

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday July 27, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



THE MIRACLES OF THE BREAD *2 Kings 4:42-44 / Matthew 14:13-21*

⁴² Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, "Give it to the people, that they may eat." ⁴³ But his servant said, "What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?" He said again, "Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: 'They shall eat and have some left over.' " ⁴⁴ So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD. -2 Kings 4:42-44 (NKJV)



We have been in our study on the life of Elisha for a while now, and we have been reminding ourselves each week of some of the foundational information about Elisha and his call to the ministry that may help us frame his life and how/why God used him. There are characteristics of Elisha's life that have already begun to emerge in our study that we've been seeing each week. See if you can fill in the blanks below to be reminded of some of the important background facts concerning Elisha's life.

5 Important Background Facts About Elisha to Remember: *See if you can fill in the blanks of the following background fact in Elisha's life.*

1. Elisha's name means "God is Salvation"
The name Elisha means "God is Salvation." This may give us an idea of the purpose of His ministry (v.19)
 2. Before becoming a prophet Elisha's occupation was farming
Elisha's father's name was Shaphat, and was farmer in the area of Abel-Heholah. Remember that Elisha, himself, was a farmer himself following in his father's footsteps when God called Him - "...And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place."
 3. Elisha followed in the footsteps of the prophet Elijah
Elisha became an obedient disciple and understudy for the Prophet Elijah and his powerful prophetic ministry. He faithfully and obediently served Elijah until Elijah's ascension to heaven in a whirlwind. And when the mantle of Elijah fell to Elisha, he picked it up and followed God in obedience for the rest of his life. And remember Elisha's call to ministry was from God not man, and was issued through the Prophet Elijah (v.19). An important note here is that Elijah didn't call Elisha, God did. Elijah, throughout his ministry was simply called to be the messenger of God, and he did so obediently. and no less here was Elijah the messenger to Elisha of God's call on his life.
 4. Elisha's ministry was to the northern kingdom of Israel
Like the prophet Elijah, Elisha's ministry was to the northern divided kingdom of Israel and his ministry lasted there for about 60 years. He ministered in many of the same towns and area that his predecessor, Elijah, had.
 5. Elisha is primarily known as the prophet of miracles
One more important fact about Elisha's life that might be of interest to you and that set's him apart from other prophets in the Old Testament... Elisha was incredibly blessed by God. He did more miracles in the Old Testament than anyone except Moses.
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This is a phenomenal statement... really for a number of reasons!

5 Important Observations from Jesus' Bread of Life Statement:

- (1) **By equating Himself to bread, Jesus is saying He is essential for life -**
- (2) **The life Jesus is referring to is not physical life, but eternal life -** Jesus is trying to get the Jews' thinking off of the physical realm and into the spiritual realm. He is contrasting what He brings as their Messiah with the bread He miraculously created the day before. That was physical bread that perishes. He is spiritual bread that brings eternal life.
- (3) **Jesus is making another claim to deity with this statement -** This statement is the first of the "I AM" statements in John's Gospel. The phrase "I AM" is the covenant name of God (Yahweh, or YHWH), revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). The phrase speaks of self-sufficient existence (or what theologians refer to as "aseity"), which is an attribute only God possesses. It is also a phrase the Jews who were listening would have automatically understood as a claim to deity.
- (4) **The words "come" and "believe" is an invitation for those listening to place their faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God -** This invitation to come is found throughout John's Gospel. Coming to Jesus involves making a choice to forsake the world and follow Him. Believing in Jesus means placing our faith in Him that He is who He says He is, that He will do what He says He will do, and that He is the only one who can.
- (5) **The words "hunger" and "thirst" aren't talking about alleviating physical hunger and thirst -** The key is found in another statement Jesus made, back in His Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus says, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*" When Jesus says those who come to Him will never hunger and those who believe in Him will never thirst, He is saying He will satisfy our hunger and thirst to be made righteous in the sight of God.

If there is anything the history of human religion tells us, it is that people seek to earn their way to heaven. This is such a basic human desire because God created us with eternity in mind. The Bible says God has placed [the desire for] eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The Bible also tells us that there is nothing we can do to earn our way to heaven because we've all sinned (Romans 3:23) and the only thing our sin earns us is death (Romans 6:23). There is no one who is righteous in himself (Romans 3:10). Our dilemma is we have a desire we cannot fulfill, no matter what we do. That is where Jesus comes in. He, and He alone, can fulfill that desire in our hearts for righteousness through the Divine Transaction: "*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). When Christ died on the cross, He took the sins of mankind upon Himself and made atonement for them. When we place our faith in Him, our sins are imputed to Jesus, and His righteousness is imputed to us. Jesus satisfies our hunger and thirst for righteousness. ***He is our Bread of Life!***

ELISHA AND CHRIST

Interestingly, Elisha has been recognized as a “pointer to Christ.” Elisha does not appear to have given any specifically Messianic prophecies, but we will see that the whole ministry of Elisha does indeed have many allusions and comparisons to that of Christ, thus pointing to the Messiah. Jesus himself pointed out the parallel when he said in his own defence in Luke 4:24-27, “²⁴ Then He (Jesus) said, “Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country (speaking of Himself)... ²⁷ And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian (a comparison to Elisha).”

In Jesus’ times the Jewish people expected the great prophet Elijah to come again – and, in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus suggests that this has happened in John the Baptist. He says to his disciples, ‘If you are willing to accept it, John is Elijah who is to come.’

Accepting this, people began to ask whether Jesus – who seemed to continue the ministry that John the Baptist had started – was Elisha, the even greater prophet who succeeded Elijah.

It’s an interesting question. And, when we read the Old Testament stories about Elisha, we see many similarities between Jesus and Elisha. Here are ten of them...

10 Similarities Between Jesus and Elisha:

- 1. Their names have similar meanings** - Elisha means ‘God is salvation.’ Jesus means ‘Yahweh will save.’
- 2. Their ministries both start at the Jordan River** - Elisha takes up the mantle of Elijah at the River Jordan and starts his ministry. Jesus is baptised by John at the River Jordan and starts his ministry. Elisha sees the heavens open and Elijah being taken up in a whirlwind and then receives a ‘double portion’ of the Holy Spirit. At Jesus’ baptism John sees the heavens open and the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus like a dove.
- 3. They both raised a woman’s adult son from the dead** - Elisha raises the son of the ‘Shunaammite woman’ from the dead. Jesus raises the son of the ‘widow of Nain’ from the dead.
- 4. They both miraculously multiplied bread to feed large numbers** - Elisha feeds 100 men with a few barley loaves and there is food left over. Jesus, on two occasions, feeds 5000 and then 4000 with a few loaves and fishes and there is food left over.
- 5. They both turned a small quantity of liquid into an abundance** - Elisha turns a small amount of oil into enough oil to fill every vessel in the community. Jesus turns water into huge quantities of wine.
- 6. They both healed lepers** - Elisha heals Naaman, the Syrian commander, of leprosy. Jesus heals many lepers.

7. **They both made things that should sink, to float** - Elisha makes an iron axe head float. Jesus walks on water and enables his disciple Peter to walk on water.
8. **They were both betrayed for love of money** - Elisha is betrayed by his servant Gehazi because Gehazi sees an opportunity to make money from betrayal. Jesus is betrayed by his disciple Judas because Judas sees an opportunity to make money from betrayal.
9. **They both gave sight to the blind** - Elisha first blinds his enemies and then restores their sight. Jesus often restores sight to the blind.
10. **Their deaths both brought new life** - Elisha's tomb was a place of resurrection. Raiders interrupted a burial and the body was thrown hastily into Elisha's tomb. On touching Elisha's bones, the dead person came back to life. Jesus' tomb was a place of resurrection. He himself was raised to life and brought the promise of new life to all.

It's fascinating to see all these parallels and how the ministry of Elijah points forward to the time when the will of God would be revealed uniquely and fully through the person of Jesus Christ. The ministries of Elisha and Jesus share similarities – not that surprisingly, as they both lived their lives in relationship with God. But Jesus, as God's son, lives fully in relationship with God in a way that no other has or can. This is why, as Christians, we believe that God is completely revealed in Jesus.

JESUS' FEEDING OF THE 5,000 (*Matthew 14:13-21*)

¹³ When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴ And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. ¹⁵ When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." ¹⁶ But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." ¹⁷ And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." ¹⁸ He said, "Bring them here to Me." ¹⁹ Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. ²⁰ So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. ²¹ Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. -Matthew 14:13-21 (NKJV)

Aside from the resurrection, the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels. Obviously, the Gospel writers considered this a significant miracle. When Christ fed the masses that day, He began with only "five barley loaves and two fish," borrowed from a boy's lunch (John 6:9). To feed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish is indeed miraculous, but the Greek term used in Matthew 14:21 specifies males, and Matthew further emphasizes the point by adding, "Besides women and children." Many Bible scholars believe the actual number fed that day could have been 15,000—20,000

people. Remember, Jesus' disciples had wanted to send the people away because evening was approaching and they were in a remote place (Matthew 14:15). They knew the people needed to reach surrounding villages soon to buy food, find lodging, etc., or they would likely go hungry (Mark 6:36). But Christ had a better idea,, **"You give them something to eat"** (Matthew 14:16). At this point, the disciples should have recalled the many miracles they had seen Jesus do. Perhaps some of them did, but Andrew asked, **"What are [five loaves and two fish] for so many?"** (John 6:9). And Philip exclaimed, **"It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"** (verse 7). Jesus called for the bread and fish to be brought to Him (Matthew 14:18). He then gave thanks for the meal, broke the bread, and gave it to His disciples to give to the crowd. Amazingly, the entire multitude was fed with that small meal. Jesus provided "as much as they wanted" (John 6:11), and "they all ate and were satisfied" (Matthew 14:20). Christ did not just meet the need; He lavished them with so much food that there were "twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish" left over (Mark 6:43).

5 Recognized Lessons Gleaned from the Parable of the Loaves and Fishes:

- (1) **God will shatter the pint-sized expectations of what His followers can do if they would learn to bring Him what they have already been given -** **"Little is much when God is in it."** When Christians are willing to offer their lives sacrificially, relinquishing their hold on whatever God has given them in terms of time, money, talents, etc., God will use these ordinary things to create extraordinary things. Christians must never believe their resources are too little to serve God. God delights in taking a humble, seemingly insignificant person and using him or her for His glory (see 1 Corinthians 1:27). Philip's mind immediately ran to the cost of the project. He quickly calculated how many man-hours of work it would take to feed all those people; he saw the task as impossible because he approached it as if everything depended on *his own work*. Jesus' approach was different. Jesus bypassed all human effort and did the impossible. It's **"'not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty"** (Zechariah 4:6).
- (2) **God chooses to use his followers/disciples to be His hands and feet to minister His saving provision to others -** It is noteworthy that Jesus fed the people *through the agency of His disciples*. Of course, He could have simply snapped His fingers and caused everyone present to have a meal, but He didn't. Instead, He **"gave . . . to his disciples to distribute to the people"** (Mark 6:41). In this way, the disciples had to trust the Lord for everything they distributed. They could only give as they received. Philip, Andrew, and the rest were put in a position of total dependence upon the Lord for the supply. God still uses people the same way today.
- (3) **Christians should be reminded that their problems are never too large (the "many" of John 6:9) for God to handle -** Surely, Andrew was wondering, "What good are we going to do with only five loaves and two fish?" Of course, theoretically, believers know God can easily multiply whatever He wants, to feed as many people as He wants—He is

God. The problem comes when we are faced with a practical outworking of the theory; we tend to doubt that God will *want* to meet *our* need.

- (4) **Christians should make note of the foreshadowing of Christ's miracles in the life of Elisha in 2 Kings** - Elisha told his servant to feed the people gathered there, although there was not enough food for the hundred men. One of the men said, "How can I set this before a hundred men?" (2 Kings 4:42–43) In the end, however, the men not only had enough to eat, but "they ate and had some left" (2 Kings 4:44). Isn't that just like God? He says He will do more than provide for His people; He will give an abundance (Psalm 132:15).
- (5) **Christians must bring their lives to God in a spirit of obedience and sacrifice, no matter how insignificant they may think their gifts or talents are (Romans 12:1)** - When doing so, expect God to do far beyond what can be imagined (Ephesians 3:20). Also, Christians should trust that God not only wants to meet the needs of His children, but He wants to lavish His children with spiritual blessings, even to overflowing (Psalm 23:5).
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INTRODUCTION

As you study the life and ministry of Elisha, it is easy to see how his character and works resemble many of the features of the ministry of our Lord. The story of the man from Baal-shalishah is very similar to the feeding of the 5,000 or the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. Note that...

- The famine that existed in the preceding story of the poisonous pottage is still in effect in this event (2 Kings 4:38-41).
- There the emphasis was on the flour which nullified the poisonous pottage, a picture of the Lord Jesus and His Word, the only antidote to the various poisons of the world.
- Here (in our passage for this study) the emphasis will be similar.
- Bread and grain are provided which again portray the Savior and His Word as the answer to the spiritual famine, only now, another dimension is added, that of our responsibility to trust God to multiply what He has given us as we share Him with others.

★ As Jesus' disciples were to learn from the feeding of the five thousand, so here we have a group of prophets gathered together around Elisha because it was to these men that God had given the responsibility of carrying His Word to an idolatrous nation. This was a difficult, if not impossible task apart from the divine enablement of God.

- They would face personal hardships, persecutions, times of want, and many other difficulties for which only God was adequate.
- In this text, they were called on to believe God and trust Him for all their needs and responsibilities.
- As we relate this to our own lives, let's ask a couple of pertinent questions:

2 Questions to Ask Ourselves in Relation to this Study:

(1) First, what are some of our needs for which we need to trust the Lord? - These include...

- Our own personal weaknesses and failures
- Our need to grow in faith and obedience
- Our ignorance and lack of spiritual discernment
- Our physical needs and wants; our needs of guidance and wisdom, courage, honesty or character, and many like things.

(2) Second, what are some of our responsibilities? - These include...

- The use of our gifts, talents, and the ministries God has given us and wants to give us
- Our responsibility to study, pray, love and care for others (family, friends, neighbors) and many other things

EXPOSITION

⁴² Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, "Give it to the people, that they may eat." ⁴³ But his servant said, "What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?" He said again, "Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: 'They shall eat and have some left over.' " ⁴⁴ So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD. -2 Kings 4:42-44 (NKJV)

A LESSON IN FAITH, LOVE, AND STEWARDSHIP (2 Kings 4:42)

⁴² Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, "Give it to the people, that they may eat."

Who was this man from Baal-shalisha? We don't really know! His identity is simply not given. Perhaps he represents so many of us whose names will never be in a hall of fame or on a who's who list... but there are a couple of simple lessons that are apparent from verse 42

3 SIMPLE LESSONS FROM THE MAN FROM BAAL-SHALISHA:

(1) He came - We'll talk more about where he came from in a moment, but for the moment just focus on that he came. When others weren't coming, when famine was fierce and giving (especially of your own) was very risky and sacrificial because you might not have enough for your and yours, and tension were high, persecution or serving Jehovah God was a real threat, many had rejected God and supporting the prophets of God was not popular and may even be considered criminal by some higher-ups in their day... he came. ***What does this say about our own times... and were we are today? Even in the things we have seen in the past few years where we have seen churches shutting down, and religious freedoms being threatened, and many churches struggling trying to get***

people back? Listen to the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 10:23-25, “²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” **How does this relate to the man in our passage and how does it relate to us?**

(2) **He gave** - Clearly he represents a faithful believer who gave of his substance, but the Lord knew him and will never forget him. Listen, you and I will never know on this side of Heaven what God can, will and has done with even what little we give Him in humble faith. Listen to Hebrews 6:10-11, “¹⁰ For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. ¹¹ And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end.” With this in mind, we should also remember Paul’s exhortation in 1 Corinthians 15:58, “⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” **What lesson might be in this for us concerning giving, tithing, bringing our gifts to the Lord?**

(3) **He was unnamed (unknown)** - The fact this man is not identified also reminds us of another truth, one expressed by John the Baptist when he was questioned by his disciples over the growing influence and popularity of Jesus with a corresponding decline in the influence and popularity of John. John showed no jealousy or concern, but rather reaffirmed what he had said all along. He was but a witness of the Savior (see John 3:26-29). In the growing influence of Jesus, John found his own joy fulfilled just as the friend of the bridegroom, the best man, is there to support the groom and finds joy in that role. John then made this important statement, “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30). As servants and instruments of the Lord, we should never call attention to ourselves, but to the Savior we represent because He alone is sufficient for the needs of mankind. But, unless we are truly finding our significance and joy in the Savior, the constant temptation is for us to want to be in the limelight if we are seeking our significance in the praise of men.

Though the man is unidentified, the text tells us he was from Baal-shalishah. Where exactly was that? *From the text this seems to be more significant than the man’s name. Why?* Man’s chief end is to glorify God, to exalt the Lord and draw attention to Him because of who and what He is to men and the universe. That he was from a place called Baal-shalishah does this very thing. The fact the man was from this particular place during a time of famine was a argument against the worship of Baal.

Remember that Elisha’s miracles were often performed as an argument and an appeal against the idolatrous cult and worship of Baal, the god of storm and fertility in favor of the true and only God who saves, Jehovah God. God’s supremacy over Baal and Baal’s impotence is constantly affirmed in the stories of Elisha and his acts served as a argument against the very

powers that were attributed to the pagan nature deity who was supposed to control fertility in agriculture, in man and beast as well as the rain. The fact this man comes from Baal-shalisha demonstrates this.

The Significance of Baal-Shalisha: (*an the man being from here*)

- (1) **The meaning of the name “baal”** - First, the term *baal* means “owner, husband, master,” but it was often used simply as a name for the Canaanite deity called *Baal*. Sometimes the verb form, B`u~l, was used of the Lord, the true God of Israel to express His relationship to Israel as master or husband with whom they were in covenant relation. Jeremiah 3:14 *“Return, O faithless sons,” declares the Lord; “For I am a master (B`u~l) to you, And I will take you one from a city and two from a family, And I will bring you to Zion.”* Jeremiah 31:32 *“not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband (B`u~l) to them,”* declares the Lord. When Israel was obedient to this covenant then Yahweh, her husband or master and provider, would bless the land (Deut 28:29). When disobedient to the covenant, they would experience cursing such as famine. Israel had been disloyal to Yahweh and had gone into baalism, thus, there was famine in the land.
- (2) **The meaning of the name “shalisha”** - Second, *shalisha* mean’s “third” and can stand for the idea of “multiplicity” because in Hebrew the number three was the smallest number which set forth the idea of multiplicity. So the name Baal-shalisha could mean “the Lord of multiplicity” or perhaps, “the Lord who multiplies.” So here a man, a worshipper of Yahweh, the true God and husband of Israel, was coming to the true prophets of God with bread and grain which Yahweh would miraculously multiply as the God of multiplicity. This would again demonstrate that He alone was the true God who would meet their needs and multiply their ministries.
- (3) **Where the man came from and who he came to** - Third, note that he came to the “man of God,” to that man who stood opposed to the prophets of Baal and his worship. God was honoring the ministry of Elisha and the true prophets of God.
- (4) **The significance of what he brought from the place he came** - Fourth, what he brought is described as the “first fruits” of his crop. This proves he was a godly and true believer in Yahweh who was bringing from God’s blessing in accordance to the Old Testament Law, God’s covenant with Israel. The first fruits or the first portion of the crop was to be given to the Lord in obedience and as a sign of faith that Yahweh, the God of Israel, the covenant-keeping God, would give the rest of the crops. It was an act of faith that demonstrated the person believed God’s covenant and that more would follow because Yahweh was faithful to His promises.
- (5) **What the man from this place represents** - Fifth, in this act of faith by this one unknown man, we see how God takes the faith of one believer, never mentioned again in Scripture as far as we know, and uses that man as a demonstration of His steadfast love and as a means of encouragement and hope, but also as a training aid for Elisha to use with his men.

- (6) **The size of the gift from this place** - Sixth, note that what this man brought was not a great amount; he simply brought what he had. The amount is never what is important, for God is able to multiply our gifts and talents.
- (7) **What the man brings and what it represents** - Finally, the loaves naturally speak of the Lord Jesus as the Bread of Life and the grain as the seed of the Word which not only feeds us, but is to be sown in the world.

THE COMMAND OF THE ELISHA (VS. 42)

Notice verse 42 again, ⁴² *Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, "Give it to the people, that they may eat."* The man from Baal-Shalisha said, *"Give them to the people that they may eat."* Elisha, a man totally occupied with the Lord God and motivated and directed by the principle of His Word saw in this event a tremendous opportunity. It was one of those situations that demonstrate the principles of Romans 8:28, 32...

- *Romans 8:28, ²⁸ "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."*
- *Romans 8:32, ³² "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"*

What principles do you see demonstrated in these two verses (Romans 8:28, 32) that are prevalent in our passage (2 Kings 4:42), and how might these apply to us?

So it was an opportunity to teach and demonstrate a couple of important truths to God's people, especially Elisha's pupils

Important Truths Demonstrated in 2 Kings 4:42

- (1) **God will take care of His own** – First, it taught them who and what God was to them as teachers of God's Word. It was He who would multiply and supply their needs, whatever they might be as they sought to minister to a spiritually starving nation. God would take care of them.
- (2) **Our responsibility is to faithfully obey and leave the results to Him** - But it also taught them something of their responsibilities as they went forth to spread the Word and minister to people. They were to take whatever God supplied and use it, trusting God to multiply it as He might see fit.
- (3) **We must totally depend on God and not our own ability** - This passage not only illustrates God's faithfulness and His ability to supply our physical needs such as food and clothing, but as with our Lord and the feeding of the five thousand, it was intended to be an analogy of God's power and provision for them as preachers of His Word and of their responsibility. It was an illustration of their responsibility vertically to God. They must always walk in dependence on Him rather than in their own abilities.

(4) **We can't but God can** - It also illustrated their responsibility to men in breaking and sharing the bread of Life with others and in sowing the seed of the Word. The statement in Mark 6:34, "Like sheep without a shepherd" sets the stage and atmosphere for the feeding of the 5,000 and what our Lord was seeking to teach the disciples and us. In a similar way, surely Elisha was saying the same thing. He was saying, "I want you to take these loaves, a picture of the Word which was to be fed to others." But this is a very big responsibility for which no man is equipped no matter how gifted or brilliant or capable. So this event was designed to teach us a very important truth, a truth brought about by the large number of men. A hundred men were present, but they had only a very small number of loaves. Far too little to adequately feed the whole crowd. Why are we so often inadequate in our responsibilities and in our ministries? Because of the confinement of our perspective or vision, which like the bars of a cell, keep us from seeing how the power of God can multiply the very little that we have. Often this comes out of adversity. In our weakness, God's abundant strength is multiplied.

THE CONFINEMENT OF THE ATTENDANT (2 Kings 4:43)

"⁴³ But his servant said, "What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?" He said again, "Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: 'They shall eat and have some left over.'"

Did you notice the words? *"What, shall I set this before a hundred men?"*

- The attendant was confused and confined, limited by his unbelief, but his unbelief was caused by measuring his own ability to feed so many rather than by who and what God was and always is.
- Measuring our ability or capability or success in any aspect of the ministry (or whatever God may call us to do) by the puniness of ourselves must automatically confine us, resulting in confusion and defeat.
- We must learn to take whatever God has given us and then, trusting in the will and power of God, use it knowing that God is able to multiply it super abundantly above all that we can ask or think if He desires to do so.
- *So the issue here was not the small number of loaves, but the ability to see beyond the loaves to the Almighty.*
- It was an issue of having the wrong perspective, a perspective which measures our ability by who and what we are and have rather than by who and what God is to us.

The key lesson: *"God's wants us to learn to measure life by God's infiniteness which is without measure."*

How might this statement be reflected in Jesus' multiplying of the fishes and the loaves and what might have been his message to his disciples in that?

How might his statement be reflected in Elisha and the miracle of the bread and what might have been the message to the school of prophets? To us?

What do you think the statement means by “measuring life”?

What are some way’s we may be tempted to “measure life”? Why are these discouraging, often deceitful, and dangerous?

What do you think the statement means by “God’s infiniteness? And why this be important to our life and perspective (measure of life)?

Why is this so important for the church and Christians in our day to learn?

THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PROPHET (2 Kings 4:43)

”⁴³ But his servant said, “What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?” He said again, “Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: ‘They shall eat and have some left over.’” Here Elisha repeats his former instruction, *“Give them to the people that they may eat, for thus says the Lord, ‘They shall eat and have left over.’”* As the statement, *“for thus says the Lord”* indicates, Elisha was given direct revelation from the Lord that He was going to multiply the loaves. It was a promise from the Lord to Elisha, but only, it appears after Elisha exercised faith in the Lord, trusting Him to perform this miracle.

Elisha wanted to demonstrate what God was to these prophets in their ministries so that they might learn to measure their lives, their work, and their challenges, not by the size of the problems or their own resources, but by the greatness of their God.

For us today, the words, *“thus says the Lord,”* stand as an illustration and a picture of our need to know and understand the principles and promises of the Word and then count upon them for the provision of God. Elisha was teaching these prophets (and us) what God will always be to us if we will adopt the disposition of faith in the Word and the promises of God that Elisha had toward the Word of the Lord.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF OBEDIENCE (2 Kings 4:44)

⁴⁴ So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD. Notice those words at the start of verse 44... *“So he set before them...”*

Some Foundational Principle’s to Glean from the Miracle of the Bread:

- (1) **Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus** – To borrow the line from the great hymn, “Trust and obey!” First let us note that the attendant was obedient to God and the command and believed in the promise of God. This is foundational. Until God’s people learn the moral necessity to both believe and obey the Scriptures, there is going to be a spiritual famine, confusion, and confinement in our lives and our ministries.
- (2) **God will take care of you through every day, o’er all the way, He will take care of you** – To borrow a line from the old hymn “God Will Take Care of You.” That is the second foundational principle to gras’, “They ate and had some left over.” God’s provision is always more than enough for our real needs, not our greed, but for the real needs of our lives.

Finally note the words “according to the word of the Lord.” The point is, it happened just as God promised. God’s Word is tried and true. God is faithful to His Word. We can count on the Lord.

The problems we so often face or fail to adequately solve are often caused by the confinement of our perspectives, and our unbelief in the Word. Oh, that we might learn to measure life and deal with its needs not by who we are, but by who and what the Lord is and has promised.

George Müller’s life so beautifully illustrates one who truly believed God’s Word and His promise to provide our needs. Mr. Müller established several orphanages solely by faith that God was leading him to do so and he believed God’s promise that He would provide their needs. Needs were never made known, no indirect hints were made that funds were needed, and even when in dire straits, those who inquired as to the needs were never informed so that the ministry would be a testimony to God’s faithfulness. Mr. Müller said he was kept in peace by “not looking at the little in hand, but at the fulness of God.”⁴⁴ His desire was to prove to all men that it is safe to trust only in the living God.