

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GOLDEN KINGDOM

A Study of First and Second Kings

Session 3 - The Dramatic Ministry of ELISHA

1 Last week we studied the late years of Elijah, prior to his being taken by chariot of fire
2 into God's presence. Before leaving, he blessed his protégé Elisha with the double
3 portion of his anointing. As we now enter II Kings, we will see some of the incredible
4 and supernatural ministry of this man Elisha.

5
6 Elijah and Elisha had crossed the Jordan going east into the country we now call Jordan.
7 Then it was the area of Gilead. How did they cross the Jordan?

8
9 2 Kings 2:6-8

10 **And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to**
11 **Jordan. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.**
12 **And they two went on. [7] And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood**
13 **to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. [8] And Elijah took his mantle, and**
14 **wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither,**
15 **so that they two went over on dry ground. [9] And it came to pass, when they**
16 **were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be**
17 **taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit**
18 **be upon me.**

19
20 What a huge request! How did it work out?

21
22 2 Kings 2:14

23 **And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and**
24 **said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters,**
25 **they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.**

26
27 Elijah had fulfilled Elisha's request, made obvious by the path across the Jordan.

THE MIRACLE OF THE WIDOW'S OIL

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31 You will notice as we cover several of the miracles through Elisha that they were all done
32 to either help people or to give God glory – never for Elisha's own benefit. This story is
33 one of the favorites in all God's word:

34
35 2 Kings 4:1-7

1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto
2 Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant
3 did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be
4 bondmen. [2] And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast
5 thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house,
6 save a pot of oil. [3] Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy
7 neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. [4] And when thou art come in,
8 thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all
9 those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. [5] So she went from him,
10 and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and
11 she poured out. [6] And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto
12 her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And
13 the oil stayed. [7] Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the
14 oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

15
16 This delightful story took place around 850 B.C., about a hundred years after the split
17 between Israel (the 10 northern tribes) and Judah (2 tribes - Benjamin and Judah) over the
18 excessive tax issue with then King Rehoboam (Solomon's son). Elisha's stories took
19 place in Israel. *Remember that in the several hundred year history of Israel, there*
20 *were 19 kings and all of them were BAD!* So both Elijah and Elisha faithfully
21 ministered to God under very repressive monarchies.

22
23 During that time, widows were often left to vend for themselves, if possible, and were
24 treated badly. When the widow in this story lost her husband, he left an unpaid debt and
25 the creditor had come to collect. If a borrower did not have personal property as
26 security, his own person and that of his dependents would serve as the security. So the
27 creditor in this case could legally take the widow's sons as payment.

28
29 How destitute she was! All she had in her possession was a pot oil, used for cooking.
30 Elisha understood from the laws of Moses that widows and fatherless children be cared
31 for. So he told her something that seems so preposterous: 2 Kings 4:2-5 **And Elisha**
32 **said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And**
33 **she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. [3] Then**
34 **he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels;**
35 **borrow not a few. [4] And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee**
36 **and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside**
37 **that which is full. [5] So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon**
38 **her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out.**

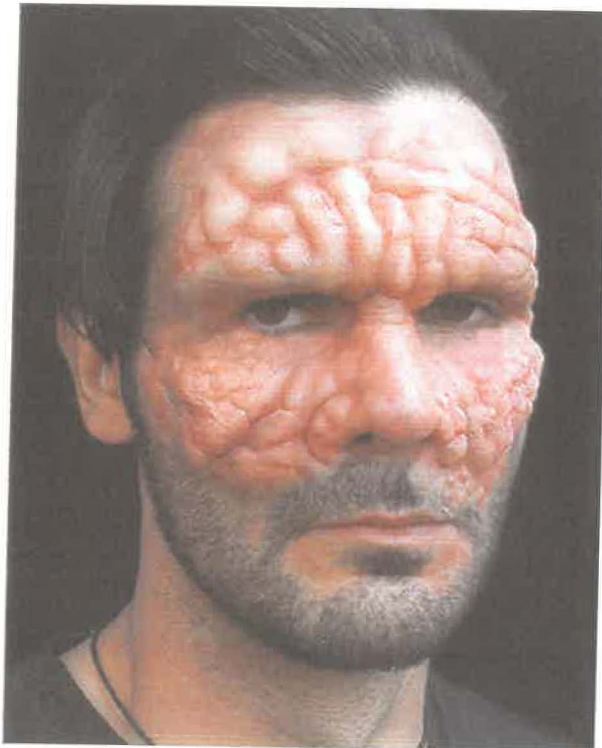
39
40 The widow could use the oil she needed for the foreseeable future and then sell the rest to

1 pay the debt. And, oh, how grateful she was!

2
3 2 Kings 4:9-10

4 **And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of**
5 **God, which passeth by us continually. [10] Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee,**
6 **on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a**
7 **candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.**

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9 Apparently God had blessed her with the oil supply, but also a husband! To show her
10 gratitude she and her husband built a little guest quarters for the prophet.



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31 Picture of a man with Hansen's Disease (Leprosy) Naaman might have looked something like this.

32 33 THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN NAAMAN OF SYRIA

34
35 Chapter 5 of II Kings tells one of the most magnificent stories in all the Bible. Let's take
36 a look at this man, Naaman:

37
38 2 Kings 5:1

39 **Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his**
40 **master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria:**

1 **he was also a mighty man in valour, *but he was a leper.***
2

3 A leper - the official kiss of death. At least that is how it was considered 3,000 years
4 ago. No cure! Leprosy is an infection caused by slow-growing bacteria called
5 MYCOBACTERIUM LEPRAE. Hanson's Disease, we call it today and it is treatable.
6 It affects the nerves, skin, eyes and the lining of the nose. Leprosy in Naaman's day was
7 feared as a highly contagious and devastating disease. Remember in the classic film *Ben*
8 *Hur* how his mother and sister were banished to some remote canyon away from people.
9 We know now that leprosy does not spread easily. In fact, I have been in a leper colony.
10 Not pleasant but not particularly dangerous to be there. Even today, if untreated, leprosy
11 can result in crippling of hands and feet, paralysis and even blindness. But to Naaman's
12 generation - DEATH!

13 **HELP WAS ON ITS WAY TO HIM!**

14
15
16 2 Kings 5:2-4

17 **And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of**
18 **the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. [3] And she said**
19 **unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for**
20 **he would recover him of his leprosy. [4] And one went in, and told his lord, saying,**
21 **Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.**
22

23 Here was a young Jewish girl, taken away from her parents by the invading Syrians and
24 now serving in the very house of the "general" who had captured her. Wouldn't you
25 think her heart would have been filled with malice and hatred? But no, she wanted to
26 help the very man who had kidnapped her. She told her mistress (Naaman's wife) that
27 there was a prophet in her homeland (Elisha) who could help.

28
29 Word reached the king of Israel (Joram) who had no spiritual knowledge to speak of - and
30 who was certainly incapable of assisting any leper. Note his helpless response: 2 Kings
31 5:6-7 **And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is**
32 **come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou**
33 **mayest recover him of his leprosy. [7] And it came to pass, when the king of Israel**
34 **had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make**
35 **alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore**
36 **consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.**
37

38 Joram had enough brains to know he could no sooner cure cancer than he could lengthen
39 somebody's name (which "healers" of a previous generation had as one of their main
40 "acts" - to the embarrassment of Bible students everywhere. All the charisma,

1 flamboyance and drama of all the stage artists in the world could not stop the ravaging of
2 leprosy. Thankfully word reached Elisha and he sent word: 2 Kings 5:8 **And it was**
3 **so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his**
4 **clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let**
5 **him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.**

6
7 The predicament of the world today is that people go to the wrong places for help.
8 Some go for booze (one of the judges on *America's Got Talent* checked herself into a
9 hospital for alcohol and sex addiction this week). Some for go other things. But there is
10 only one source of all that is worthwhile and that's God.

11
12 Elisha was apparently not all that impressed with powerful figures. He didn't even meet
13 Naaman in person. He sent this message to him:

14
15 2 Kings 5:9-10

16 **So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the**
17 **house of Elisha. [10] And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in**
18 **the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be**
19 **clean.**

20
21 The Syrian general was not pleased:

22
23 2 Kings 5:11

24 **But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will**
25 **surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and**
26 **strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. [12] Are not Abana and**
27 **Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in**
28 **them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.**

29
30 For all of our notions about the Jordan River, frankly - it ain't much! In places even
31 today, especially in the south end, it's just a glorified mud hole. Naaman, "Why should I
32 dip myself in that pathetic water? Our own rivers are much grander."

33
34 **Here is the lesson: Many do not want to come to the cross where Jesus died.**
35 **Instead they think they can do something that really impresses God. Naaman was**
36 **right when he said the rivers in his own country were cleaner and nicer. But all the**
37 **time he rebelled against Elisha's instruction, the leprosy continued to eat away at**
38 **him. Thankfully he had a smart underling:**

39
40 2 Kings 5:13-14

1 **And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the**
2 **prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how**
3 **much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? [14] Then went he**
4 **down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man**
5 **of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.**
6

7 What a wonderful story - Naaman was healed of his deadly disease. But there is a very
8 sad postscript to this drama, often overlooked. It involved Elisha's long time hired hand,
9 Gehazi: Elisha, of course, would take no gifts from Naaman. But Gehazi was not so
10 honest:

11
12 2 Kings 5:21-27

13 **So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him,**
14 **he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well? [22] And he said,**
15 **All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me**
16 **from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray**
17 **thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments. [23] And Naaman said, Be**
18 **content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two**
19 **bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and**
20 **they bare them before him. [24] And when he came to the tower, he took them from**
21 **their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they**
22 **departed. [25] But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto**
23 **him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither. [26]**
24 **And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again**
25 **from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments,**
26 **and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and**
27 **maidservants? [27] The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and**
28 **unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.**
29

30 This was a story of two great sins: Gehazi's was Greed while Naaman's was Pride.
31 Both can be fatal unless confessed to God and allowing repentance to cleanse the soul.

32 CHAPTER SIX - THE INCREDIBLE DRAMA OF THE "HIT" ON ELISHA

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34
35 Here we are going to see a side of Elisha that, to me, is just plain funny. I find this sixth
36 chapter of II Kings to be one of the most fascinating stories in all the Bible.

37
38 2 Kings 6:8-12

39 **Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants,**
40 **saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. [9] And the man of God sent unto**

1 **the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the**
2 **Syrians are come down. [10] And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man**
3 **of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.**
4 **[11] Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he**
5 **called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the**
6 **king of Israel? [12] And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha,**
7 **the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in**
8 **thy bedchamber.**

9
10 Some versions of this passage use the name ARAM; it's an old name for SYRIA. The
11 king of Syria, Joram (a son of wicked king Ahab - and just about as bad - reigned in Israel
12 for 12 years - 852-841 B.C.) was bent out of shape because every plan he made for
13 ambushes of the Israeli army were somehow revealed to the King of Israel. His
14 conclusion? There is a spy in my higher echelon: So he called together his military and
15 tried to ferret out the traitor. But it was not those men; it was Elisha. God told him
16 what Joram was going to do. King Joram put out a hit on the prophet.

17
18 Remember, Gehazi who had been Elisha's hired hand he contracted Naaman's leprosy
19 and was now out of the picture. So the prophet hired a new fellow. Unfortunately, we
20 don't know his name.

21
22 2 Kings 6:13-15

23 **And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was**
24 **told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. [14] Therefore sent he thither horses, and**
25 **chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.**
26 **[15] And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth,**
27 **behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant**
28 **said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?**

30 DOTHAN

31
32 On the next page you will find a photo of Tel Dothan. (Remember a tel is a man-made
33 hill, one civilization stacked on top of the preceding one, looking for all the world like a
34 natural hill. There are many of these all over Israel.) Dothan is first mentioned in the
35 Old Testament (Genesis 37:17) in connection with the history of Joseph. It was here that
36 his ten brothers had moved their flocks when they were approached by Joseph on his
37 father's behalf. At the suggestion of Judah, the brothers sold Joseph to Ishmaelite
38 merchants who whisked him to Egypt where he was sold to Potiphar, a big-shot in the
39 Egyptian government. It was here that Elisha lived. Today it is a military installation
40 and almost impossible to get to.



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SOMEWHERE ON THIS TEL (HILL) OF DOTHAN ONCE LIVED ELISHA THE GREAT PROPHET OF GOD. IT WAS HERE THAT SYRIAN KING BEN HADAD SENT HIS ARMY TO SURROUND ELISHA'S HOUSE AND ARREST HIM.

Small wonder Elisha's hired hand was concerned! Think of it: Dothan was surrounded by the Syrian army! "Master, what shall we do?" he moaned.

2 Kings 6:16-17

And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. [17] And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

God delivered Elisha and his servant in Dothan with a heavenly host of His military. But....He did NOT deliver young Joseph there in the very same place. Instead Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, the launching pad to him to become the second in command for all Egypt. Never judge your experiences with other believers. God does not take us all along the same route:

*Some through the waters, some through the flood;
Some through the fire, but all through the blood!*

1 God put temporary blindness on the Syrian forces and Elisha then led them to Samaria,
2 the Israeli capital. But the Israeli king, Joram, under Elisha's direction, did not bring
3 harm to them but instead:

4
5 2 Kings 6:23

6 **And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk,**
7 **he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no**
8 **more into the land of Israel.**

9
10 But even after that, Syrian King Ben Hadad had not learned his lesson:

11
12 2 Kings 6:24-31

13 **And it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host,**
14 **and went up, and besieged Samaria. [25] And there was a great famine in Samaria:**
15 **and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of**
16 **silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver. [26] And**
17 **as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him,**
18 **saying, Help, my lord, O king. [27] And he said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence**
19 **shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress? [28] And the king**
20 **said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give**
21 **thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. [29] So we**
22 **boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son,**
23 **that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.**

24 **[30] And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he**
25 **rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold,**
26 **he had sackcloth within upon his flesh. [31] Then he said, God do so and more also**
27 **to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.**

28
29 Some people are just very slow learners! Ben Hadad was such a person. But the work
30 of Elisha was just getting underway as we will see next week with the story of the FOUR
31 LEPERS WHOSE BRAVERY WAS LEGENDARY - II KINGS 7.