

Healing of the Water (2 King 2:21-22)

David Xu, 11 Mar 2018

Travelling in Israel is like travelling through the history of the Bible. When you visit a place, a Bible story or verse will come to you. The Bible is no longer a book of knowledge, it becomes alive. At the sea of Galilee, you would think about Jesus walking on the water, calming the storm. On Mt Carmel, you would remember how Elijah prayed to Lord, and Lord brought down fire from heaven. The miracles that happened in the Bible are right in front of your eyes and they challenge the way you think and act.

Standing in front of the fountain Elisha healed, I kept asking God, can I be a part of his miracle; How can he use me to perform his miracle?

Background Jericho City

¹⁹ The people of the city said to Elisha, "Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad, and the land is unproductive."

This story took place in Jericho - the world oldest city according to some scholars. Jericho was the first city Israelites conquered after they crossed Jordan river. The Lord asked the Israelites to walk around the city for 7 days, and on the last day, they all made a lot of noise and the wall collapsed. They then took the city - what a miracle!

Yet after conquering Jericho, Joshua put a curse on the city, "Cursed is the man before the LORD, who rises up and builds this city Jericho. With the loss of his firstborn he will lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son he will set up its gates." (Joshua 6: 26)

During King Ahab's time, Hiel rebuilt the city Jericho," He laid its foundation with the loss of Abiram his firstborn and set up its gates with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to the LORD's word, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun." (1 King 16:34)

As we all know, water is essential to human beings. All major ancient cities were originally built near water. Now this city had a problem. The water is bad, the land produce nothing. It was a city of desolation. The people must have had tried many ways to solve the problem, but as water was bad, all their efforts were in vain.

What could people of Jericho do? Were they forgotten and forever being cursed by God? Should they abandon the city?

Have you been in a situation that you feel like you are by yourself, you are forgotten by everyone, you fight very hard, you've tried every way you can find, but you can't go anywhere?

What can you do?

Elisha

Now Elisha came to the stage. In 1 king 19, we learned that he was son of Shaphat. He was a farmer when Elijah found him.

He was chosen to follow Elijah by God. Elijah put his cloak over him and he followed him. (1 King 19)

He was very committed to Elijah. He was dedicated to inherit Elijah's spirit. In 2 King, 3 times Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to where." 3 times Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be on me." (2King 2:10)

He inherited Elijah's spirit and doubled. And according to scholars, the number of miracles he performed doubled than Elijah.

We have a lot to learn from Elisha as followers of Jesus. We need to learn his persistence that when he made up his mind to follow his teacher, he would not quit until he got blessed.

Another thing we can take from Elisha's story is his faith. After Elijah was taken to heaven, he took his cloak, went to Jordan river, and immediately, he put his faith into action. The Jordan river was divided as it was also divided before Elijah. Faith is action, Elisha never hesitated to put his faith into action.

When people of Jericho saw Elisha dividing the Jordan river, they knew Elisha was not an ordinary man. He was a man of God. They bowed themselves in front of him, they approached to him for help. When you are in a difficult situation, who do you seek for help? Can you recognize the one God send to your way to help you? Or is your heart hard and pride that stop you seeking help from God?

Faith in Action

Immediately, Elisha offered to help. "Bring me a new bowl and put salt in it". Do you see how his faith naturally linked to action? He believed God can solve the problem, and he put it into action immediately.

Hang on, didn't God curse the city? How could Elisha change God's mind? No, Elisha didn't change God's mind, it is God's perfect will to have everyone saved by his grace. God said himself that he will punish the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments (Exodus 20:6). Peter said "he Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

Yes, God does discipline us, sometimes it can be harsh, but His discipline is out of his everlasting love. It is for our own good, to bring us back to him so that he can show his love to us, so that we can become his loving children again.

Elisha knew God's heart, and he acted upon God's faithful promise.

I wonder how many Christians today are like Elisha, who know God's heart so well, that under any circumstance, they can act like Elisha. When a situation comes up, can we act immediately according His sovereign will. Is our spirit link to His spirit all the time?

Pastor Peter knew a friend who went to a weekend market to preach. Well you know how weekend markets are like. Few people paid attention to him. He saw a crippled

man sitting on the ground with his crutches next to him. At the moment, he heard God saying to him "heal him". So he went to the man and said to him " in the name of Lord Jesus Christ, get up". You know what happened, this man got up, without crutches, he started to walk and then dance. He threw the crutches into the fire. People in the market are amazed, gathered around him, and many got saved. He put his faith into action, and God honoured him.

When our spirit linked to God's spirit, when we know his heart and perfect plan for us, when we connect with him 24/7, we will live a super natural life naturally. We will experience His miracle and be part of it.

The salt

Elisha was ready to take action.

²¹ Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, "This is what the Lord says: 'I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.'" ²² And the water has remained pure to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken. (2 King 2:21-22)

Elisha threw salt into water and proclaimed healing of the water in Jericho. And the water became pure.

Interestingly, Elisha used salt as an agent to heal the water, many hundred years later, Jesus called his disciples as "salt on the earth". (Matthew 5:13). So why salt?

Salt is an ingredient indispensable in our daily life. Salt add taste to food. It is also used to preserve food. What's more, salt is essential to human lives. Human body can't sustain without salt. Jesus asked us to be salt. What did Jesus mean we are to be salt? Could he mean that we, as his followers to bring taste to other people's live? To make their lives better? Could he mean, as salt, we Christians, are essential to bring life to the world, like the salt used by Elisha which brought healing to Jericho?

In 251 A.D. a great plague struck Roman world. Just a century ago, a plague took 1/3 of the population away. The fear was overwhelming. Those who could afford it fled to the countryside. Those who could not remained in the cities. People went to the temples for help, they found them empty, the priests having fled. The streets were filled with those who had become infected, their families left with no option but to push them out the door. Yet Christian communities saw it as their responsibility to love the sick and dying, so they took them into their homes and nursed them. Historians suggest that elementary nursing could have reduced the death rate by as much as two thirds, but it also cost a number of Christian their lives.

Was it a miracle that death rate dropped by 2/3? Was it a miracle that these Christians willing to take care the sick, even at the cost of their own lives? Were these Christians like salt that brought healing and life to the world?

Jesus said "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."(John 13:35)

To get salt is not an easy process. Salt is found in the sea. First you will need to store sea water, let the water evaporate, leaving you the salt. Another way to get salt is mining from the earth, the soil that contains salt need to be washed, purified, and vaporized to get salt.

Either way, getting salt is a long and tedious process. Imagine if the salt doesn't want to leave the water? Just imagine the salt saying to workers; "don't take me out of the sea, don't leave me in the field under the sunshine, or don't take me from the earth, don't cleanse me, don't purify me, I would rather stay in the earth"?

Same way, if we cried to Jesus, don't take me out from the sea, or earth, I don't want to be left under sunshine, I don't want to be cleansed and purified, then who can God use to heal the world?

To be a Christian, means you want to go through this process, you are willing let Jesus to extract you from the sea, leave you under the sunshine in field, wait for the water to be vaporized, being purified, then you can be called salt. And be used by Jesus.

But this is only the first stage, the second stage is more painful. When you become salt, you need to be put into use. Guess what happens to salt when it is used? What happened to the salt, Elisha threw into water? It disappeared. When Jesus said, we are the salt on the earth, could he mean that we need prepare to sacrifice ourselves?

What would happen if salt said to Elisha, don't throw me into the water, because I am so pure so white, so pretty, I don't want dissolve again. After all the process of becoming salt is hard enough. But Jesus warned us "But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. "

Jesus said "24 Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. "(John 12: 24-25)

In 1912 Harper, was traveling on the Titanic with his 6-year-old daughter. After he got his daughter into a lifeboat then he ran through the ship yelling, "Women, children, and unsaved into the lifeboats!" Survivors report that he gave his lifejacket to another man, he preached to anyone who would listen. He continued preaching even after he had jumped into the water and was clinging to a piece of wreckage.

Four years later at a meeting a man said: "I am a survivor of the Titanic. The tide brought Mr. Harper near me. 'Man,' he said, 'are you saved?' 'No,' I said, 'I am not.' He replied, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. 'The waves bore him away, but, strange to say, brought him back a little later, and he said, 'Are you saved now?' 'No,' I said, 'I cannot honestly say that I am.' He said again, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' and shortly after he went down; and there, alone in the night, and with two miles of water under me, I believed. I am John Harper's last convert."

Was it a miracle that at the end of his life, he thought not to save his life but save another soul?

Salt of world, let's we take responsibility to bring life and light to this world.