

9627

ELISHA, THE MAN OF GOD

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study #4 The Healing at Jericho, Judgment at Bethel

Reading: 2 Kings 2:19-25

My dear brethren and sisters and young people.

One thing you know about being the speaker, you never have to worry about getting a seat; anybody wants my job, they can have my seat! Well, b&s, and young people, we left our last consideration with Elisha the prophet coming back into Israel in that spectacular fashion by dividing the waters of Jordan, proving to the onlookers that the spirit of Elijah rested upon him, and that that spirit as symbolized by the dividing of the waters of Jordan, was a spirit, b&s, which enabled him to control himself. Because I don't think now there's any doubt left in anybody's mind, as to what Jordan stood for. It stands for the greatest barrier between us and the Promised Land, and that's us! And if we can get through us, we're in the kingdom. And in the symbolization of the dividing of Jordan, there was the manifestation to Israel, that this man had the power to control self and consequently, he became magnified before the people, in that Yahweh was manifest in him, the only way that Yahweh can be manifest in human nature, is for human nature to be forgotten. For immediately that we intrude our own personalities into the arena, then of course, God is no longer there.

And you know, b&s, when the sons of the prophets saw that wonderful miracle, it says in the record in verse 15, of chapter 2 that 'they came and bowed themselves to the ground before him', in humble recognition that he was indeed, their master, and he did have the right to succeed Elijah. But they didn't believe it, well, at least 50 of them didn't believe it, and they suggested in the next verse that 50 strong men be let go and see if they could find the body of Elijah. And it's rather ironical that the strong men here, that the word for 'men' is the word 'enosh' which means 'weak mortal men', whereas when they were in verse 7 styled '50 men' at that stage they were 'ish' strong noble men. But now, these so-called strong weak mortals want to find the body because they frankly don't believe Elisha, that Elijah really is missing. And b&s, it's absolutely fantastic to come to this conclusion as we do, in verse 17, 'they searched for that body three days', and they couldn't find it. That's remarkable, they couldn't find it, and when they came back to Elisha and said that they couldn't find it, he said, 'well, I told you that before you went', and they knew by that, b&s, not only now by seeing the miracle of Jordan, but that Elijah indeed had ascended, but there was only one living witness amongst them, to the ascension of that man, and that man was Elisha!

And consequently, all doubt was removed; as it was in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ when they went to the tomb, they paid soldiers money to say that His disciples stole Him by night under the noses of a Roman guard who went to sleep, on the pain of death if they did so! and the story was so ridiculous that the very spread of it in Israel, was a standing testimony that the Lord Jesus Christ had risen and his spirit rested upon 12 other men who were the only witnesses to His resurrection, at that stage. And it's remarkable the parallels in this record; (now I mention this because first of all, I forgot to tell you a little bit of that detail this morning, and secondly, because there's a little connection with the next story) you know, you've got to read the bible very carefully, it's a very powerful book, and words mean so much. You see, while they were out searching for that body, look what Elisha was doing!

Chapter 2 verse 18, 'And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,)' the word 'tarried' there means 'he sat still', it's a word that indicates a lack of interest in what was going on, because you see, the same word is used when Joab went to war against the Ammonites, it says 'that David tarried still at Jerusalem', and the word indicated that David was not particularly interested in the outcome of that war at that stage, so that he tarried at Jerusalem (he shouldn't have done that, by the way because he got them all in a lot of trouble). In this case, you find that here are the 50 strong enoshes, the weak mortal men looking for a body that didn't exist, and Elisha's sitting still, where? at Jericho. And b&s and young people, this is fascinating! While he's sitting still at Jericho he attracts the interest and attention of another class of people, who were not looking for the body but were looking for something else, they were looking for help; and it's rather interesting when you come to verse 19 and you find a class of men addressing him, styled the 'men of the city'. And you know, that's very rare because Elisha worked mainly among the 'sons of the prophets'. But it wasn't the sons of the prophets who at this stage were seeking his help, but men who were styled the men of the city. What city? Jericho, the sons of the prophets who should have known better are out on a fruitless search for a body that they won't find, and while they're on that fruitless search for a body they won't find, the men of the city who were lying under a heavy curse, were seeking assistance from Elisha.

And you know, so it was in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now when the Jews were rejecting Him, b&s, those people who would have formed the innermost circle of His friends, were all doubting Him, while there were Greeks coming up to seek Him face to face. And after His resurrection, the Jews scorned Him, and frankly, didn't believe that He'd been risen from the dead; it was men of other cities that made enquiries and received the benefits of the knowledge that He had indeed, risen from the dead and that He could heal them. And I reckon it's tremendously expressive that it says, 'the men of that city were seeking help from Elisha'. Let's have a look at that city, Jericho!

Now how amazing, b&s, when we associate the work of Elisha with Jericho. When you talk about Elijah, of course, my mind goes straight up to the plain of Esdraelon (I practically live on that plain having been there several times and it's saturated in history up there) and when I think of Elijah I can't help but think of Esdraelon because he was up on the plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon as it is in the Greek, but up there he worked

when he first appeared to Israel. He walked into the court of Ahab at Jezreel, he went to Mount Carmel and he was in and around that area, b&s, and it's noted that that area, is one of the most fruitful sections of the Land of Israel; it's the granary really of Israel, is the plain of Jezreel. The shaggy head of Carmel which pointed down to the Mediterranean was the first point where the rains came, so that when it came through Carmel, people would know that the season had broken. Carmel means 'fruitfulness' and Elijah came into that and blasted it with a curse.

What's Jericho noted for? The very opposite, and Elisha comes into that region to lift the curse. And as we said before, this was the dramatics in which these two prophets were introduced to us. And in the 'spirit and power of Elijah' which the sons of the prophets had said, rested upon him, he now came in that spirit and power, laid a foundation for Malachi's words that he was going to come there, 'lest God smite the earth with a curse'. For he had already smitten the earth with a curse and Elisha was coming in to lift that curse. And he was coming into the city of palm trees, Jericho. And it was lying under a heavy curse. You know the story, the city was called a devoted city; when Joshua went into the land, God said 'that you will not touch that city, it is an accursed city' but the word 'accursed' of course, as the margin says in the AV and as the Hebrew has it is the word 'devoted'.

You see, Jericho was a devoted sacrifice, and a devoted sacrifice had to be absolutely destroyed. And why would Jericho be a sacrifice? because every sacrifice has some purpose. God didn't simply make Jericho a sacrifice of destruction because that's no sacrifice. Sacrifice must have some purpose. What was the purpose in the sacrifice of Jericho? Namely this, that Joshua was serving notice on the peoples of the land of Canaan, that if anybody wanted to become allied to Israel and none was debarred from that, God loved the world at that stage, b&s, He never debarred the stranger who came into the camp of Israel on the basis of the principles of the truth, and Joshua laid the foundation for the entry of any stranger into Israel, by the sacrifice of Jericho, and Jericho was the very epitomy of the filthiness of the heathen, and all Joshua did, of course, was to bury it and burn it off the face of the ground, that was the sacrifice. Anybody accepting that principle, not simply accepting the sacrifice of Jericho as such, but accepting that principle in their lives, was acceptable with God. Such as Rahab the harlot; and her past life was buried with that city. But you see, when he buried that city, Joshua put a curse on it, Jah-oshua put a curse on it, because as I said it was the epitomy of the Canaanites, the worship of flesh. And he said, 'cursed is the man that riseth up and builds Jericho; he will lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and build up the walls thereof as the cost of his youngest son'. And it's remarkable, b&s, I say remarkable that Jericho was rebuilt in the days of all the kings of Israel of Ahab, and the curse rested heavily upon it, because Hiel, a man whose name means 'lofty or exalted' rebuilt the city of Jericho under the patronage of Jezebel, and any wonder the curse of God lay on that city. And it was because the curse rested heavily upon it that the spring of water was poisoned at its source and it was causing sterility throughout that land, that the men of that city were groaning under the burden of that curse. And whilst as I said before, the sons of the prophets were having a fruitless search for a body they couldn't find, here were people who at last were seeking some relief from the curse, that had

been placed upon a city which was the very epitome of flesh.

It's an interesting city, b&s, really; the name Jericho means 'fragrance'; it has a sub-tropical climate. The situation of the city is pleasant, says that record; and so it was, because a sub-tropical climate in the winter season is beautiful at Jericho. There's an oasis or spring at Jericho at the present moment of time, which gives fertility to a region that exists on the slopes and on the base of the wilderness of Judaea which is absolutely arid and so terribly barren, that it's indescribable yet there is Jericho, a little green oasis there! but it wasn't a green oasis at this stage. Not only that, b&s, but consider this fact, the curse of God rested upon that city; now you remember this, when Joshua came into the Promised Land to conquer Canaan that it might be the inheritance of the Hebrews, that was his first victory. His first victory and the nationhood of Israel in the Land was established on the basis of his defeat of Jericho. Do you know what happened to Zedekiah, the last king of Israel? 'O thou profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day will come when iniquity will have an end', do you know what happened to him? Nebuchadrezzar besieged Jerusalem, and Zedekiah jumped over the wall and went for his life. And they caught him at Jericho, and the nation of Israel came to an end, in that city!

Have a look at 2 Kings 25 and verse 4 reading about Jerusalem, 'And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about) and the king went the way toward the plain. And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him'. And there, b&s, was the verse that spelt the doom of the kingdom of Judah; 'and thou profane, wicked prince of Israel whose day had come when iniquity shall have an end', iniquity shall have an end and it ended in Jericho! How significant then was this city! and do you know, b&s, when the Lord Jesus Christ made His last march to Jerusalem, for what reason? that He might lift from the earth, the greatest curse of all time, the curse of sin and death, He commenced that march at no other place than Jericho, and He found there a man called Bartimeus, who was blind; and the word 'bar' is the equivalent of the Hebrew 'ben' which is 'son' but it's a Greek word and the word 'timeus' means 'the unclean one' and the record of Mark says, 'He found Bartimeus, son of Timeus, it repeats it that people might understand who He found there. He found a Gentile who was blind living under a curse at Jericho, and He was making His last triumphal march to Jerusalem, b&s, that He might lift that curse, not simply of physical blindness but the greatest curse that ever blighted mankind, and he commenced that march by giving that man sight, while the Jews protested that He shouldn't do it! And He stood still, and He commanded that that man should be called to Him (He didn't go to the man, He commanded the Jews that they should call him) and they called that man and He gave him sight and he followed Jesus in the way. And we could go on with that record in a manner that would fascinate you, but that's not our purpose; the only thing that we want to point out now, b&s, is that there is associated with this city, terrible curses of such a nature that they caused men of that city to cry unto Elisha and Jesus, 'O Lord save us!' and He saved them. And that's where Elisha commenced his ministry, which was going to remove a lot of curses in Israel. Now I

think that's interesting and it shows us, b&s, does it not? the spirit of this man and what he intended to do.

What was wrong with Jericho? Well, as the men said in that 19th verse, the situation of the city is pleasant as my lord seeth; but the problem with the city, b&s, was with the water. That was the problem of the city, the water, and the water they said, was naught; the Hebrew word means 'it was evil', 'it was bad'. It was a corrupt fountain; you look at the 6th chapter of Jeremiah for that and see how Jeremiah describes this, not talking about the fountain of Jericho but here's a reference to a fountain whose waters are corrupt and this is what was wrong with Jericho. And in the 6th chapter of Jeremiah and verse 7 the prophet says, 'As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds'; as a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness, and so it was the water of Jericho that was causing all the trouble, b&s, and in the Word of God, water is a cleansing agency and it's a symbol of the power of the Word of God. 'He that believeth on Me', says Jesus, 'out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water'. But their water was not living, it was just the opposite of living water, because as the record says, 'the ground was barren', and the word 'barren' there means that the ground was having 'miscarriages'. And it's a very expressive term here, you see there was a spring and the spring was coming out of the ground, and it should have given life to the ground, for the ground was to fertilize the seed which was going to come to fruition in fruit, but all that the corrupt spring was doing, was causing 'miscarriages'. All the time, miscarriages so that the ground was not sterile in the sense that it wouldn't produce anything, but that which it started to produce, just didn't come to fruition. And it's rather expressive, b&s, that a term like that should be used because here is an illustration of what happens when we've got the stream of life corrupted at its source. Here was the stream of life corrupted at its very source, because as I said, Jericho was the epitome of wickedness, and in that very small city as it was, it was as it were an epitome of the whole of the nation of Canaan.

And this was the problem with the water at Jericho; now the land was having miscarriages. Now you look at Malachi 3 and verse 9, he says, 'Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, said the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit (and that's the same Hebrew word, the word 'cast') 'neither shall your vine have miscarriages', and there was the vine, b&s, symbol of Israel. It could miscarry and not bring to fruition that which God desired of it, so that when the Lord Jesus Christ was looking for fruit, He wouldn't find it there because it would have miscarriages. Why? because the water which was suppose to feed it, was corrupted at its source. And that's what John the Baptist was telling the Pharisees, that's what the Lord was telling the Pharisees, 'bring forth fruits meet for repentance'; what's the good of having a fig tree if you can't get anything off of it? And what is the cause of that, b&s? The cause of that is water poisoned at its source, and it doesn't produce any fruit. And

you take that illustration of Malachi, that fruit of the vine; here if the vine has miscarriages that it doesn't bring its fruit to fruition, what's the good of it? Ezekiel said, 'what would you do with a vine that didn't produce fruit? you can't make furniture out of it, you can't do a thing with it. There's only one thing that you can do with a vine is burn it, and tomorrow morning we're going to drink wine in remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the water we're going to drink that's associated with that vine, is pure. And why would you imagine, b&s, that He chooses the vine as a symbol of His blood? because there's one thing about the vine and one thing only that makes it so outstanding; it has only one single virtue, fruit. One single virtue, fruit, and if it miscarries its fruit, it's useless! And another think about the vine is this, that fruit is in clusters, and when the Lord Jesus Christ broke bread and wine, He took the bread and He gave it to them and said, 'take eat this is my body which is given for you'. When He picked up the cup He gave it to them and said, 'you divide that amongst yourselves', because the vine hangs in clusters. And if the vine of Israel today is going to produce fruit, b&s, it's all going to hang on there together. And it's by the clusters of grapes that that symbol of the Lord's blood was given, that He gave His life for you and I and we divide that life between ourselves, and everyone that partakes of that life, is brought together in a cluster. But if that water which feeds us, is impure at its source, as it was at Jericho, and that fruit is not produced, then there is no value whatsoever in the vine of Israel today.

And that's what was wrong with the city of Jericho, and Elisha's going to lift that curse, now come back with me to 2 Kings chapter 2 and have a look at what he did! In verse 20 he said, 'Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him'. Three things I want you to notice in that verse, b&s, 1. they brought a new cruse, 2. that it had in it salt, 3. they brought it. He didn't provide the salt, he didn't provide the cruse, he provided the power. He provided the power, they provided the cruse, the salt, and he provided the power. It was a new cruse, why would it be a new one? because Elisha wanted them to understand, b&s, there was no vessel ever used in Jericho that could heal those waters. 'Be ye clean' says the prophet, 'ye that bear the vessels of Yahweh'; they've got to be new! Any vessel associated with that city had no efficacy whatsoever to heal those waters, it had to be something brand new out of that place. The word 'cruse' here, by the way, means something 'tall', it's the only time the word is used, and why I don't, but this means something 'tall'. It had to hold salt, what of it? And salt, well, salt, straight away, b&s, we know the symbol of salt. Why? every sacrifice that went upon the altar was salted with salt. So says Leviticus chapter 2 and verse 13, and the Lord commented on that issue; in the 9th chapter of Mark He said, 'that every sacrifice is salted with salt. In the 18th chapter of Numbers and at verse 19, you have a look at this one, and see what salt is called here! God says, 'All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto Yahweh, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before Yahweh unto thee and to thy seed with thee'. It was a covenant of salt, and of course, the idea of that was that it was a perpetual covenant, it was an everlasting covenant, it had intrinsic value, that was the idea behind salt because salt is a preserver, but I want you to note, b&s, what was a covenant of salt! What was it that was a covenant of salt? It was this that all the heave offerings which the children of Israel gave to Yahweh, became the possession of the priest, so that was a covenant of salt. What's a heave

offering? Well, the word 'heave' means to heave up to God; and that's the idea of the English word and it's the idea of the Hebrew word; it's well translated. And when a person offered a heave offering, it was a special offering that went direct to God, direct it was meant to go! But God gave His portion to His representative, and because that man was His representative, the priests and only the sons of Aaron could ever receive that portion of sacrifice. He gave unto them because they represented Yahweh, and here was a man throwing salt into water, because he was going to heal those waters by a covenant of salt. Why? because he was the 'salvation of God!' and he was going to lift the curse off those people. The same as the priests were the salvation of God to the people under the Law, not for eternal salvation but as a form and knowledge of the truth, as a shadow of greater things to come; and they lifted the curse of God from off the people, because they were His representatives.

And in that salt went, and Jesus said, 'ye are the salt of the earth' and we have it within our grasp, b&s, to help people from under a curse. We have it within our grasp to do that, 'ye are the salt of the earth', said the Lord Jesus Christ. Now you think of that, we've got new cruses, we're new creatures in the Lord Jesus Christ, we've got a treasure in an earthenware vessel, and we have the ability and we've been given the privilege to lift curses from people, if only we will act on God's behalf and if only people will respond; and these people at Jericho responded, and so Elisha went ahead and did his best, and he lifted that curse. Now you come back to the 2 Kings and look at this point here.

It says here in verse 21 of 2 Kings 2, 'He went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there'. Notice what he did! he didn't start, b&s, by trying to get those waters down further and starting at the bottom and working up and trying by some means to put fertilizer into the ground, and working around and trying to work his way back to the source that's no good! There's only one place that salt can be put to do any good, he went right to the source of that spring, right to where it came out of the ground and he threw it in there. And you know, the Lord Jesus Christ was for ever doing that, people came to Him with problems, people came to Him that were living under curses, they were blind, they were deaf, they were dumb, they had personal problems. Whenever did the Lord Jesus Christ fool around on the fringes, b&s, HE NEVER DID! He always went directly to the source of the problem. He went straight to the source on every occasion, never mind about giving people a mere healing of any disease; forget for healing's sake, that going to be no good; He's going to get back to the source of the problem. And there that salt has got to be rubbed into that wound, or it's got to be cast into those poisonous waters. The covenant of God has got to be put right there first, and when you get the source pure, then you're going to have productivity! Fruit will be brought forth to the glory of God, and isn't it expressive, he went to the spring of the waters and he cast it in there. And of course, b&s, we have in the Christadelphian community, a pure source; we're based upon the truth of the bible, and you let anybody poison that source, and watch this vine wither. You watch it wither; I've been around a little bit, b&s, amongst the ecclesias and I've seen the devastating effects of poisoning the source of that stream. DEVASTATING effects! you don't have to go outside this country to see it, and you see the vine wither and you see the fruit dry up.

You see the miscarriages, you see the tragedies! and you hear people talking about how they're going to solve the problem, and you know full well where the problem is, the problem lies where the water's coming out of the ground. And until somebody's got the gumption and the know-how to get hold of a covenant of God, and to get it at the source, you'll never have any productivity!

And look at the produce at this camp. Why? because we all believe the truth, we're not perfect people by a long stretch of the imagination, we've all got our problems but at least the source is pure, and as long as we keep drinking from that source, we have hope of the curse of God being lifted from us, and let me tell you, death is a curse of God, and a righteous and justified curse at that! as was the curse of Jericho the curse of God, put upon that city than no other person than Jehoshua Himself. And that curse could only be lifted by God, by God's methods, God's principles, God's standards, b&s. And He healed the waters, says the record, He healed those waters; what a beautiful expression. Now I want you to take note of this fact which is intensely interesting. Note that phrase 'He healed the waters'. What do you read for example in verse 14 of the same chapter? concerning the return of Elisha when Elijah was taken up, what did he do to the waters of Jordan, b&s, he killed them, it says 'he had smitten the waters' that word in the Hebrew means 'to smite badly, to wound' it is rendered 'to kill', and here was a remarkable thing; there was a river that represented the flesh and he came through that river and he smote those waters and drove them out of the way, and he went into that Land.

And having done that in himself, he comes to people who are resting under the curse of poisoned waters. And having, b&s, demonstrated the principle in the river Jordan, that he's got the ability to kill the principles that that river stood for, he now has got the privilege, the responsibility, and the power to heal other waters which are cursing you and I. And that's Paul's argument in Galatians, 'He was made a curse for us; for cursed is he that hangeth upon a tree', and you know, b&s, in that chapter in Galatians which we won't turn up because we're so familiar with it. What did the apostle say, 'that we're all under the curse because the Jew was under the curse of the Law, for cursed is every man that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them'. But we're not under that curse, we are under the curse of mortality and so was the Jew. So there was a double curse resting upon the Jew and a curse resting upon us, which no man could lift. Why? because there is none of us who had the power or the qualifications to lift the curse from ourselves after we lift it from the people. And here the Lord Jesus Christ came born of a woman, under the curse of mortality, born under the Law under the curse of the Law, and resting upon His shoulders, heavily resting upon His was the responsibility for removing that curse. And how did He do it? God smote Him, b&s, He smote Him! He put Him to death, He killed the waters of Jordan, and He brought Him from the dead and the Lord Jesus Christ has for ever since, been making the waters of life pure on our behalf!

And so the prophet Isaiah said in words which are eloquent, 'with His stripes we are healed'. And that's what happened, Jordan was smitten with stripes that Jericho might be healed. And in Jordan, b&s, he came back to the sons of the prophets, who didn't

believe him, but they were looking for a body they couldn't find, and he found the healing power which he had brought from Jordan, was given to men of the city of Jericho; I'm not suggesting they were Gentiles, we don't know who they were, but they're merely described as men of that city, living under the heavy curse of that city, and by his stripes they were healed. Very expressive is the principles of Jericho!

And you know, from that place Elisha commenced a journey into the hills of Judaea. He's coming up from Jericho and he wanted to go to Beth-el, so put it this way, he wanted to go to Carmel because that's where he finished. But in the course of his journey, he would go up through the hills of Judaea and through Beth-el, not because it was the easiest way to go, but because perhaps he wanted to visit the sons of the prophets of that place; and the record says 'he went up to Beth-el'. He went up to Beth-el alright, geographically he went up because he was down in the plains of Jericho and he'd go straight up into the hills of Judaea, spiritually he went down, b&s, Beth-el at this stage was full of idolatry. Do you know what people were doing at Beth-el? they were kissing cows, that's what they were doing at Beth-el, kissing cows; they were, of course, statues of cows however that's good as far as the bulls were concerned, but you'll see in a moment a reference that says they were kissing cows. And you know, we're going to have a look at what happened at Beth-el, and isn't it remarkable, b&s and young people, you see we commenced this study by telling you that it was going to be entitled 'the healing of Jericho and the judgment of Beth-el'. Isn't that interesting, because these two followed upon each other; and what happened, the Lord Jesus Christ came and healed people who were living under a curse, and when He went to the house of God, to His own, they rejected Him!

And Elisha found the same; he went to Jericho and the men of the city who had had this curse were appealing to him for help, and he helped them, he went to Beth-el, the house of God, and all he found in that place was violent opposition. You think of that, where he should have found everything else but violent opposition. I want to tell you something about Beth-el, because the stories of these prophets, you know, they don't mean a thing unless you see the associated history of these places. How much of the bible is written upon the history of these places, the geography of these places, it's immense! If you look at Beth-el, b&s, (we won't turn up all the references again, not all of them, because you know most of them) But you take Beth-el, it was so called by Jacob, he saw a vision of a ladder reaching unto heaven, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, and so he called the place Beth-el because he said 'this is the house of God', this is the doorway to heaven' he said. And later on when he came back into the land, God confirmed to him that it was indeed, Beth-el; this was to Jacob, the house of God. And there was something associated with Beth-el which Hosea the prophet picked up.

Now you come back to Genesis 35, and have a look what it was that Beth-el was associated with; in the 35th chapter of Genesis at verse 14 we read, 'And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him' (that is where he talked with God) 'even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el'. You see, God

spake with him there, notice the emphasis upon this, God talked with him, God spake with him, where? at Beth-el. And Beth-el was noted, b&s, for the place where God spake to Jacob, but He wasn't only speaking to Jacob, He was speaking to all Jacob's descendants who had a voice to hear what He was saying at Beth-el; and what God was saying to Jacob at Beth-el was nothing more or less than an reiteration and an emphasis upon the promises made to his patriarchs, the fathers of Israel, and that God would surely bring His seed into that Land, and that He would give it to them for an everlasting possession, and God speaking in the house of God was telling all generations of Israelites, that this was His avowed purpose and the emphasis was on God speaking.

Now you come to the 12th chapter of Hosea and see what he says about that; and in the 12th chapter of Hosea, Hosea speaks about the principles of Beth-el. And talking about Jacob he says in verse 3, 'He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto Him: He found him in Beth-el, and there He spake with us' (plural) Who spake? God spake; who'd He speak to? Jacob. To whom was He speaking? He was speaking to all the descendants of Jacob, there God spake with us; what was He telling Jacob? He was reiterating to him, not only the principles, b&s, of the promises made to the fathers, but what happen at Succoth when Jacob wrestled with the angel. And what was the principle involved in Beth-el? what was God trying to tell Jacob? He was telling him just this, to have trust in God, to listen to what God's got to say. How do we know that? because that was the very principle of Jacob wrestling with the angel; trust in God, that was the simple principle involved in that very, very, intriguing story. For you see, b&s, as the 'heel catcher' is what 'Jacob' means, (we say it means 'supplanter' but that's only one implication), it really means 'the heel catcher', and the word there, took by the heel, is the word 'Jacob', he took his brother by the heel, he 'Jacobed him in the womb. You see, as a heel catcher in the very infancy before he was born, in his extreme infancy, he was forever trying to trick men to bring about the promises of God by the ingenuity of his brain. But the record says 'when he had strength' and the word means 'maturity' when he grew up, he found it was better to rely on God's brain and power; he had power with God.

And so the prophet says in verse 6, 'therefore, turn thou to thy God keep mercy and judgment and wait on thy God continually'. Wait on Him, and that was the message of Beth-el and they should have known and never have forgotten it, and do you know, b&s, Jacob never forgot it, because when he came back to that place from Succoth and he wrestled with the angel, there was his brother Esau waiting to meet him with 400 men and he couldn't match him; he knew he was no match in a military sense to his brother. In years gone by, he would have thought of a scheme; oh, he would have defeated him, he would have thought of a wonderful scheme; that Jacob was very adept at doing, but he now realized that no longer was that of any avail, he had to rely upon God. And so he clung to the angel, and this is the point, and he sent his family, his beloved wives and children ahead of him; and they were going toward Esau. What could he do? what would he do? let go of the angel, rush up to his family and say, 'look, if we do this and that and everything else, we'll get through', or would he cling to the angel and say, 'well,

look, I've got no other strength but this', and he choose to do the latter! And it was morning, b&s, when he let go, b&s, and there's a verse in Genesis which is absolutely beautiful in its eloquency of the principle involved when it says, 'when Jacob went towards his family, the sun was risen upon him and he limped'; he was lame and he couldn't hurry. It was late, the sun was up upon him and he couldn't hurry and when he got there, everything was alright! And God had taken care of him! And that's what God was telling him at Beth-el; in his extreme infancy, he was forever trying to save himself; when he grew up he let Me save him! and Hosea said, that was the message of Beth-el.

And up to Beth-el went Elisha where that message should have been ringing in the ears of the children of Israel and he should have found at that place, b&s, a strong knit community on the basis of the truth, waiting upon the salvation of God, and all he found was 42 louts to challenge him. And louts they were in every sense of the word! and they were going to challenge him. And why were they going to challenge him? well you see, b&s, Beth-el had degenerated into nothing else but centre of the calf worship of Jeroboam. And when Jeroboam wanted to keep his people from going down to Jerusalem, to the Easter camps and bible schools which were held three times a year, because he knew the power of the still small voice, and when he wanted to keep his people from going down there, he put golden calves right on the southern border of his kingdom in Beth-el, and he put them right up in the north in Dan, so that people from either extremes of his kingdom would have no problem getting to the meeting places that he had arranged. He poisoned the source of the stream by changing the laws of God, and what happened? the record states that 'the people went to Dan' (which means 'judgment') and Beth-el means 'the house of God' and Peter tells us that 'judgment will begin at the house of God' for all those that poison the source of the stream, and who go in the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, just by altering the truth ever so slightly, changing a course here, and a course there in the Statement of Faith, that didn't really matter; doing away with the brethren that use to talk something about the Word of God, and making the lowest of the people priest, and saying, 'why shouldn't he have a go, he's not a bad chap, doesn't know anything about the bible but who cares! And just by a mere twist, he poisoned the source of all those streams, and this is where Elisha came in; and it was the centre of this calf worship, and I believe, b&s, that the challenge he received at Beth-el was an organized challenged, because they knew, they knew by the very words they used that this man was the successor of Elijah and they didn't want him around!

And so as he went up to Beth-el, the record says 'little children came out'. Bear in mind here, that when it says 'little children' that phrase means 'a boy' actually, Rotherham says 'young lads'. That phrase or term is used of Isaac when he was 28 years of age, of Joseph when he was 39 and Rehoboam when he was 40. So there's no difficulty here in having to reconcile the record of the bible with the fact that God would allow bears to tear little children, for perhaps some naughtiness; God wouldn't do that sort of thing, b&s, these weren't little children, these were young men and they knew what they were doing. And I believe this was organized and I believe this was the first challenge that Elisha had to meet because he was going to come across Baal worship again and again; he was going to ignore it largely and work upon the still small voice among the

prophets, but he had to answer that challenge, because they were saying to him 'Alah, alah, thou round head, alah, alah thou round head. The word 'alah' means to 'go up' and it was the very word that was used for Elijah when he was taken up; and I believe what they were saying was, 'we got rid of him, the lord of hair is gone, the fellow from Carmel he's gone; go on, go on, get up, get up with him, you round headed thing!' And you see, by using the term 'round head' of course, they were trying to drive into his mind, b&s, they were trying to drive a wedge between him and Elijah; they were trying to point out to him as one who didn't have the marks or the qualifications for leadership. But it didn't work, and Elijah turned and looked back, and of course, they'd always attack from the rear (they wouldn't be in front of him) that crowd never are! 'He turned and looked back at them and he cursed them in the name of Yahweh'; he had just lifted a curse from Jericho, and he put one on the house of God. And that's what God did! He lifted a curse from amongst the Gentiles, because Jericho was the site, the men of the city may not have been Gentiles (we don't know what they were) this we know, that Jericho was a Gentile city, and whilst the curse of God had been lifted from Gentiles, the curse of God rested upon His children who were singing out in the streets, 'let his blood be upon our heads; so be it!' and the dreadful curse that fell upon them in AD 70 and forever after, has been a terrible curse and Elisha turned around and he cursed them in the name of Yahweh, as if to make the issue quite plain as to where he stood. They were attached to the calves of Beth-el, he wasn't attached to the calves of Beth-el, b&s; he was attached to the name of Yahweh, and he made the issue quite plain and no sooner had he done that than two she bears lumbered out of the woods and there was a dreadful carnage.

And it would have been dreadful; ever been through the scriptures on the symbolism of the bear? It makes blood-chilling reading, believe me, because the bear was noted, b&s, for its savagery. Whereas the lion in the scriptures was noted for the fact that it would kill for its food, the bear was noted for its savagery, and not only that but there are four references in the scriptures to the strong maternal instincts of a she bear. And you'll remember one that was made when Hushai the Archite, when he was giving counsel to Absalom, and Absalom was listening with great interest and he said, 'you know your father, David, I wouldn't chase him; he's like a bear robbed of her whelps'. Yes, I get your point! and you know, in the 17th chapter of Proverbs, b&s, there's a nice reference here and this is interesting, in verse 12 we read, 'Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly'. Very expressive, 'let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly', they were fools, and a bear met them, those she bears; we don't know if they were robbed of their whelps, but why does the record say she bears? And who knows, b&s, that those 42 young lads may not have been responsible for the destruction of the progeny of those bears? We don't know, but there are some remarkable stories told about the maternal instincts of a bear.

When I was studying up for this study, I got hold of authorities on this, and had a look at it, and there are some remarkable stories told about the memory of a she bear, that will never forget anybody that touches her young, and of the maternal instincts in those creatures is truly remarkable what they will do to preserve their young, and what they will do when you harm their young. And if you go through the Rockies of Canada, where Ronnie Abel comes from, and they say, 'keep a lookout for the bears' (which we never

saw; we don't believe they're there) but they always tell you don't get between a bear and her young, never do that! because it's courting disaster!

But the most interesting reference of all, of a bear robbed of her whelps is found in the prophecy of Hosea and in the 13th chapter. Have a look at this one, but of course, Hosea didn't write in the life and times of Elisha, but as we stated before, he wrote after Elisha, but look at this reference here, b&s, in Hosea 13 and verse 1. 'When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel: but when he offended in Baal, he died', here's a wonderful principle, when a man is humble, he will be exalted; but when he becomes proud and follows the proud religion of Baal, he will die. And what are they doing in verse 2, it says, 'And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves'. And of course, the calf worship was started at Beth-el, they were kissing the calves of Beth-el, and were puffed up in their fleshly pride which was associated with their religion.

Verse 7, 'Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them; and I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps', and that's exactly what Elisha did! And he met them as a bear bereaved of her whelps and he rent the caul of their hearts, and he tore them in pieces; and if that's not a commentary, b&s, upon the incident of Elisha, I've never seen one! and it proves this, that if that is a commentary upon that incident, then we're outside of Beth-el where they kissed those calves, and God's going to meet them as a bear robbed of her whelps, then it proves this also, that those young men were attached, very much attached to Baal worship, and they were going to challenge Elisha, challenge him openly as the successor of Elijah; and if they'd got away with that, b&s, there would have been immediately, a collapse among the sons of the prophets. Baal worship would have swept them out of existence, and there would not have been on the earth, a people prepared for the LORD. That would have been gone, but Elisha met that challenge and mild mannered as he was, he turned back and cursed them in the name of Yahweh. And let me warn you now, and let's all be warned about this, and let me heed the warning as well, b&s, Baal worship is very much extent today. What is Baal worship? You say you wouldn't kiss a calf, well, (I've seen some people, who look very much like cows and people kiss them), but we might not kiss a golden calf but look, let's be serious about this, what was Baal worship? Do you know what 'Baal' means? people say it means 'lord' and so it does, but the connotation of that term 'lord' is that one is possessed by that lord; Baal means 'a possessor' and you see, Baal worship was not associated with one form of worship only. But you see, the title 'Baal' became attached to whatever form of worship that had overtaken the people, and God's punishment was always comparable to that, so in the days of Gideon they were overtaken by the worship of Baal-berith, they had become possessed with another covenant, and so God punished them for seven years. That was justice! In the days of the wanderings of the children of Israel, they had become possessed by Baal-peor, (and I can't tell you the meaning of 'peor' because we're in mixed company, but it has to do with the most vilest immorality) and the punishment for that was that a man and a woman were pierced through with one sword.

And that was very fitting! In the days of the Lord Jesus Christ, the scribes and Pharisees were possessed with the lord of flies, with their own filthiness, and the holocaust of AD 70 fitted that crowd, and today, b&s, Baal stalks the earth, he stalks this earth, Baal-materialism. He's a terrific god! and in this country where they're digging out of the ground all those minerals which make those lovely silver idols, made round to go round, others made flat to stack, Baal-materialism is with us. What are we possessed by? b&s, we're going to be possessed with something; who owns us? whose slaves are we? and whatever possesses us to that person, or to that principle we are enslaved. And you know, b&s, when we come and realize the epitome of Baal worship, the fact of being possessed, you can see the need for Elisha to challenge that at the very onset, and challenge it he did! Met that challenge and as God said, 'those that kiss the calves, I'll meet them as a bear robbed of her whelps', and none of us want to meet a bear robbed of its whelps. We're going to see a couple tomorrow night, and I hope when we see them the lesson will go home, b&s, and we'll all remember that we've got to be possessed by the truth and the truth only, and not by anything else. Oh, yes, you can have your homes, got to have them; have your motor cars, almost an necessity in this age and generation; have your money, got to be secure, but never let them get hold of you and strangle you to death! You know, it sickens me when you move among the Gentiles and you see men bowing and scraping to money, it just sickens me, b&s. Cutting each other's throat to work an extra ½ hour overtime, while I'm cutting his throat to get out of it! They'd kill their mother for money, and that's how it is, they're absolutely possessed by it; they know nothing else, they just don't. They live, breathe, and drink it (literally), and it drives you mad, and when you see that coming into the Christadelphian community, look, it hurts because we can't afford the time; and if you say to me, 'well, John, what's the good of talking like that, I can't get by now? Come tomorrow morning to the exhortation and listen to that! because we're going back to the story of Elisha, where a woman came to him and said she couldn't live, and she found herself supplying the sons of the prophets, the lot of them! It's remarkable the lessons in this book, b&s and young people, and if we heed these things today, today in the day of opportunity, we're going to live! live forever.

And you know, it's interesting, and we must conclude now, but in that 2nd chapter of Kings it's interesting to follow Elisha, that after this incident, in 2 Kings chapter 2, we read that after the killing of the 42 young lads of Beth-el, in verse 25, 'he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria'. You know, that's remarkable isn't it, he went from Beth-el to mount Carmel (right up there) I suppose 30 or 40 miles, and he came back to Samaria where he stayed. Doesn't say why he went to Carmel, there's no purpose revealed, but do we need a purpose to be revealed? Isn't it tremendous to, imagine him coming through Beth-el; (I can appreciate this) as he came from Beth-el and he saw those young lads torn to shreds, it must have outraged his feelings because he didn't want to destroy people, and he went to seek the solitude of Carmel. And I can imagine him, b&s, sitting up on that mount, where he was found quite frequently, by the way, and where he would have drawn upon a strength from on high, and remembered the sterling example of his master, Elijah, and the principles for which he stood, and would have refreshed himself in the oneness of the power of the Word of God. And then he'd return to Samaria and tomorrow morning, b&s, we hope to

pick him up again, and to continue our story of this wonderful man of God!