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ELISHA SUCCESSOR TO ELIJAH

– *II. KINGS 4:25-37. – MARCH 12. –*

**"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
– Romans 6:23.**

OUR lesson follows in order the one of a week ago. Elisha was with Elijah until the whirlwind separated them and took Elijah out of sight. His mantle dropped to Elisha and Elisha's prayer was answered that a double portion of Elijah's spirit might rest upon him and that he might take up, in a measure, the work of Elijah as a teacher. Using the mantle to smite the river Jordan, the same miracle occurred to him as to Elijah. He passed over safely. On the other side of Jordan he began his career as a prophet. At Jericho the supply of water came from a brackish stream, unpalatable and unhealthful. Elisha went to the fountain and there performed a miracle similar to the one performed by Moses at the Wells of [R4758 : page 42] Moses at Marah. To this day the spring is known as Elisha's Fountain. Again we read that one of these "sons of the prophets," or students, died and that his widowed mother was in want and that the Prophet Elisha helped her to exercise faith. She had a cruse of oil, which increased in supply as she poured it from vessel to vessel until she had sufficient for all her debts. Several other miracles of a restoratory character are noted, the most prominent of which is related in our lesson, namely, the restoration of a boy to life and health. The thing connected with Elisha's experiences which has attracted to him world-wide attention and general reprobation was his cursing of forty-two youths. These were children in the sense that every person is by the Law considered a child until twenty-one years of age – they had been mocking Elisha, crying, "Go up, thou bald head." Your Master, Elijah, went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Why do not you go also? You are a bald head, or one who has lost his master. You are not fit to pose as a prophet nor to be compared to Elijah. (This is our paraphrase.)

Elisha did not swear at the children; when we read that he cursed them the proper thought is that he condemned them, just as Jesus said to some with most kindly art, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees," etc. So Elisha pronounced woe or blight upon those youths of various ages who taunted him. He declared that something would befall them. Divine Justice would square accounts and vindicate him. Forthwith two she bears came upon the rabble, put them to flight, and forty-two of the mob were torn and wounded – more or less. Opponents of the Bible read into this that forty-two children were killed, but nothing of the kind is stated.

We are to remember that the Israelites under the leadership of their King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had been turned to idolatry, and that although the Prophet Elijah had re-established the true religion, the King and Queen and the majority of the people merely tolerated it.

The youths who had tiraded against Elisha were probably the young men and boys of Jericho, a hoodlum set ranging in years from ten to twenty, who had followed the Prophet, taunting him and, doubtless at the instigation of their parents, seemed to destroy his influence. The Divine judgment following the Prophet's denunciation was doubtless intended as a just rebuke and a profitable lesson for those torn and for their parents and for all who heard about it.

ELISHA CONSIDERED TYPICAL

Our interest in this story of Elisha's experiences after Elijah was taken away increases as we consider the fact that he, like Elijah, was quite a positive and typical character. We have already intimated a correspondency between Elijah and the antitypical priests and between Elisha and the antitypical Levites of the Gospel Age. Elisha may also typify the Ancient Worthies, into whose hands the instruction and blessing of the world will be placed at the inauguration of Messiah's Kingdom: "Princes in all the earth." From this standpoint we might think of Elisha representing the secondary class of the spirit-begotten ones first, and that his crossing of Jordan represents the death of this

class of antitypical Levites. With this view the after progress of Elisha and his work of judgment and restitution already referred to correspond well with what we should expect at the inauguration of Messiah's Kingdom under the "princes." The healing of the water-spring would well represent the healing of the stream of Truth. For long centuries error and superstition, combined with Satan's great falsehood, Ye shall not surely die, have made the waters of Truth brackish, unpalatable, unhealthful. The putting of the salt into the Fountain or Spring symbolically represents the cleansing from untruth and error, through the co-operation of the Church in glory, which, while here, is appropriately styled, "the salt of the earth." The healing of the stream of Truth will come from the glorified Church, although it [R4758 : page 43] will come through the Ancient Worthies as a part of the New Covenant blessings then to come to the world of mankind through the Jews. This is also what St. Paul calls to our attention in Romans 11:25-33.

The "death in the pottage" will be effectually offset by the blessings of the Lord through his glorified Kingdom. The earth shall yield her increase. The wilderness shall blossom as the rose. Streams shall break forth in the desert. The blessing of the Lord will be everywhere – represented symbolically by the sons of the Prophets. These were some who separated themselves from the idolatries of their land and who gladly gave heed to the teachings of the Prophets, prophesying themselves, as their followers.

The blessing upon the widow's cruse of oil has symbolical signification, in proportion as we realize the value of the oil to the people of that time. It was not only a part of their food, but their general medicine and furnished them their light. What came through the prophets, therefore, is a very beautiful picture of restitution blessings, which may be expected in due time and which will come to all the worthy.

The restoration of life to the dead is to be one of the great features of the New Dispensation – Messiah's Kingdom. And this power will be exercised doubtless through the "princes" of that time, typified, we believe, by Elisha. Those most to be favored will be those who will most thoroughly appreciate and best receive the "princes," represented by Elisha, even as the parents of this child whom Elisha raised from the dead had made gracious provision for the prophet's comfort.

The judgment upon the opposers of the Elisha class, typified by the tearing of the forty-two, would seem to tell of disciplinary judgments which, during Messiah's Kingdom, will be promptly executed against all opponents of the Divine arrangements. The assurance of the Scriptures is, "When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness"; "Judgment shall be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet."

