mob. The other thing to note here is that verse 24 uses the Hebrew word *baqa* which means to tear or break open.

This word could certainly imply that the bears tore open and subsequently killed these 42, but if that were the case another word would have been more appropriate and that is the word *harag* which means to kill or slay.

And so, in all likelihood these youth were not necessarily killed but were wounded and taught an important lesson not to taunt or mock God's prophet.

From chapter 3 through chapter 13 of 2Kings we have the ministry of judgment of Elisha and the many wars and rulers that tried to war against God's people.

In chapter 3 we have King Jehoram, the son of Ahab.

2 Kings 3:1-3 ^{NAU} Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. ² He did evil in the sight of the LORD, though not like his father and his mother; for he put away the *sacred* pillar of Baal which his father had made. ³ Nevertheless, he clung to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.

The king of Moab decides to make war with Israel and here we have the irony of ironies as Ahab's son seeks Elisha the prophet for information. But as we'll see Elisha has little respect for him.

2 Kings 3:12-14 ¹² Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. ¹³ Now Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What do I have to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother." And the king of Israel said to him, "No, for the LORD has called these three kings *together* to give them into the hand of Moab." ¹⁴ Elisha said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you.

Elisha gives word to the three kings that God will in fact deliver the king of Moab into their hands.

2 Kings 3:26-27 ²⁶ When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him 700 men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not. ²⁷ Then he took his oldest son who was to reign in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall. And there came great wrath against Israel, and they departed from him and returned to their own land.

In chapter four we have two miracles that are very similar to the miracles that God caused at the hand of Elijah. One miracle involved a woman with a jar of oil and another woman whose son died.

In the case of Elijah the jar of oil sustained the woman and her son for the time of the famine. That same woman's son died and Elijah was used by God to bring him back alive.

Here in our text we have a woman who was the wife of one of the prophets of God. Her husband died and her creditors came to collect at his death and threatened to take her children as slaves if she didn't pay up.

2 Kings 4:2-7 ² Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil." ³ Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, *even* empty vessels; do not get a few." ⁴ "And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels, and you shall set aside what is full." ⁵ So she

went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing *the vessels* to her and she poured. ⁶ When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not one vessel more." And the oil stopped. ⁷ Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you *and* your sons can live on the rest."

In this same chapter we have an incident of a young man dying and the mother pleads for Elisha to go in to him.

2 Kings 4:32-36 ³² When Elisha came into the house, behold the lad was dead and laid on his bed. ³³ So he entered and shut the door behind them both and prayed to the LORD. ³⁴ And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands, and he stretched himself on him; and the flesh of the child became warm. ³⁵ Then he returned and walked in the house once back and forth, and went up and stretched himself on him; and the lad sneezed seven times and the lad opened his eyes. ³⁶ He called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Take up your son."

So, we see that God was performing miracles in a variety of ways in the O.T. that was a precursor to the healing ministry of the Son of God as Jesus Christ healed the sick and raised the dead.

There were many other miracles that were performed by God through the hand of Elisha as we go through 2Kings that are reminiscent of the ministry of Jesus as in the case of Elisha feeding a hundred men.

2 Kings 4:42-44 ⁴² Now a man came from Baal-shalishah, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And he said, "Give *them* to the people that they may eat." ⁴³ His attendant said, "What, will I set this before a hundred men?" But he said, "Give *them* to the people that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, "They shall eat and have *some* left over.'" ⁴⁴ So he set *it* before them, and they ate and had *some* left over, according to the word of the LORD.

Elisha was a prophet through the reigns of different rulers in Israel and Judah. But there was an incident during the life of Elisha that Elijah never got to see, and that is the death of Jezebel that was foretold by God during the ministry of Elijah.

1 Kings 21:21-26 ²¹ "Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel; ²² and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked *Me* to anger, and *because* you have made Israel sin. ²³ "Of Jezebel also has the LORD spoken, saying, "The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel." ²⁴ "The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven will eat." ²⁵ Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him. ²⁶ He acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the sons of Israel.

And God is faithful to keep His word and did in fact do so during the ministry of Elisha.

2 Kings 9:29-37 ²⁹ Now in the eleventh year of Joram, the son of Ahab, Ahaziah became king over Judah. ³⁰ When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard *of it*, and she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out the window. ³¹ As Jehu entered the gate, she said, "Is it well, Zimri, your master's murderer?" ³² Then he lifted up his face to the window and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" And two or three officials looked down at him. ³³ He said, "Throw her down." So they threw her down, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and he trampled her under foot. ³⁴ When he came in, he ate and drank; and he said, "See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter." ³⁵ They went to bury her, but they found nothing more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. ³⁶ Therefore they returned and told him. And he said, "This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; ³⁷ and the corpse of Jezebel will be as dung on the face of the field in the property of Jezreel, so they cannot say, "This is Jezebel.'""

God will be faithful to carry out His justice, either here and now or in His presence before His throne. No one will escape except for those who have been justified by the blood of His Son.

Romans 8:1 ^{NAU} Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:32-39 ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.