

BOOK OF 2 KINGS
MIRACLE OF EVIL WATERS HEALED
2 KINGS 2:18-22

Introduction

So we are seeing the early days here of Elisha's ministry after the translation of Elijah! We've already seen Elisha's perform his first miracle—the parting of the waters of Jordan to walk back across it. Tonight we'll see the second!

I. WE SEE THE CITY OF THE MIRACLE. (Vs. 18-19a)

The location of this account is Jericho. We know this from the previous passage in *verse 18*. Elisha stayed here three days.

The name “*Jericho*” means “*fragrant*.” It was said to be “*the city of palm trees*” in *Deuteronomy 34:3*. And it was a part of the expanse of land that was once compared to the “*Garden of the Lord*” in *Genesis 13:10*.

Also note that this was part of the land in the plain of Jordan that Lot chose when he saw that it was *well-watered*. Lot would have been better off settling in this area of Jericho than he did winding up in the gates of Sodom!

II. WE SEE THE MEN OF THE CITY. (Vs 19a-19b)

Here in *verse 19a* account, we see the “*men of the city*” came to Elisha asking for his help. Note how quickly Elisha's power with the LORD had already been made known, not just to the 50 sons of the prophets who had been present to see his first miracle of parting water of Jordan, but here also to the people where he had stayed three days while those sons of the prophets were looking for Elijah who had been caught up to heaven in a whirlwind!

Let me remind you that the name *Elisha* comes from two words – *el*, meaning *God* and *yasha* meaning *to be saved*. So his name means *God is Salvation* or *God the Savior*.

Notice what they say of their city in *verse 19b*, “*Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant as my lord seeth.*”

Now understand the area of Jericho was, and still is, known for its beauty.

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It lies on a broad plain not far from the Jordan, and running through it is the Prat River. It is adorned with groves of palm trees and sycamore trees.

It is the town where Jesus was passing through in *Luke 19* when Zacchaeus the tax collector climbed up in a sycamore tree to see Jesus!

Along with the beauty of the trees, I've read where there are aromatic shrubs which adorn the air with wonderful smells. Remember the meaning of the name *Jericho* means “*fragrant*”. From Jericho, the mountains of Moab can also be seen. So, all in all, it was (and I understand, still is) a pleasant place.

III. WE SEE THE PROBLEM WITH JERICHO. (Vs 19c)

In these few words here we can sense (and no doubt Elisha could also) that there was this “*but*” coming! If the city was beautiful, and if that was evident to Elisha, then they had to have some point that they wanted to make about it. And they did!

Yes, by all appearances Jericho was a beautiful place, but there was an aspect that Elisha was probably not fully aware of— something that was contrary to this otherwise pleasant city!

Verse 19c “*...but the water is naught, and the ground barren.*”

“*naught*” means “*bad or evil*”

“*barren*” means “*to bereave of children; to cause a miscarriage.*”

So, the water was *tainted, as if cursed*. In turn, this caused the ground *to be barren and unfruitful*. The beautiful trees would miscarry their fruit because of it, but even more. *The historian Josephus says that it not only caused the plants to be barren, but it caused the women and animals to miscarry as well.*

So, in other words, “*the ground*” that the men refer to extends to the inhabitants of that ground – both animal and plant. Some say the reason for this went back to the time of Joshua.

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After the battle of Jericho, Joshua pronounced a curse on the one that would rebuild the city:

*Joshua 6:26 – “And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, **Cursed be the man** before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.”*

Many years later, at the time of King Asa of Judah and King Ahab of Israel, a man did rebuild the land. This is found in:

1 Kings 16:34–“In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.”

So, while some have tried to tie the curse to these bad waters of Jericho, it is doubtful because the curse was upon the man, not the land. So we don't know the source because we are not told.

IV. WE SEE THE MIRACLE OF THE LORD BY THE HAND OF ELISHA. (Vs 20-21)

A. Elisha's Instructions Were Two-Fold: (Vs 20)

1. Elisha said, “Bring me a new cruise...” (Vs 20a)

The word translated “*cruise*” is only found here and means “*a an elongated or tall jar.*” And he wanted a new one! This certainly seems to have had importance to the prophet as he was quite specific. (*Two reasons?*)

a. If it could not later be claimed that there was something previously carried in the jar which was actually responsible for the healing effects upon the waters.

b. It was to be uncontaminated by previous use. Its purity was intended to typify the process of purification which would come upon the waters.

This same concept of using something never used before is seen several times in Scripture.

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Most notably it is seen in the colt which was selected for Christ to ride into Jerusalem on. It had never been ridden according to the Gospel accounts.

2. Elisha said, “...and put salt therein.” (Vs 20b)
Salt is one of the things in the Bible where its symbolic meaning can only be derived from the surrounding context.

In some cases, **salt can be used as a destructive agent.** For example, when someone wanted to ruin the field of an enemy, they would **sow the field with salt.**

Salt was used in connection with covenant offerings and sacrifices.

It was, and still is, used as a condiment to make food more palatable.

It was also used as a preservative.

In general, salt indicates concepts such as perpetuity and incorruption; and loyalty and friendship. It is further a symbol of the power of life which destroys death.

Elisha, as a prophet of God, is asking for this common and yet important substance as a response to their concern about the evil condition of the waters of Jericho.

The fact that salt is used though gives additional weight to the miracle. The normal result of throwing salt into water is to make the waters more harmful. So, the new jar, and the salt in that jar, point to the Divine nature of the miracle.

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B. The Men Of Jericho Obeyed Elisha's Instructions. (Vs 20c)
"And they brought it to him."

In what under normal circumstances might seem a pointless thing to do, they complied with Elisha's request.

We'll see later on in our studies in this book that Naaman the Syrian came to Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. When Elisha asked him to do a simple and seemingly pointless thing, he balked and got angry.

Later, he was shown the folly of his ways and finally followed Elisha's words and was healed.

At times, the simple things we are asked to do are the things which may seem the most pointless, and yet they are the very things which bring about the most wonderful results.

(e.g. Simple repentance and faith is what it takes to be saved. Yet many think that is too simple and try to add something to God's plan of salvation! But to add something to God's plan makes it NOT God's plan!)

C. Elisha Calls For The Healing At The LORD's Word!
(Vs 21)

1. *"And he went forth unto the spring of the waters..."*
(Vs 21a)

The word translated "*spring*" means "*to come out.*"
So, this is speaking of **the exit of the waters.**

2. *"...and cast the salt in there..."* (Vs 21b)

(i.e. Directly into the source of the waters!)
As it was a flowing spring, it would appear that this could effect no true change of the waters. The salt would simply be purged back out of the stream as it flowed. So, this is another symbol of the Divine nature of what was occurred here.

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3. *"...and said, "Thus saith the LORD..."* (Vs 21c)
The prophet is the mouthpiece of the LORD, and therefore he is speaking on behalf of the LORD.

However, he still makes the statement in the name of the LORD. (i.e. The existent One, Who cannot lie)

If Elisha was truly a prophet of the LORD, and if the LORD truly was speaking through him, then what Elisha stated could not possibly fail to occur!

4. *"...I have healed these waters..."* (Vs 21d)

By the word of the LORD, the waters were healed at that moment. It could not have been the jar, and it could not have been the salt.

Rather, it was by the spoken Word of the LORD as the **principle cause**, and by the use of the jar and salt as the **instrumental cause**, that the miracle was to be effected.

The same word that was used to describe the LORD, at the healing of the bitter waters of Marah, is used here.

There in *Exodus 15:26*, the LORD said, "*For I am the LORD that healeth thee.*" (*Jehovah Rapha*)

So the LORD Who Heals, once again healed bitter waters for His people. In turn, the resulting problem caused by this evil water was healed by this act as well!

5. *"...there shall not be from thence any more death, or barren land."* (Vs 21e)

The promise is made. If termed in the positive rather than the negative, we could state it,
"From now on, from this well there will only come life and fruitfulness."

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**The curse was reversed at the speaking of the Word.
And the result is...**

6. *“So the waters were healed unto this day...” (Vs 22a)*
What previously brought only death and barrenness now brought health and restoration. And this still remained true up until the time this was written!

7. *“...according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.” (Vs 22b)*
This is not intended to give Elisha credit for the miracle. That has already been given to the LORD in the pronouncement Elisha made over the water.

What this did was to solidify in the eyes of the people, and in our minds, that Elisha was indeed a valid prophet of God!

Elijah spoke in the name of the LORD, and the LORD’s Word through him was validated!

Conclusion

Well, that’s our Bible study for this evening! Next week LORD willing, we’ll see Elisha’s third and probably most controversial miracle—The cursing in the name of the LORD of what the Scripture calls children who were mocking the man of God!

What is that all about? Well, LORD willing, next Wednesday we’ll examine what happened and why.