

The Lord who Finishes what He Starts

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[0:00] So, as the screen says, it's from 2 Kings, chapter 2, and it's now from verse 7. So, 2 Kings, chapter 2, verse 7-3, if we continue the story of Elijah and Elisha as passing on that great ministry.

So, this is our year, verse 7. Fifty men, for the company of prophets, men stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped in the journey. Elisha took his foot, rolled it up, and struck the water off the top of the top.

The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two crossed the water on the right. When they crossed, Elisha said to Elijah, I shall tell you what I do for you, before I am taking from you. Let me get a little portion of your spirit in Elisha's life.

You have asked a difficult thing, Elisha said, yet you see me when I am taking from you. They will be yours, otherwise they will not. As we were walking up home, and talking to you, suddenly a chariot of fire, and courses of fire, appeared and sent me to the door, and Elisha went up to heaven.

Elisha saw this and cried out, My father, my father, the chariot had crossed the ministry, and Elisha saw them home. Then he took over his garment, and told him, and told him.

[1:11] Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak, and had fallen from him, and he stood at the bank of the door. He took the little bit of falling from Elijah, and struck the water with him. Where now is the Lord of God to the Elisha?

When he struck the water, and he bowed to the right and to the left, he crossed the water. The company of the prophet Elisha, who were watching, said, they spit on Elisha's blessing on Elisha. And they went to eat him, and bowed with the ground before him.

Look, he said, eat yourself, and take you now. Then go and look for your master. Perhaps he spit on the Lord, and he spit him up, and set him down at some mountain of some valley. No, Elisha replied, I did not say. But they persisted, and they would have been surprised to refuse.

So he said, send him. And he sent fifty men who served for three days to get their thinking. Finally he turned to Elisha, who was standing there, and he said, didn't think they were going to go. The people that sent him, said to Elisha, I told you, I remember this town's will such a great national sea, but the water is fine, and the land is not productive.

Then he moved, he said, and put some hand. So they brought him to him. Then went out, and sprained, and threw the song hand to him, saying, this is what the Lord says, I have healed this world. And there began it because death, or made the land of the land.

[2:15] And the water has remained pure in this day, according to the word, Elisha had spoken. From there Elisha came to Bethany. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of town in Gilead, Gilead and Ammon, to get out of here, over here, he said, get out of here, over here.

He turned around, looked at him, and called him and cursed him in the air floor. Then two bears could go to us, and them all forty-two boys. And he made one to make our children disappear.

Thanks Derek for reading that for us.

And if you keep your Bibles open, except the things you do, that would be great. If you find out by inside the Lord's sheet, let's pray and ask for God's help. Know that the Lord is God, and the Lord is he, who made us.

Almighty God, who has made us, and who has become our Shepherd, and our Holy Heavenly Father. And we ask that you will speak to us now, by your Spirit. And we will give us ears to hear you, and turn our hearts back to you.

For Jesus' name's sake. Amen. Well, a key theme in this chapter of the Bible is the idea of Succession. Succession is a big issue in life today. This is a smash-in American drama, Succession, about chaos when a media magnet Lord and Boyd had to be retired from the family business.

[3:21] Succession is a problem in football, when a successful manager's taken to the family, how the focus in effect, how God is to follow a successful manager. It's an issue right now for Apple, where Steve Jobs handed over to Tim Cook. He got the job, and all in the world wanted, of succeeding Steve Jobs at Apple.

But actually, Apple had grown under him. And now, people are asking, will the next cops at Apple also have the minds touch? And of course, our big Succession story in the UK was the Queen's death four years ago, and her 70-year reign, and the 15 Prime Ministers had come to an end, and there was this sense of, how will things change under a king?

When? We've not seen, perhaps, someone else behind one. Now, that idea we found on today, what the people have got in this chapter. So much so, that in these situations, when we come across in the world today, we sometimes use the phrase, don't we, we're just going to take up the mantle now.

And if you've ever heard of that, for example, that is what's going to be in our chapter today, the guy who's taking up the mantle. So Elijah was this magnificent, faithful man in the Gospel, and we've seen his story to the heart of this poor first and second king, as he magnificently brought God's word to a people who had gone and rescued, and drifted upon him under the faithless kingdom. He called them back to God, and it was a great fight for the souls of the people of God. And that's why we see such a tickling miracle happening around this season in the first and second kings. As I recall, I believe God works fabulous later in the world today, but I think we can see four periods of human history where God's signs and wonders were especially intense.

[4:39] One is around the Exodus, when God first showed up and rescued people and brought them out slavery. And then the second season is in this time of Elijah, and then Elijah has a fighter, turn their hearts back, and then the third will be in the life of Jesus.

And then the fourth season will be in the work of the apostles, in Acts, as God indicated their message with signs and wonders. So, it's epic stuff. And we're going to see in our first point today, as Elijah believes, that God's power is still enduring, and still live for him.

Our chapter has the only thing run right through it very significantly, so let me just show you that. Here we go first from the chapter 2. We get the Lord was about to take Elijah to heaven and the world went. Elijah and Elisha are on their way from Yilgah. Okay, so in the chapter they all go from Yilgah to, which is in Samaria, they go from Samaria to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and then they go from Jericho to the Jordan River, which was the way the gospel first came into the right side.

That's at the centre, and Elijah is then taken away. And then Elisha, who's been following him, takes the same route back in the second half of the chapter, from the Jordan River, because Jericho, from Jericho to Bethel, and Bethel to Samaria, significantly.

And we're going to think about that. And if you look down to verse 2 and verse 46, you can see that as Elijah and Elisha four, three times Elijah urges Elijah not to form him. So verse 2, verse 4 and verse 6, he says the same thing, three times, stay here, the Lord has sent him.

[5:50] I'm not sure why. I think it's partly to demonstrate that Elijah's commitment to the word God. Elijah will not leave the prophet Elijah behind. He's cleaving to him. He's saying yes to the commission to him.

It might also be that Elijah is deleted about Elisha's ministry that's coming, because he's known, as we know if we read, it's only typing that Elisha is going to be a minister, of course, to the truth. We're not sure fully why, but it does build a suspense of how big a deal it is that Elijah is living. That he keeps saying stay here, and Elisha's power leaving, and he can follow us now. And he seems to be following the group in reverse, that Joshua's going to bring the people in, in the context of what we're seeing into the world. So what we're seeing is the word of God being pulled out through the prophet of God leaving, and being left thinking, is this the end of God's people?

His gracious word is going. So in verse 7, they abide at the Jordan river, and they stop. Verse 7 to 15, and the prophet went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elijah were stopped at the Jordan. Elijah took his claw, he walked up and struck the water with it, the water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

Then he says to them, Elisha, what can I do for you? In verse 9, Elisha says, The double portion of your spirit. Not that he'll be twice as powerful as Elijah was being, but the double portion was what was rightly a lot of the first part in a family.

[6:59] And so he's saying, Let me be your heir, and let God finish the world that started through you, through me. Through me. So then we get a set of point in the whole chapter verse 11, as they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire, and horse of fire, appeared, and separated the two of them, and Elijah went into heaven, in a world.

What a moment. And David, this is the morning that inspired the new spiritual song. Sweet moat, sweet child, I've been called to carry thee home. Still, the Christmas Eve our leaders will be supported, so I'm going to see you often at the end.

But you can see the original idea, such a wonderful thing to be out here, that Elijah is one of two people we know of in human history. Given that privilege, that the Lord, that's only important to be with him, without even having to pass through death.

And so the son is evoking that kind of prayer, that we need to be brought home, forgotten.

Wonderful for Elijah, but for the people, again deeply troubling, but now he's gone, what next? So look at Elijah's cry, and he goes, My father, my father, the chariot of the horsemen of Israel.

And I take the effect what Elijah means by the chariot of the horsemen, is not the chariot of fire, that's coming from heaven, but rather he means Elijah, is the chariot of the horsemen of Israel. He's the cavalry, he's the strength. Without the word of God, the people of God have no strength.

[8:04] And now he's gone, what now? And then, verse 13, Elijah, picks up the cloak, that's the mantle, he takes up the mantle, that's fallen, and he goes back and he stands on the back of the jaw. Verse 14, and he took the cloak, that it's fallen from Elijah, and struck the water with it.

Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah, in the earth? Now why is he gone out? I think partly because, there's no bridge, right? So he's stuck, on the other side of the river, and if not the miraculous happened now, Elijah's going to have to spend the days, walking on stream, to go round, he's stuck, and the company of the prophets were watching him.

But then, when he struck the water, it divided, to the right and to the left, and he crossed off. So it answers his questions, and his question is, where is the Lord, the Lord of Elijah, and the earth's 15, that the company of the prophets were watching, realized, because of the miracle, that the spirit of Elijah is resting, on Elijah.

They've worked it out, and they walked in him, and they bowed him around. In other words, the key point is, God certainly is God, but God's power will still reach his people, for his power is not confined. He's not confined to one particular hero, and you see that in this part of the Jordan, because if you were, and it's really like, thinking about his God's power to us now, we need God's power.

What you think back to, was God's power to the exodus, and dramatically, that power was displayed, when Moses got off to the Red Sea, to save his people, and the other one. And then, through Joshua, on the place of the New Orleans, they stood on the edge of the Poison land, God's part of the Red Jordan.

[9:21] So looking back to Israel, we're never thinking, God's power has got to show the fight for them, and think of the Red's party, and now there they are, and Elijah parts of the Jordan, and Elijah parts of the Jordan, and it communicates to them, God's power is not confined to one particular hero, he is for you today.

And we need to do that today, as well, don't we? In our times, it's easy to look back at times in history, with cross-tinted spectacles, and think, our books have worked then, but we won't see times like that, because everything's changed now.

So we might look back, at Scotland, and the great histories of spiritual renewal, that happened in Scotland, there was, you can call in Cancel, to the park, and you can stand, but to the fact, to remember where, George Abel came, and he preached, the gospel, and hundreds of people, on the same day, gave their lives to Jesus, and gave their flame across Scotland, to the spiritual awakening, and, at the time, from the island of Lewis, or the gods, particularly in the early 50s, early 1950s, when there was this revival, and young people, suddenly struck by great fear, about wanting to be invited, and seeking Jesus, and transforming the island.

And we can think to ourselves, well, did that really happen, where we live now, the conscious change, people are moving on. And, this chapter reassures us, we're not to think like that, that God can't be confined, in particular anyway, he is powerful today, to work by his spirit, to turn to his heart back to him.

And this chapter also identifies, that the calendar of God is not confined, for a particular leader, that we can be guilty, thinking that we can think of, particular men, or women being greatly abused by

God, and then, they die, or they retire, they sadly fall, and, we feel that then, and we think, is there any more, after them?

[10:52] I speak to people, who can remember, but we can see, and, and, and, and just the extraordinary impact, that his ministry had, and the people whose family members, were saved by him, by God speaking, the advocate of Tim Kelly, who died four years ago, he was the man, and all my mates to hear, and all my mates to read books, but then, without them, God is not powerful, to act, in extraordinary ways, in our time.

He's not confined, particularly to the, he wasn't confined to Elijah, his spirit, and work, wherever he teaches, through the memory of his, and so, for us, the encouragement is, attempt, great things for God, and expect great things from God, pray, audacious prayers, in our times, and did bravely for him.

So, the thing I've seen in this chapter, really build our confidence, to live for God today, and it's our second part, God's Savior Judges come, trustfully, in him. We've known since verse 15 and 19, that Elijah's going to have his ministry, God explains to Elijah on a mountain, that Elijah would have this, dramatic ministry of judging and saving, but the end of Kings, is a disaster, the end of this book, and the people have got a letter thinking, we need another Savior, that judge, we need God to send an ultimate Savior, that judge.

But what are they to look out for, to recognize him? What God does is, we use through history, patterns, paradigms, that foreshadow, what his ultimate Savior Judges will be like, so that we can have, every confidence in him, when he comes.

As Charles Wesley says, when he's saying this about Jesus, the ancient shadows are fulfilled, when we come to Jesus. Now the second thing to do, we have these, exciting shadows, that have been laid out for us, and the first thing we can explore is, the larger control between Elijah, who's just been taken away, and the ministry of John the Baptist, that we have in our first reading.

[12:24] The fourth thing to have, a message calling people, to turn back to God, to repent, it's called to repent. And lastly we heard that, the king who knew Elijah, recognized by his clause, that he bought a garment made of Calus, there, so a grace would just go to the next slide, and you can see, keep track of this, there's the call to repent, and then there's the Elijah, clothing, his garment of Calus there, and Matthew tells us, about John the Baptist, that his clothing, that he's called to a bit of Calus there, he had a leather belt on his wrist, so he went out to his first, and he said, I've got a particular request for you, and even Elijah cost you, and he went out to the wilderness, to preach to repent, dressed as Elijah, and if we still have a bit of dimensions, the prophet Malachami, ends our Old Testament, with the Lord saying, that the Lord's gonna come, and the glory comes, as we call that, send Elijah, to turn the heart of the people back to me.

And then Jesus tells his disciples, Elijah and Haskell, meaning John the Baptist, that was his ministry. So there were these apostles, four of us in the 4-10, and now if you think about the hamul, from Elijah to Elijah, God foreshadows, what John and Maxis will do, as he passed on the baton, to Jesus, and the hamul that happens in the Jordan River, and in Matthew chapter 3, Jesus heads out from Galilee, to meet John and Jordan River, to be baptized by him.

and the watching witnesses, say of Elijah, and of the spirit of Elijah, is resting on Elijah. And as Jesus comes out of the water, to baptism, heaven is on him, and the spirit, to stand on him like a dove, and rest to the night of him.

And then we see how Jesus, is the true and great Elijah, the successor. You see it from the name, so Elijah's name, which literally just means God saves, which of course is Jesus name, the angel says you're calling Jesus, because it means God saves, and he will save his people from their sins. And as well as their name is the same thing. They call it Ramjahina the same thing. So in the next chapter, we'll see it's Elijah, there's a series of miracles, that if you come in, it's backwards, because you know more about Jesus in the Gospel, well how Jesus did these miracles?

[14:06] But Jesus is going around, self-consciously doing the miracles, that Elijah had foreshadowed. So we'll see that, a woman's son dies, and she runs to Elijah, and Elijah raises her son to life. And then we see Jesus arriving at the town of May, and you were coming out, from the years of his son, and he raises the Lord into life.

And then we'll see Elijah in the feeding miracle, where they're like, there's a large crowd, there are a hundred men, and there's just a few laws, and the light of these them, and then there's leftovers. Miracles that demonstrate, that it's not just that Jesus has extraordinary talent, but that he's exactly the deliverer of the judge, that God has promised, and he's all in the history, that's at him.

So when we see him, well this is exactly what we needed, God's Saviour just can't take it. So the hand over in his chapter, in Jesus' name, points us to the great Saviour who is coming. And this is great news for any of you, if you're someone here today who thinks, when I come to church, I look at other people and think, hey, they seem to have such confidence about their faith. I wish, I have that confidence, but I struggle to believe. And it's as if the Lord is saying to this chapter, don't spend your best years, sitting on the fence, worrying about whether or not this is true. Because it is true.

It is true. And the Bible just unfolds like that, to give us this great confidence, that right through history, Jesus was coming, and now he has come. So that you can take a big step forward this week, in living for God's sake, and have the confidence to speak for a friend, about Jesus.

[15:21] So what should we then expect from God's ultimate deliverer of the judge, that there was God, that's after our response is decisive, so welcome here. Elijah at the Vespa chapter, who traces that journey, back to the Pong's land, he goes to Jericho, and he goes to Bethel, and God brings an abundant blessing, to God, and create a curse, to people, depending how we respond, to God's man.

Because the man represents God's words of Bethel, and how we respond to those words, shows God how we respond in the packet. As spiritual backgrounds, remember that Israel had a particular relationship with God, it was sort of by stipulations, it was a covenant, and there were blessings promised, if they kept trusting God, and curses, if they turned from God, to worship for Spots. And those blessings and curses were tied, to their prosperity, or famine, in the land. So let's take a journey to Bethel, first. Because it actually is more the kind of work, that they're honestly expecting Elisha to do, when he was in Bethel, we were expecting to be an instrument of the prosecution, and from verse 23, just go look, Elisha went to Bethel, as he was walking on the road, some boys came out of town, and Jeheath said, Get out of here, Baldi!

He said, Get out of here, Baldi! And then Elisha caused down a curse on him, and gave him the name of the Lord, and two bears, come out of the woods, and they maw, 42 of them. So if you're anything like me, with my life experience, what I picture you is, a little gang of youths, hanging out, not the chance to fear, they're outside parking booths, I bought shops, drinking cider, and Elisha, is just a funny-looking book, who happens to walk past, and they shout at youths.

All people, they hope this isn't sounding too, fulfilling an experience for any of you, who might be having a speeding hair run. But the next thing you know, some bears appear in Kilmer. When we think about it more closely, this is Bethel he's gone to.

[16:52] And Bethel is the place where King Jeroboam had built a golden calf for the people. So it is the epitome of false worship. All the people got rescued. They'd done the golden calf, they thought that was my idea, and said, no, I haven't forgotten, but this happened before.

Let's worship this, this is the God that brought Sabbath, he did. And God is, of course, offended by that spiritual doctrine. Now Elisha was even in the town, he's passing by the town, and they come out, to make sure they go in.

And there are lots of boys here, right, because of these forces, there are more forces here, and these forces get more. So when this group, get out of here, it's not random and mockery, this is a town that knows exactly who Elisha represents.

And what they're doing is resolving, we don't want the living God anywhere near us. This is their moment to drive us away. And thinking back to the covenant relationship that Israel has with God, God had, one of the curses on the grounds of judgment that they rejected God, was that he would withdraw protection from them in the promised land, and while man, what would be that shone.

So when we pursue the idea that God won't bring judgment like this, we might need to make with the place in our view of God, and we need this warning that there is a healthy way to be afraid of the living God in terms of what it would mean to stand before his appointed saving judge on Judgment Day, which we will all do, having rejected him, having pushed him away in our minds.

[18:06] It will be a perfect day if you've done that. So that's definitely, but then let's go to Jericho. Now this is amazing, because in Leviticus 26, one of the Black Saint's comments was the people of hateless fertile land, but Elisha arrives at Jericho and over verse 19, the people of the city say to Elisha, our Lord, this town is well situated as you can see where the water is bad, and the land is unreded up.

Literally, the land's something miscarriage, who believes that the livestock that the past life can't reduce because of the poison in the water and pollution. But they call Elisha their Lord to be the

sea, and they ask him for help.

So he goes out to the supreme and draws salt in it, and he makes a declaration that he does come and go out here with this water. Never again will it cause death, or then the land unreded. And the water has come in New York to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.

So this is the voice of life-giving, healing and blessing. And it's remarkable that this happened to Jericho, because Jericho was a city under the curse of God. It had been rebuilt, even though God had said that people in the water bring the curse.

And even here, where they did that disobediently, God's grace overcomes for the curse. In a look at the message of this encounter is, waiting to come to God's Saviour, and asking for mercy and help.

[19:10] His grace over-veilantly wipes away your past. Precious news from Jericho, but also wonderful news for any of us here today who are struggling in line for the effects of a past sin.

Something we've done, that we feel still freaks carnage in our lives. That thing we did wrong ever to be so costly for our marriage, or for our livelihood. Or it gives us ongoing feelings of shame, and we wonder, could that be wiped away?

Well, God's grace is powerful to overcome that normal benefit, to heal you, and restore you, and give you new life. And this is what God's doing since 21 years comes to his saying, there's no greater thing.

So the chapter leads us to reflect, how am I responding to God's Saviour Judge today? Our response to him is what is so decisive. It might not look at today if you look around the people around us, but ultimately, it is decisive.

The tears of anguish and grief, that God's children can come. Think of Jericho, that day, the tears of joy and relief and wonder, that God be so gracious to that temple. And think of Jesus, centuries later, standing up not in Jericho, but in Jerusalem, and saying, let anyone who is thirsty put to me and drink.

[20:13] Indeed, the water I did there, will become a man's strill of water, by not eternal life. Elijah can heal with water, Jesus offers us living water. Elijah can bring life back to the city, Jesus offers us eternal life.

Elijah can help a poison spring outside the people, but Jesus offers to put a spring of living water within us to people, so that he can then send us out to be his faithful witnesses. Let's pray together.

Gracious Heavenly Father, we pray to you that you are a powerful two-word today in our lives.

Thank you for the sign of what you've given us that we can, recognize Jesus as your appointed Savior and Judge with such great confidence.

And so, may we welcome him gladly in our lives, experiencing the wonder of his grace, giving us healing and life. And may we go out from here and be able to attempt great things for you and expect great things from you in our lives.

We pray for Jesus' name's sake. Amen.