

Guess Who?

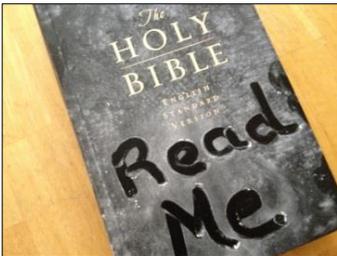
Elisha (with an 'S' and an 'H')

Part 3 – January 19, 2014



We're going through Jesus' 3½ year ministry, as outlined in the Gospel of Mark, using five separate, game-like, series styles. So, even though we're opening the "Guess Who?" box on Elisha today, the emphasis, like last week with Elijah, will be on *Jesus*.

The New Testament is the *completion* of the Old. And, we can't appreciate the *completion* without seeing what it's *completing*.



I used to *hate* reading my Bible. Most of my life. *Especially* the OT. Nothing made sense. It made me feel stupid and unspiritual. Even as a pastor, I'd ask myself if I'd have the same reading discipline if I wasn't being paid. And, I knew God knew the answer to *that*. But, I had a *revelation* ... a simple thought: **What if the question marks ... are questions? Riddles even.** Look at Paul's doxology:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! – Romans 11:33-36 NIV

If it's *just* a doxology, and the questions are rhetorical, those question marks don't even slow me down, I subconsciously answer: "*Nobody.*" "*Nobody.*" "*Nobody.*" But, is '*nobody*' the right answer?

These are OT verses, (Job 36:22; Isaiah 40:13; Job 41:11) and the answer/completion is ... *Jesus!* He alone knows the mind of God, counsels with God, and paid with His life to gain our forgiveness and new life in Him! To *Him* be the glory forever! And, this reveals an unmarked question, a *hidden riddle*: how can Jesus do what only God can do? *He's God!* The unmarked questions are where the *action* is!

Elisha and those bears has a *ton* of *hidden riddles!* My time in and with the Word (there's a reason both the Bible *and* Jesus are named that) has transformed. Now it's like *playing* my Bible with my best Friend and loving Father. And anybody at any level can come in and play. Because, you will only see what you're ready to seek, and God's ready to reveal. Here's how it works ...



From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some youths came out of the town and jeered at him. "Go on up, you baldhead!" they said. "Go on up, you baldhead!" He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths. **[Seems a bit harsh!]** And he went on to Mount Carmel ... – 2 Kings 2:23-25a NIV

Okay, so why was he going to Bethel? What's at Bethel? Why'd he go on to Carmel? How old are those boys? Why the insult? What's the motive? Why do they say, "go on up"? And, what's a *curse in God's name*?

[Here's what I got] From there [Where? Jericho, where 50 prophets just saw Elijah's spirit resting on Elisha (2 Kings 2:15) as he crossed the Jordan where Jesus is later baptized] Elisha [about 25 years old; and on his own, without Elijah, for the first time] went up to Bethel. [Why? To *pass by* on his way to Mount Carmel; Joseph's dad, Jacob named it Bethel (House of God) when he dreamt of the ladder to Heaven here (Gen 28:10-19); after that, but about 65 years before Elisha, Jeroboam set up a golden-calf cult on the *high places* of Bethel, and sacrificed the sons and daughters of Israel in the fire (1 Kings 12:28-33; 2 Kings 10:29, 17:16-17)] As he was walking along the road, some youths [How many? 42 is *just* the ones who couldn't outrun the bears; How old? Preteens to older teens (Strong's H6996)] came out of the town and jeered at him. [They feared Elijah, but *not* Elisha] "Go on up, [ascend, climb (H5927); to where? One of the *high places* of Bethel] you baldhead!" [Bald on the back of the head (Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon; H7142)] they said. "Go on up, you baldhead!" He turned around, [Why? He's not coming toward Bethel; he *bypassed* it] looked at them [inspected, perceived (H7200); he's discerning their intention; picture yourself in a city, alone, at night, balding, and more than 42 hardened teens slink out of a dark alley behind you. One says, "Hey bald-spot, get up in here." What's he saying? "You're *dead* – dead if you *run*, dead if you *stay* – so, we can do this the hard way, or the easy way, but either way ... you're *dead*"] and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. [This isn't a magical bear spell; he's doing what true prophets did, declaring the truth that by rebelling against God, they've made themselves vile (YLT) and accursed; do you see how gutsy this is? He doesn't know about those bears. He's proclaiming God's truth in the face of certain death (in the movies, *this* is when Superman appears)] Then two bears [*she-bears* (H1677)] came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths. [How big a mob does it have to be, that 42 can't get away? I picture the oldest, boldest, meanest boys in front, and the guardian bears emerging between *them* and Elisha; and the mob *they* assembled *against* God becomes their *destruction*] And he went on to Mount Carmel [i.e. *Garden Land*] ... – 2 Kings 2:23-25a NIV

And, the moral of this story is pretty straight forward: **false gods of gold that'll devour their own with fire are no match for the true God who guards us as a Mother Bear her cubs.**

[Hosea later says] They offer human sacrifice and kiss the calf-idols. ... "But I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me. ... Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open." – Hosea 13:2-8 NIV *condensed*

But, why *two* bears? Why is the insult said *twice*? **There are no unnecessary words in God's word, only clues.** I think there were two cubs, the spirit and mantel of *Elijah* was resting on *Elisha*. **Elisha, as the new, is shouldering the mantel of the old.** If Elijah was the forerunner of John, who's Elisha (who received a double portion where the Spirit descended on Jesus), representing?

God's two main names: Yahweh and Elohim. Jesus' name means 'Yahweh is Salvation'; Elisha's name means 'Elohim is Salvation'; both names mean 'God is Salvation'. And, both brought life to the dead, *after* they died! (2 Kings 13:21)

For 3½ years Jesus accused the religious accused who corrupted God's House, *month after month after month* until they took Him up as a sacrifice. Why 42 mockers? How many months is 3½ years? There were no bears to save Him. Why? **Jesus is the bear.** And, **He alone could bear the burden, of the curse that came, when we sinned against God, and He had to sever us to save us from His presence.**

Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. ... As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth. – Hosea 6:1-3 NIV

You see? The story *ends the same!* **Jesus goes on to Garden Land, so He can send the spring rain of new life; this is why the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost is referred to as the latter rain.**



Joel connects the latter rain with overflowing oil. (Joel 2:23-24) Oil is a symbol throughout scripture of both the Holy Spirit and healing. **Oil was used to anoint the priests and to light God's house.** Elijah, representing the *First Covenant* and *fall rain*, performed a miracle for a widow by *temporarily increasing* her oil supply.

[Elijah said to the widow of Zarephath] "... the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land." – 1 Kings 17:14b NIV

And that day came when Elijah prayed, 42 months later. (James 5:17-18) Elisha, representing the New Covenant, while shouldering the mantle of the Old, has an oil miracle of his own. He tells a widow and her son to fill every empty jar that they can find.

... she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left." – 2 Kings 4:6b-7 NIV

Jesus sold himself to pay our debts, and we'll live eternally on the leftovers ... which we can prove mathematically. The number of people who'll ever exist is *finite*. So, the number of sins that'll ever be committed is *finite*. And, the Spirit is compared to rain because it's an infinite, perpetual, cycle. So: $\infty - [\textit{every sin ever to be committed}] = \infty$

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. – 2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV

We are now God's Temple, the Bethel of His Holy Spirit, (1 Cor 3:16) and at Pentecost, **the anointing came as fire, that divided into flames, and lit on every head, empowered in Jesus' name!** (Acts 2:2-4) Maybe Elisha's bald spot was a prophetic *landing pad!*

So, why would God compose His word in such a puzzling way?

1) He was creating a relationship book, not a rule book.

Nobody can enter in on your behalf; because, entering in is an eye-opening act of free will and faith and trust and worship.

[Jesus] said to them, “Do you bring in a lamp [*“Your word is a lamp” (Ps 119:105)*] to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand? [Luke adds: *“so that those who come in can see the light” (Luke 8:16)*] For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, [truth] let him hear. [truth] Consider carefully what you hear,” he continued. [They were hearers, not readers; but either way, we only see to the degree we “come in”] “With the measure you use, [What measure do you use?] it will be measured to you—and even more. [It compounds with your interest! And, the insights of truth will build exponentially!] Whoever has [truth] will be given more; [truth] whoever does not have, [truth] even what he has will be taken from him.” – Mark 4:21-25 NIV

You will only see to the degree that you enter into the Word. Same reason Jesus spoke in puzzling parables; **truth is the most valuable commodity in creation, and it’s dispensed accordingly.**

2) It separates the sheep from the goats.

Only those who know His voice and seek His face will find. Those who want to reject truth, and justify lies, will read the same stories and see the unjust, unloving God they so desire to see.

“This is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.’” – Matthew 13:13-15a NIV

Jesus asked the crowds who went out to hear John’s message, **“What did you go out to see?”** (Mat 11:8) **What do you want to see? Because, whatever you want to see, you will see.** And, **in this way we pronounce our own judgment! When you open your heart to Jesus, He opens His word to you. You want Him to come in; He wants you to come in.** Do you want to see truth, life, light, and love? Then you must follow His verse, I mean *voice*, and allow Him to open your eyes.

3) Because, this is how life works.

Because God’s ways are unfathomable, He can appear at times to be unjust, harsh, impersonal, and downright cruel. But, the more you enter in, and seek and find, the more you’ll find yourself trusting Him, more and more, with all the puzzling and perplexing problems in life, that we just can’t comprehend.

More for He-who ...

The call of Elisha	2 Kings 19:19-21
Elisha receives the double portion	2 Kings 2:1-18
Elisha restocks the widow’s oil	2 Kings 4:1-7
Miracle birth and resurrection	2 Kings 4:8-37
Naaman cured and Gehazi <i>cursed</i> with leprosy	2 Kings 5:1-27
Elisha makes an ax head float	2 Kings 6:1-7
Elisha traps and blinds the enemy	2 Kings 6:8-23