

ELIJAH'S LIFT-OFF

2 Kings 2:11-12 records Elijah's lift-off, "Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two."

We get the idea God sent an angelic limo to fetch Elijah, but what's going on is far more profound. Ezekiel 1 records the prophet's vision of God's throne, and he sees it sitting on the back of cherubim. In other words, it was a mobile throne.

Devotion Box - Digging Ditches

Elisha tells the soldiers to dig ditches... and the next day the Lord brings rain, and fills the ditches with water.

It was a life-saving miracle!...

And it's a lesson for us... Only God can send the rain, but we can dig a ditch.

God expects us to do our part - to have faith. If you say it's going to rain, but leave the house without an umbrella, you really don't believe what you say. Only God can meet our need, but we can anticipate His provision, and act in harmony.

If we're trusting the Lord to add to our church, then let's buy some new chairs. If you're believing God will take away your desire for alcohol, then clean out the refrigerator. If you're asking God to supply a mate, then don't be afraid to date. Don't pray for the rain if you're unwilling to dig a ditch to hold it when it comes.

God's miracle also confused the enemy. From Moab the sun glistened off the water, making it look like blood. The Moabites assumed the 3 kings had quarreled, and killed off each other. They charge into the camp... and right into the hands of the waiting armies.

Devotion Box - What Manner Of Spirit Are You?

In 2 Kings 1 Elijah fired the men Ahaziah sent to arrest him... literally, with fire from heaven.

Just in case you think this might be a good way to deal with your enemies, remember what Jesus told James and John. When the Samaritans refused to let Jesus pass through their territory, the hot-headed disciples want to duplicate Elijah's miracle. In Luke 9:54 they ask Jesus, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Eljah did?" Let's fry'em! Quite frankly, there have been times when I've wanted to fry an enemy...

But Jesus rebuked them, "You do not know what

We know the Ark of the Covenant was a type of God's throne, but 1 Chronicles 28:18 refers to the Ark as a "chariot." Psalm 18:10 tells us God "rode upon a cherub... and flew upon the wings of the wing..." I believe the fiery escort of Elijah to heaven was none other than the throne-chariot of God. God Himself revved up his throne and came personally to take Elijah to heaven.

There's one other Old Testament saint who never died. Gen. 5:24, "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him"

In the New Testament there's a group of people who will never die... *the church alive at the time of the rapture...* and I'm expecting to be one of them.

Devotion Box - An Unbearable Situation

2 Kings 2:23-24 tells us, "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! So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the LORD. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths."

It doesn't say they died. They may've got away with a few scrapes, but it taught them a lesson. Elisha would've made an interesting High School youth pastor.

Elisha couldn't *bear* the mockery of a bunch of teenagers, so he called out a *grizzly* judgment.

Unless you accuse Elisha of jump'n on some preschoolers, understand the same word here translated "youth" was used of Joseph at 39 years old. It refers to older youth. This was a gang of smart-aleck teenagers hassling the prophet.

The real lesson here is to be careful what you say about a person who's serving the Lord. When you roast the pastor over Sunday lunch, or laugh at the bald spot on top of his head, or make fun of his inability to tell a good joke... *watch out for the wild bears!* Hey, I've got a man-eating Labrador Retriever at home.

Seriously, no one is above legitimate criticism - just make sure your critique is over valid and biblical issues. Picky, trivial criticisms are *unbearable* to God.

manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

Elijah had a ministry of judgment, but 2 Corinthians 5 tells us we've been given the ministry of reconciliation. Our job is not to call down fire from heaven, but to extend God's mercy and forgiveness. Our ministry is reconciliation, not judgment.

The fire we need is the fire of the Holy Spirit - the fire that purifies, fuels, forges, and burns away cords of bondage. When God says, "*Well done good and faithful servant*" we want it to be a description of a godly life, not the degree to which a sinner's been cooked.

Bible Scan - 2 Kings 1-11

PASSING ON THE BATON

It's been said, "God's workmen come and go, but God's work continues." That's what we find in 2 Kings – a transition takes place. Elijah, the prophet, passes on the baton of ministry to his protégé, Elisha.

In chapter 2 Elijah's departure from this world is at hand, and God reveals in advance how it's going to happen. Verse 1 tells us God was "about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind..."

The only question is what will Elisha take up... will he return to his former business, or take up the ministry of Elijah? Elijah knew the rigors and hardships that come with ministry. Elisha too, was well aware of the sacrifices ministry required. For 10 years he'd served with Elijah.

Before he's taken to heaven, Elijah goes on a final stroll that's designed to test Elisha's calling to the ministry. He walks from Gilgal, to Bethel, to Jericho, to the Jordan River - and at each stop Elijah gives Elisha the option of staying behind... to bow out gracefully... to slip away, and return to his former occupation. But each time, Elisha reaffirms his commitment to press on.

When they reach the river, Elijah takes off his coat, and smacks it against the water. Miraculously, the waters part, and the 2 men walk across on dry ground.

In 2 Kings 2:9 Elijah says to his sidekick, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." This is a marvelous request. Elisha was well aware of his own inadequacy. He knew that *God's work* is always done by *God's Spirit*. In fact, he knew he would need twice the anointing of the Holy Spirit that Elijah had enjoyed. He asks for *a double-dip of Holy Spirit power*.

That's exactly what he gets! Elisha ministers 50 years – twice

as long as Elijah – and he does twice the number of miracles.

Elisha's double portion was contingent on him seeing Elijah's departure to heaven. It was necessary for the younger man to continue with Elijah to the very end. Only a man willing to walk in Elijah's footsteps was fit to wield his power.

This is a lesson for us. We all want the power demonstrated by godly men, but are we willing to cultivate the godliness needed to handle that power?

When Elijah is swept up into the chariot, his mantle falls to the ground. Elisha uses the cloak that performed Elijah's last miracle, to work his first. He returns to the Jordan, smacks the coat against the river, and shouts, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" And just as they did for Elijah, the waters part.

2 Kings 2:15 tells us the other prophets concluded, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And indeed it did!

There are many similarities between Elijah and Elisha, but there're also several notable differences. Elijah's miracles revealed God's fiery judgments - Elisha's conveyed God's grace and mercy. For example, Elijah's first miracle turned off the water. He prayed, and God shut the heavens. Elisha's first miracle healed the waters at Jericho.

Elijah's ministry resembled the warnings of John the Baptist. Elisha's ministry represented the mercies of Jesus...

It was the same spirit on Elisha that rested on Elijah, but the same Spirit worked in a different way through the two men. We'll find the same to be true of God's work in us. Each of us will have our own style and emphasis. You may be a *fiery Elijah*, or a *laid back Elisha* – but the same Holy Spirit will use both types.

A CLOSE CALL

Athaliah was Judah's Jezebel - a wicked gal.

When she realizes her son, Ahaziah, has been killed, she makes herself Queen over Judah. To solidify her claim to the throne, she kills all of Ahaziah's heirs (we're talking her own sons and grandsons). Only one of the boys escapes. Ahaziah's sister scoops up the baby Joash, and hides him in the temple.

This was a close call. God promised David a son would always sit on the throne. God's promise included an eternal king, or Messiah. This eventually was fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth. But if Athaliah had succeeded in ridding herself of all her Davidic competition, Jesus could never have been born.

Satan came within seconds of cutting off the Messianic line and ending any possibility of salvation. When we get to heaven, we need to look up Ahaziah's sister, *Jehosheba* and thank her. Literally, we owe her our salvation!

Devotion Box - Purification

In 2 Kings 4 Elisha saves dinner for a group of prophets, and teaches us a truth.

A poisonous herb is accidentally thrown into the stew. When someone samples it, he shouts, "There is death in the pot."

This is the problem with whole human race. Satan has interjected death into the pot. Sin has entered the world, and now contaminates every area of life.

What's interesting about this miracle is what Elisha doesn't do. He never tries to pick out the poison. Many people think this is the solution to sin. They put themselves through endless rounds of introspection and self-evaluation. They think it's up to them to sift

through the stew and find all the poisonous roots. The problem is, once the poison is interjected, it permeates the whole bowl.

Instead, I love what Elisha does. He simply adds some flour.

Rather than try to pick out all the poison, he trusts in an additive to neutralize and purify the pot.

This is Jesus' solution to sin. Start adding God's Word, walk in His love, interject the influence of the Holy Spirit, fellowship with other believers.

Fill your life with the good things of God, and it purges the poison. As Galatians 5:16 tells us, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

GENERAL NAAMAN

In chapter 5 a leper visits Elisha, but this was not your normal leper. This was the mighty Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army. This was the Norman Shwartzkopf of Syria – a noble man of distinction and honor. But since the day a leprosy spot appeared on his body he'd become a desperate man.

It just so happened his wife had a Hebrew servant who told him about Elisha.

Naaman immediately pursues the proper channels. He influences the king of Syria to send a letter and an expensive purse to the king of Israel. He thinks he can purchase the prophet's cooperation. Naaman approaches his healing like he would any diplomatic mission. He relies on his clout and connections.

But he soon discovers Elisha isn't impressed. In fact, when Naaman shows up on Elisha's doorstep, the prophet doesn't even invite him in or come out to greet him. He sends his servant with a message, verse 10, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean."

Verse 11 tells us, "But Naaman became furious." I'm sure he thought, "*Man, I've traveled 100 miles to see this prophet. The least he can do is get up off his tuff and walk outside of his own house to acknowledge that I'm here.*"

He tells us what he was thinking, "He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy." After all, Naaman was a VIP. Elisha should consider it an honor to have a hand in his cure. The healing of a General should be a photo-op for Elisha.

Naaman had it envisioned... Elisha would put on a performance worthy of the deed, then ask for Naaman to autograph a picture of them standing together.

Instead, Elisha doesn't even give him a personal audience, and, worse, he orders him to do a most humiliating deed. He's to go down to the Jordan river, and dip himself in the muddy water 7 times. Naaman answers, "Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. Naaman is about to learn a lesson. God's healing – His miracle comes not to the mighty, or worthy, or deserving – but to the humble – to people with faith.

Verse 13 tells us, "his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?' So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God;" I'll bet it was the most embarrassing moment of Neawman's life. Six times he dipped, and hated himself for doing so.

But when he came out of the water on the seventh time, he was suddenly healed.

LET JESUS GET "IN YOUR FACE"

There was a couple in Shunem who offered their hospitality to Elisha. They set up a little room for him so when he passed by he'd have a place to rest. Elisha wanted to reward the woman's graciousness, so he asks what he can do for her...

Gehazi, Elisha's servant, tells him that she's childless, so in verse 16 the prophet promises, "About this time next year you shall embrace a son." Despite her skepticism the Lord fulfills the promise.

The blessing, though, turns tragic. A few years later, the boy dies suddenly. The woman takes the corpse to Elisha's room, then runs to the prophet. The first thing you notice about the woman is her faith. When Elisha's servant greets her he asks, "Is it well with you?... with your husband? Is it well with the child?... she answered, 'It is well.'" This is what she said to her husband. She believed it would be.

At first, Elisha sends Gehazi to lay his staff on the boy. No life.

I love the comment the famous commentator, Matthew Henry, offers on the symbolism of Gehazi's action,

"I know not what to make of this..." It is a perplexing passage. All we can offer is speculation. But to me, the rod represents the law.

Legalism – the observance of rules and rituals – was impotent to help the boy. The staff failed to give life. 1 Corinthians 3:6 says, "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." The Law sentences us to death.

And if the staff represents the law, Elisha speaks of the One who came after the Law, Jesus Christ.

The dead are brought to life through identification with Christ. In Romans 6, Paul says when Christ died we died, with Him. We've been crucified with Christ.

When Elisha stretched out on the boy – mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands (you might say he was, "*in his face*") – it was as if the breath, or spirit, of Elisha was transferred to the corpse.

This is what happens when we get serious with Jesus. When we let Him get in our face, His life – His Spirit – becomes a part of us. His life is transferred to our dead spirit.

"SORRY, I LOST MY HEAD..."

In chapter 6, Elisha and the other prophets are falling trees for new construction when an iron ax-head flies off into the river. I'm sure you golfers can relate. You've been hacking and hacking, and, suddenly, an iron goes flying into the water...

In the 9th century BC, iron implements were very expensive and hard to replace. Besides, this was a borrowed ax, and it's got to be returned!

Elisha throws a stick into the river where the ax-head sunk, and miraculously the iron floats to the surface. Today, modern man has found a way to make iron float. Just go down to the harbor and watch the Navy vessels come in and out. If man can engineer it, then it shouldn't surprise us that God has His ways as well.

What Elisha does is perform a miracle of retrieval. He recovers what everyone thought was lost – and he does it by throwing a stick into the water.

Isn't this what God has done for us? God has used a roughed-out piece of wood – a stick, in the form of a cross – to redeem the world unto Himself.

Once, during the Easter season a little boy noticed all the crosses on the front lawn of various churches. He asked his mom "Why all the plus signs?"

The cross is a definite plus. Man was weighed down by sin – as heavy as iron. His retrieval seemed hopeless – spiritually, he was sunk – until God tossed in the stick. Add the cross of Jesus, and the solution for man's sin becomes crystal clear. The weight of sin is removed. The load becomes light. What was lost is found.

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - April 30, 2000

5/2 Tue-Women's Prayer, Praise & Potluck A.M. & Evening Ladies Bible Study meets at regular time 7:00 p.m.

5/3 Wed - High School Youth Meets. & Calvary Café Randy McCracken teaching - Three Last Words Music

5/5 Fri - 5/7 Sun - Singles Retreat Registration Deadline is today!

5/7 Sun Night - Missions 2000 Saltillo, Mexico Information Meeting

Upcoming Sundays

5/14 Sun - Adult Spring Party

5/28 Sun - Annual Spring Wing Fling!

Upcoming Events

6/5- 9th Pre- school VBS

Next Bible Scan - May 7 - 2 Kings 12-25

"Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." - 2 Kings 16:15-16

Bible Scan Memory Verse

EXPAND YOUR POSSIBILITIES

In 2 Kings 6 the Syrian king sends his army to arrest Elisha.

They arrive at night and circle the prophet's house. In the morning Elisha's servant walks outside and sees the army. He's frightened. He cries in verse 15, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

Elisha is so cool. He says, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then he prays, "LORD... open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

It was an angelic army. It was the Syrians who were surrounded, not Elisha. When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He told his disciples, "Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than 12 legions of angels?" Perhaps these were the 12 legions...

So often people say that faith is blind, but, to the contrary, the person of faith sees more than other people see. Secular eyes see only the physical and mental aspects of life - their sight is two-dimensional. But spiritual eyes see 3-D - they see into the spiritual realm. Faith enables us to see the whole picture. Guys, we need eyes of faith to see what *God is doing* in the situation.

In verse 18, when the Syrians move to arrest him, the Lord smites the soldiers with blindness. Now the tide turns. Elisha tells them he'll take 'em to the person they've been sent to arrest; instead he leads them to Samaria, Israel's capital. He leads the enemy right into his king's hands. Verse 20 is humorous, "the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and there they were, inside Samaria!" At Elisha's suggestion, the king of Israel treats 'em with kindness, and sends 'em home.

But the peace is short-lived. In verse 24, the Syrian king, lays siege to Samaria and cuts off the food supply. A desperate famine occurs inside the city gates. It was so bad that a donkey's head - usually considered inedible - was sold for 80 shekels. And a pint of dove droppings was selling for 5 shekels of silver. *Conditions were awful!*

In fact, people were so hungry they were boiling their babies for food. And the king blamed it all on Elisha. His judgment had caused the calamity. He vows in verse 31 to have the head of Elisha, and dispatches a man to arrest him.

When the king's messenger comes to Elisha, the prophet pins him

between the door and wall. He then makes an incredible promise. He tells him in 7:1, "Thus says the LORD: 'Tomorrow about this time a seah (or 8 gallons) of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.'

Imagine, 8 gallons of fine flour - 16 gallons of barley grain - for a single shekel - compared to 80 shekels for a donkey's head, and 5 shekels for dove do. How could God orchestrate such a dramatic turnaround in such a short time?

Verse 2 tells us, "An officer on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, "Look, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, could this thing be?" He scoffed at God's promise. *There was no way!* "His heart *wouldn't believe* what his mind *couldn't conceive*." This is the stumbling block to faith.

As long as they can see a way for God to work it out, people will believe, but what happens when the promise seems impossible? Are we going to limit God to only what the flesh can't figure and the mind can't muster? Guys, God is able to work outside the lines. Don't box Him in. He has means we know nothing about.

Elijah warns the scoffing servant that God will get the last laugh. He says, "you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it."

And that's exactly what happens.

One night, the Lord works a miracle, "For the LORD had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses - the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!" The Syrians thought they were under attack. They panicked and split. They left their tables full of food, and their supplies were all still intact.

The next day four lepers find out what's happened, and everyone comes out to plunder the tents of the Syrians. And guess what we're told in 7:16? "So a seah of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD."

And the man who scoffed at God's promise? He was in charge of the city gate. When the Samaritans heard there was food to be gathered, they stormed the gate and trampled the gatekeeper. Like Elisha said, *He saw it, but didn't eat it!*

If you limit God to what's humanly possible, or personally conceivable, you'll miss out... *Faith expands the possibilities.*