

## The God of the Non-miraculous

### 2 Kings 2:14

Heritage is traveling the original Route 66, reading the Bible chronologically. This week we moved from reading about Elijah to studying his apprentice and successor, Elisha, who ministered in Israel under Ahab's son, Joram.

Elisha is famous, among other things, depending on the way you count, for the 28 miracles he performed.

- 1) Parting of the Jordan (2Ki 2:14)
- 2) Healing of the waters (2Ki 2:21)
- 3) Curse of the she bears (2Ki 2:24)
- 4) Filling of the valley with water (2Ki 3:17)

**Picture 3** - King Mesha's account of his victory over Israel is inscribed on a basalt slab in the Louvre in Paris

- 5) Deception of the Moabites with the valley of blood (2Ki 3:22)
- 6) Miracle of the vessels of oil (2Ki 4:4)
- 7) Prophecy that the Shunammite woman would have a son (2Ki 4:16)
- 8) Resurrection of the Shunammite's son (2Ki 4:34)
- 9) Healing of the gourds (2Ki 4:41)
- 10) Miracle of the bread (2Ki 4:43)
- 11) Healing of Naaman (2Ki 5:14)
- 12) Perception of Gehazi's transgression (2Ki 5:26)
- 13) Cursing Gehazi with leprosy (2Ki 5:27)
- 14) Floating of the axe head (2Ki 6:6)
- 15) Prophecy of the Syrian battle plans (2Ki 6:9)
- 16) Vision of the chariots (2Ki 6:17)
- 17) Smiting the Syrian army with blindness (2Ki 6:18)
- 18) Restoring the sight of the Syrian army (2Ki 6:20)
- 19) Prophecy of the end of the great famine (2Ki 7:1)
- 20) Prophecy that the scoffing nobleman would see, but not partake of, the abundance (2Ki 7:2)
- 21) Deception of the Syrians with the sound of chariots (2Ki 7:6)
- 22) Prophecy of the seven-year famine (2Ki 8:1)
- 23) Prophecy of Benhadad's untimely death (2Ki 8:10)
- 24) Prophecy of Hazael's cruelty to Israel (2Ki 8:12)
- 25) Prophecy that Jehu would smite the house of Ahab (2Ki 9:7)
- 26) Prophecy that Joash would smite the Syrians at Aphek (2Ki 13:17)
- 27) Prophecy that Joash would smite Syria thrice but not consume it (2Ki 13:19)
- 28) Resurrection of the man touched by his bones (2Ki 13:21)

**Picture 1** - These were miracles unlike the Nun bun. In 1996 one of the managers of the Bongo Java Coffee House at Belmont saw the likeness of Mother Teresa in one of their homemade cinnamon buns. CNN, the Washington Post and even David Letterman ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkM9\\_xr-uo8&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkM9_xr-uo8&feature=youtu.be)) shared the story and people travelled from all over the world to see it. Mother Teresa sent a cease-and-desist order so that the Coffee house had to stop using her likeness on their T-shirts.

**Picture 2** - Two years later, Diana Duyser saw the Virgin Mary in her grilled cheese sandwich and sold it for \$28,000 on EBay.

Many Christians think the Bible is filled with the everyday miraculous but actually, the miraculous only occurred on a normal basis on three occasions:

- 1 – Moses and Joshua
- 2 – Elijah and Elisha
- 3 – Jesus and the disciples

In reality, miracles are not the exception to the natural order but the restoration of the natural order in obedience to God. Think about how Jesus's miracles restored life in Eden and pointed to life in heaven.

Yet most of the Bible is the day-to-day obedience of God's people living by faith in the God of miracles and not the miracles themselves.

**2 Kings 2:13-14** - *...he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. <sup>14</sup> Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.*

**Elijah = Yahweh is my God**

**Elisha = Yehweh is my salvation**

Each of Elisha's miracles was intended to point, not to the miracle or Elisha but to the meaning of Elisha's name: Yahweh is my salvation. And it is in that salvation, that God works the miraculous.

In a world that attempts to coerce, force, shame change, God miraculously effects change.

Think about Jesus's miracles. Each of them demonstrates God's salvation.

**First: Turning Water into Wine – Jesus Saves the Best for Last. Jn 2:1-11**

We have all heard the mantra, *“the first shall be last”* (Mt 20:16). It is true, but it’s also true that in God’s world, *“the best shall be last.”*

Jesus, according to the host, *“Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”*

Jesus’s first miracle, which did two things:

- a) Manifested his glory
- b) The disciples believed on him

Demonstrated his ministry and crucifixion. In that single and small miracle, Jesus demonstrated how he is moving all creation from Eden to the New Jerusalem.

In the unregenerate world, this is our best life now as people get drunk on what they perceive is ‘good wine.’ Little do they know that Jesus has reserved the best for last.

In a Covid-19, Protest world, it is important to remember that this is not our world, that we will have tribulation in it (Jn 16:33) and that the best is yet to be.

As Elisha’s name teaches us, God, not this world, is our salvation.

### **Second: Healing the Blind Man – People are First Like Trees, Then Christians. Mark 8:22-26**

Think with me about Jesus’s 38 recorded miracles:

- He immediately turned water into wine – Jn 2
- He immediately healed the nobleman’s son – Jn 4
- He immediately cast out an unclean spirit – Mk 1
- He immediately cured Peter’s mother-in-law – Mk 1
- He immediately cleansed a leper – Mk 1
- He immediately healed the centurion’s servant – Mt 8
- He immediately raised the widow of Nain’s son – Lk 7
- He immediately stilled the storm – Mt 8
- He immediately rescued two demoniacs – Mt 8
- He immediately cured the paralytic – Mt 9
- He immediately raised Jairus’s daughter from the dead – Mt 9
- He immediately cured the woman with the issue of blood – Lk 8
- He immediately opened the eyes of two blind men – Mt 9

**John 21:25 – Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them was written down, I suppose that even the whole world could not have room for the books that would be written.**

Why, if Jesus healed two blind men immediately, does he progressively heal this blind man?

Look what happens immediately after this healing

- a) Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah – 8:27-30
- b) Peter denies Jesus as the Messiah – 8:31-33

Christianity is both instantaneous and progressive. We believe that Jesus is the Christ but, we still see men walking as trees for a while.

**Philippians 3:12-15** - *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us hold true to what we have attained.*

Christ-likeness is a progress that only the Holy Spirit can create

**Philippians 3:18** - *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,<sup>[e]</sup> are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.<sup>[f]</sup> For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

2 Timothy 2:7 - *Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*

- Jesus's first miracle proves the best is last
- Jesus's healing of the blind man shows how the kingdom progresses

**Third: The Resurrection – Jesus's Resurrection is the Greatest Miracle Working Power.**  
**Lk 24:5-6**

Christlikeness is a progress that only the Holy Spirit can create

**Philippians 3:18** - *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

2 Timothy 2:7 - *Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*

The resurrection is the theme of Apostolic preaching

**Acts 4:1-2** - *And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, <sup>2</sup>greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*

Your life demonstrates the power of the resurrection.

- It changes death to life
- It changes disobedient hearts to joyful obedience
- It changes guilt into forgiveness
- It changes chains to freedom
- It changes anxiety to hope
- It changes fear into love, despair into joy.
- It changes sin into sanctification

The resurrection is not just about the future.

It is a present experience.

- Through his resurrection Jesus became “a life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45), a whole new kind of human being, and enabled us to share in this new life.
- Because of his resurrection and ascension, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit into the world to carry out his life-transforming work in unbelievers and Christians (John 7:39; Acts 2:33).
- Everything the Holy Spirit does today is only possible as a result of the resurrection.

**Colossians 3:1** - *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

**Romans 6:4** - *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

**Ephesians 2:5-6** - *God . . . made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him.*

This is my point. If you are looking for the miraculous, you don't need a nun bun or a grilled cheese sandwich.

Look in the mirror.

### **Conclusion:**

Elisha was a great instrument of God but like Elijah, his ministry ended. Our focus should not be on the miraculous but on the God of the miraculous.

**2 Kings 2:13-14** - *...he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. <sup>14</sup>Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.*

Our Application:

1 –

- We will not see all of the change we long to see, in this life.
- Some of it will come.
- Rarely will any of it come on our time schedule.
- Some of it will never occur in this life.

Depending on the miraculous rather than the God of the miraculous will disappoint and discourage us.

2 - In a world that attempts to coerce, force, shame change, God miraculously effects change. Otherwise, it is not really change at all. And we must trust God, both for our own transformation and change in others.

God's power is the only real changing power.

### **Community Groups:**

1 – How are you doing?

2 – How are those you love doing?

3 – What is the hardest part of living in a Covid-19 world?

4 – Is the national unrest we are enduring, also troubling you?

5 – How would you define what is taking place in our nation today?

6 – What do your prayers look like during this time?

7 – What does Elisha's name mean?

7 – How can the miraculous sometimes become a substitute for God himself?

8 – Discuss how Jesus's turning water into wine prefigures God saving the best for last?

9 – What is the point of Jesus progressively healing the blind man?

10 – What human mechanisms are we likely to depend on to create change?

11 – Why doesn't a 'shame culture' really change people?

12 – Based on 2 Tim 2:7, how do we get spiritual understanding?

13 – According to Phil 3:18, how does God change us?

14 – Why is there such divine power in the resurrection?

15 – Why should we not trust in the miraculous but the God of the miraculous?