

The Lord's Arrow

*2 Kings 13:14-19 (TEV) The prophet Elisha was sick with a fatal disease, and as he lay dying, King Jehoash of Israel went to visit him. "My father, my father!" he exclaimed as he wept. "You have been the mighty defender of Israel!" [15] "Get a bow and some arrows," Elisha ordered him. Jehoash got them, [16] and Elisha told him to get ready to shoot. The king did so, and Elisha placed his hands on the king's hands. [17] Then, following the prophet's instructions, the king opened the window that faced toward Syria. "Shoot the arrow!" Elisha ordered. As soon as the king shot the arrow, the prophet exclaimed, "**You are the Lord's arrow, with which he will win victory** over Syria. You will fight the Syrians in Aphek until you defeat them." [18] Then Elisha told the king to take the other arrows and strike the ground with them. The king struck the ground three times, and then stopped. [19] This made Elisha angry, and he said to the king, "You should have struck five or six times, and then you would have won complete victory over the Syrians; but now you will defeat them only three times."*

- The famous prophet Elisha, anointed successor to Elijah, the great 'double portion' prophet himself, is now in the last hours of his life. As he lays on his deathbed, he is visited by the weeping King Jehoash, who knows that Israel is about to enter a terrifying new era – because, unlike Elijah, Elisha has no successor!
- Jehoash exclaims, "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" These are the exact words that the old prophet exclaimed many years before as he saw his predecessor Elijah ascend to heaven in a whirlwind (*2 Kings 2:12*).
- It is a fairly common expression in ancient Israel, and it expresses the fact that Jehoash knows Elisha to be the real power behind the country. His contact with God has accomplished more for Israel than their armies and weapons ever could have; in the words of the TEV translation, "You have been the mighty defender of Israel!" Literally, when Elisha showed up, God showed up with him!
- But Elisha has no patience for pleasantries; he is a man who knows that he is fighting a losing battle against the relentless march of time, a man who knows

that his very minutes are numbered, a man who knows that his appointment with eternity is now imminent. He doesn't even acknowledge the compliment; he just begins to bark out orders.

- Take bow and arrows!
 - Put thine hand upon the bow!
 - Open the window eastward!
 - Shoot!
- Elisha rouses himself to confidently declare, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them."
 - Whether Jehoash is just humoring the old man or whether he realizes that an event of prophetic proportions is about to happen, we do not know at this point. He willingly complies with each direct request of the feeble prophet, fulfilling what is demanded of him.
 - But suddenly, unexpectedly, Jehoash is put to the test which will forever mark his character and alter the very future of the nation he rules.
 - Take the arrows! Smite upon the ground!
 - The king pauses, uncertain exactly how to continue. Until this moment, his instructions have been straightforward and detailed; he has been told exactly what to do and how to do it. But what does he do now? If there really is prophetic significance in these "arrows of deliverance" then it must matter how he proceeds! But the old prophet simply glares at him as if to say, "What are you waiting for?"
 - By now, Jehoash is beginning to sense it – somehow, in his hands is the destiny of his life and of his nation. But the teacher is silent, and all of heaven waits with baited breath to see what the pupil has learned. WHAT DO I DO NOW?
 - Warriors of Worship, can you sense the same kind of destiny in your hands? Or do you just see arrows? Have you decided to smite the kingdom of darkness through sheer anointed determination, or do you just have a few memorized

clichés to fire at the enemy? They say “only time will tell” – that’s a truth, but here’s a greater truth: “ONLY YOU WILL TELL!”

- At the very moment when the miraculous could have happened, Jehoash fumbled the ball and settled for the mediocre and the mundane. With half-hearted hands, he took the arrows and smote the ground once, twice, three times ... and stopped.
- He was just turning his head to look for the prophet’s approval when Elisha roused himself in anger and shouted in spite of his sickness: “Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice!”
- Suddenly, Jehoash realizes to his shame that the first arrow was a prophetic act, but the remaining arrows were purely, simply, and entirely a test of zeal ... and he has failed the test utterly.
- Syria will not be defeated, only smitten three times. The unnecessary battles and pointless skirmishes will rage on for generations – even into modern times – because Jehoash took his place on the stage of time with half a heart, the bare minimum of obedience, and a God-displeasing mentality of mediocrity.
- In the words of the Psalmist (*78:41*), Jehoash has “limited the Holy One of Israel” by his actions. But isn’t God sovereign? Yes, but His sovereignty does not limit our responsibility! Because God has chosen to work through human vessels, the way each one of us approach our service to God becomes eternally important.
- The old prophet falls weakly back on his bed, his body wracked by the fiery burst of anger. The very next verse (*2 Kings 13:20*) records his death and burial; we are left to assume that his frustration with Jehoash may have been a major factor in his swift demise. What was it that made Elisha so angry? I think I know ...
- Elisha was also just a young man when his opportunity to make a difference came along. He was plowing in the field – working hard – when Elijah found him and threw his mantle over his shoulders. Elisha left his old life at a

moment's notice and served Elijah in obscurity for many years, ministering to him. And over that time, his determination and desire grew ...

- When it became obvious that his mentor would soon be leaving him, Elisha stuck to him like glue. In spite of the smug mockery of the sons of the prophets who were content in their complacency, he shadowed Elijah through Gilgal, to Bethel, to Jericho, and finally to the banks of the Jordan River.
- And finally, after years of obscurity and humility that others thought extreme, after years of discipline that others deemed unnecessary, Elisha steps onto the stage of time and takes his single moment in the spotlight of divine destiny.
- When the question came, Elisha was ready without a moment's thought. "What shall I do for thee, before I be taken away from thee?" "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me!" And for more than a half century, Elisha has lived out his determination.
- That's why he is so frustrated with Jehoash, the patron saint of mediocrity! He has youth! He has strength! He has time! He has ability! And most of all, he has opportunity! And Jehoash is going to waste it all by just not trying hard enough. Elisha can't take it!
- Warriors of Worship, the spirit of Jehoash is very much alive in your generation; it will take a concerted effort to fight against it:
 - "It's not necessary to make such great sacrifices"
 - "I'm doing just as good as others are doing"
 - "I'm going to use my gifts to make a living for myself"
 - "I can get by with less effort"
 - "I'm contented with my life as it is"
 - "I don't want to be wearied by ministry"
 - "I need more time for myself"
 - "No one will notice if I give less than my best"
 - "It's not practical to waste my energy on the uncertain"

- The problem with mellowing into mediocrity is that – like Jehoash – you will never know what could have been. As you leave the doors of NCC tomorrow evening, reality will set in as your feet hit the parking lot.
- The teachers are finished giving detailed instructions, and now the only person telling you how hard, how long, and consistent to smite the arrows is YOU! You determine your own effectiveness.
- The problem with most people is that after three blessings, three successes, three victories, we think we have it all – and that we can get by with less effort. And so we settle for less than God’s best.
- One of the worst enemies in ministry is peer pressure – because everyone is more comfortable with mediocrity. It’s easier to keep each other contented than it is to reach out to the lost! Be prepared to be criticized, maybe even mocked or shunned by the comfortable; but be prepared to be rewarded by the Lord!
- YOU ARE THE LORD’S ARROW, WITH WHICH HE WILL WIN VICTORY!
 - The arrows were united in smiting the ground.
 - Arrows are shot by someone else – no personal agenda.
 - Just because God has given you a ministry and a promise doesn’t eliminate your responsibility to keep smiting!
- *Joshua 1:3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.*
- The word “darak” (“tread”) also means to bend a bow; literally, God is saying “I will give you every place that you fight for!”
- YOU ARE THE LORD’S ARROW, WITH WHICH HE WILL WIN VICTORY!