

Questioning God's omnipotence (Quality: Average)

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Date: 02 February 1978

Preacher: Broome, Leonard Robert James (1905-1986)

[0 : 00] In the Lord's help, we will speak from the second book of Kings, and the second chapter, and the 17th verse.

Verse 17, in the second chapter of the second book of Kings. And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, And they sent therefore fifty men, and they sought three days, but now did not.

The hymn you've just sung is by a preacher of the gospel, Beric. And it's a very necessary thing that preachers of the gospel should experience such thing as you've just done.

Otherwise they could not enter into your innermost fear. They would be about that. One of the very cardinal points of the gospel ministry that the husbandman must be first, the type of the fruit.

A common ground therefore upon which all stands. And it is the Lord's great mercy to us that we are not elevated above any position whatsoever.

[1 : 40] And that he himself taught that he that would be greatest among you, let him be your son. And that he said, It might be that the Spirit of the Lord had failed in taking his master from his head today, as he's repeated three times in this chapter.

The prophets suggested that there might be a failure in what they had already been aware of in the translation of Elijah to heaven.

And under this pressure that the Spirit of the Lord had set him down upon some mountain or some valley, they suggest that they scour much as they can of the countryside, see whether they cannot find it.

This poor, prostrate body of the mighty, the mighty prophet Elijah. In the first instance he says, No, you can't go.

But the text says, They urged him till he was ashamed, till he gave way.

[3 : 46] And then he said, And on this foolish task of searching for the body of Elijah, they spent three days, and found him not.

But can this really be that such things can happen, when God can lose his mighty wonders, as he had done with Elijah, and was doing with Elijah?

Can it be that there should be a failure in the purposes of God?

How many suggestions there are that there can be? And how ready is the devil to emphasize the suggestion and say, Yes, it can be.

Such a thing is possible that the purposes of divine grace can be thwarted. And the noble prophet never reached heaven, in this remarkable translation.

[5 : 12] It is true, it was uncommon. Only Enoch, and they have no details of his translation, was before translated without seeing death.

But precedent counts nothing with God. It does with us. If we've got precedent to work on, the natural thing is, we make good use of it.

Men do. And are very fearful of creating a precedent, lest it should become a rule.

And simply because it has not happened before, there's no hindrance to Jehovah, that for the first time he should do something entirely new.

No need for half a dozen other cases of men walking through the fire, not being burned, to prove that God could do it, is it?

[6 : 26] Or shutting a man up in a den of lions, all night. No need for them to be more than one case. Although to these histories are, as I so often have to say, for our learning.

And if we are pupils, or disciples, then we shall benefit by them. They won't go in one ear and come out the other.

There will be admissions that we shall take home with us. So that all these things, whether they be from the Old or the New Testament, or the confirmation of faith, Israel, Israel, and this wonderful work of God in these times, of Israel's trouble, are absolutely exceptional.

there are no cases, or generations, in the Old Testament, to compare with the periods of Elijah and Elisha.

they stand out as men, they stand out as men, of God-given power. And what is noticeable is this, they are only supernatural, as God gives them the power.

[8 : 20] there were things hidden from them, of which they had no knowledge. Elijah was quite unaware that there were 7,000, who'd never bow the knee to Baal.

And Elijah was quite unaware that the Shunammite son lay dead upon his bed, in the little room, prepared for.

God has not told it to me, he says Elijah. He's in great trouble, but I don't know what it's about. And you can pick these points out, by careful reading, and you can profit by them, and see that, while these mighty works were conducted, and the record is just a plain and simple one, there are many details left out.

And if we had a whole story, of Elijah, or Elijah, in full detail, it would take up a volume or two.

One great question to ask here, which you know don't have asked, and that is, who were the sons of the prophets? And what were they, and what was their function?

[9 : 57] Another great question is this, who was the controlling influence, in these generations, after the glory of Solomon and Thaddeus?

and they said, they're not afraid. And they said, why the prophets? These kings, one after the other, rain. And they rained for good or bad.

But, when there was anything to be done, of a mighty nature, God did it through these two prophets. And the sons of the prophets, are said, to be the disciples, of the prophets.

The word college is even mentioned, in some margins. They were there, at Bethel, and Jericho, for the purpose of instruction.

From what books, we know not. But it is significant, that Elijah visited them, on his last journey.

[11 : 22] And, it is also significant, that, they knew, what was going to happen. That God was going to take away, their master, from their head to death.

They each asked a question. Now, how this communication, should be received, we are not told. There wasn't a great, distance, between Bethel, and Jericho, five or six miles.

And, no great distance, between Jericho and Jordan. About the same amount. Easy matter, for, one of those, men, swift runners, to pass the communication, but how did they get it?

That it was a known fact, beforehand, that God was going to take Elijah to heaven, in a peculiar way. I don't mention death.

- I don't say, do you know that today, Elijah's going to die. But no hint of it, no suggestion.
- [12 : 42] Purely in every place, it says, knowest thou, Lord, will take away thy, master, from thy head today.
- And, there's no other words, to equal it, anywhere in description. Well, that we're facing something, of a very, great nature.
- great, and, one thing, that Israel, was in the trough of the way. We seem to have to dwell upon this, subject, somewhat, don't we, please?
- David's, temple, and Solomon's temple, had been built, peace had reigned, over the largest part of, the country that he'd ever had, in the time of Solomon.
- All the magnificence of the temple, being enjoyed, the presence of God realized, a period, a period, without equal, now, it all crashes to the ground.
- [14 : 02] The kingdom is divided. Solomon, falls into, a pit of inequity. This kingdom is divided, and, Jeroboam, Jeroboam, and Rehoboam, divided between themselves.
- The first one, takes Judah, and Benjamin, and, Rehoboam, takes, what became known as the Pen Trough.
- All God. And does God leave them? You may, well, say that, he would be just, if he did. that he, changes his, purpose of government.
- Instead of a, theocracy, of any importance, he, produces, these humble, prophets.
- We know nothing about Elijah, as regards his origin. He suddenly appears on the sacred page, and there he is, in a time of drought.
- [15 : 21] We have the history of him, and we have his success, and we have what the psalmist calls his down sitting.
- give us, and we'll prove, that these men, were what James calls them in his general epistle. Men of like passions with us.
- And this is a remarkable truth. Because our minds are, so ready to assume, that they were not, of like passion with us.
- There's something different about them. I did, with regards their surroundings, and their clothing, their environment, but, that's all.
- I will be the black passions, as we are. Just the same as you and me. Do you think about that? Let me think about it.
- [16 : 33] Think about the head you just saw, of your, very, My eyes, refuse to lend a tear.
- I lisp, and falter in my prayer. And sick and faint as I. Men of like passions. Why, Elijah said, Lord, it is enough.
- I'm no better than my fathers. And the Lord, gives him some more work to do. And among those, three things, that Elijah is given at the cave, now, is to go and anoint, Elijah, the son of Shaphat, in his place.
- And this is that. Find him at the flower, with twelve yoke of oxen. That one's thinking about.
- It's where I'll be over the box. And he gives him, follow him, and he follows him, and we read, he ministered to him.
- [17 : 53] So that, whatever training Elijah had, we're not told. Now, to quite clearly, Elijah was servant with, and to Elijah, for a fairly long period, I should say, coming up to ten years.
- Now, there was a certain amount of preparation, like there was with Timothy, and the apostle Paul. As to the sons of the prophets, this training, and these communications, were no doubt passed on to them.

But they were not kept out of the secret, of the imminent departure, of Elijah. Now, there's a setting of the text, which I feel is necessary for us to look well into, that God did not leave his people, in the times when they deserved it, any more than he did in the midst of Babylonian captivity.

And they were suffering for their vile sins, of absolute defiance to Jehovah. And when they would have none of him, he still abode faithful.

Hence his word, I the Lord change not. Therefore, your son of Jacob are not mature. But there is a lesson, in this incident of these prophets.

[19 : 46] They were younger, in all probability, and this is the result of their immaturity.

They say, behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men.

Let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master, lest peradventure. The spirit of the Lord has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain and into some valley.

And he said, you shall not stay. How often, the younger generation, are extremely critical of the older.

And feel that they can offer them some very good advice. Especially upon religious matters.

[20 : 54] And counsel them to their benefit. This is nothing new, of course. Neither is it in natural things for that matter.

But when it comes to the pressure, there is the test. Are the older going to give way to the younger?

The more mature to the immature? Is there going to be a lessening of the standard? The work of God?

The purpose of God? Are they going to be altered? It is so here. Elijah gives way. I urged him until he was ashamed.

Now just picture to yourself all that had gone on in that day. Quite apart from what had gone on the previous year when he walked with Elijah.

[22 : 06] Elijah. And then take your mind over to the New Testament. And see exactly the same thing there. Where the disciples walked with the Lord Jesus.

Three years at least. And during that time of his ministry, they said some very strange things and acted some very strange acts.

And you'd hardly credit that they could ever be called disciples. Some of their words were very strange.

And yet there they are. And there is Jesus with them. And out of words he could, and sometimes did, reprove them.

The Lord. And also. On the other hand, he let go their inward lusts. And you'll find that on one occasion even the beloved John and James very subtly to their mother asked that they might have prior place in his kingdom. Very selfish petition, very unworthy petition but oh how good and kind of the good spirit to tell us that these things happen. Now if we are men of like passions with them we shan't be strangers to some of these rising lusts and want to be right up in the front and feel that if we could only get the left and the right hand place in the kingdom how good it would be but poor Mary's you know he would have been content for the lowest wouldn't he? Look from the windows of thy grace and cheer and drooping heart. A single smile from thy sweet face will bid my griefs depart. Thou art the life of all my joys. Thy presence makes thy heaven. Thou whatever else my lord did I, thy presence Lord begiveth.

[24 : 56] That's the gospel spirit. That's the gospel place. And how many such hymn writers have expressed it. And truly the household of faith have long to be just a unit among the living people of God unworthy of anything else.

And so Elijah with all that he has heard and seen is remarkable I don't know what to call it it isn't a phenomenon it was a reality we are not given any details of it of the material horses or chariots taken up in a whirlwind to heaven and Elijah so is not he has got a ground for the agnostics and the unbeliever oh what lovely work here for him how he loves it doesn't he and says yes you don't believe that do you?

you don't believe what you read in the bible do you? but horses and chariots and another page later on in the life of Elijah when his servant he was in the city you remember and he said alas master how shall we do?

and the enemy little enemy and the lord opened the young man's eyes and he saw that the city was surrounded with horsemen and chariots you really got to say yes or no for these things and a believer says yes but an atheist an unbeliever he says no don't believe it you can believe it if you want to but I'm not going to so he makes his way onward down the broad road to destruction as an unbeliever and when we come over to the new testament again to anything comparable with this what do we find there?

could not this man that opened the eyes of the blind of course that even this man should not have died and I work day panchil letting Lazarus die taking the extreme step why couldn't he have preserved him from death?

[28 : 18] he could open the eyes of the blind? well reasonable enough so says the unbeliever of both old and new testament but to believe that this was so without asking questions as to the material and the strange and peculiar nature of it you can find plenty of other places if you want to and ask yourself why the ravens so willingly gave up the bread and the meat every morning and evening you know very well merely by observation that once a bird has got a piece of food in his mouth he won't give it up you can see the seagulls chasing one another and one of them has got a piece of bread and he's going to only watch them this morning why did the ravens give it up so deeply why did they lay down this meat more likely to rob than to feed the ravens with failure than pride but when the Lord's people have made his goodness will find out a way what happiness what comfort in faith in the spirit of the God given faith in receiving the absolute impossible and here it is before us now so they urged it what was this if it wasn't a test see

Elijah took the mantle said by commentators to be a sheepskin which the prophets wore to denote their office that was the general belief of those commentators and in all probability also and he took this mantle that had fallen from Elijah and he smote the waters now he wanted to prove that the spirit of Elijah rested upon him and he soon put it to the test and the test soon came to pass and the waters divided anyone asks you how many times the waters of Jordan were divided think carefully because they were also divided by

Moses when they entered the promised land they were divided also by Elijah and by Elijah but it tested and it passed the test they would have thought this would have been absolutely sufficient and yet the cry where is the Lord God of Elijah is recorded for us to notice with all its implications great question in it where is he I know it is put in their language and their form of expression there is nothing derogatory in it but this is the question and here you are the Lord God of Elijah dividing the waters of Jordan now this was proof to Elijah and proof to the prophets because they came and bowed before him and in a word they accepted it

I said yes well this is our new page here is the proof of it they bowed before him and accepted it now so far then the matter's good then the devil comes in and test God's words and he doesn't try only the prophet but he tries also the new head Elijah with this supposition peradventure perhaps isn't it remarkable how God suffers his work to be tried in a believer oh the solemn mystery of the trial of faith will never be expounded here no volumes could ever tell the strange means by which

God tries the faith of his people they're indescribable inexplicable and yet they fulfilled their design purpose and so they so they did here they fulfilled their design purpose and what was that purpose look at the prophet they urged him to leave a shame go over again to the new testament and see Peter on his knees weeping bitter tears after the devil had urged him to leave a shame there he is all pictures unfolded before him Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift his wheat but I have prayed for them here he is isn't it inexplicable that he should be permitted to wound his

[35 : 20] Jesus with those and curses isn't it inexplicable that Elijah could say go they urged him that he was ashamed now whether this word ashamed is to be understood in our English form as we understand it I don't know but the fact remains that they urged him to the point of giving them the command to go the permission to go so that this rises to death and now let us follow this through supposing they had found Elijah supposing they had found the broken carrier and the dead horses if such there were and supposing they had come back and said we found him he hasn't gone to heaven after all there have been a breakdown a failure purposes of

God hadn't ripened supposing I say supposing your fears were realised supposing your unbelief came to pass creatures of fear we drag along and fear where no fear is supposing you just think of some of your fears not only current but past ones supposing they had come to pass what would have happened to you and those that you've got today supposing they really do come to pass where would you be where would these prophets have been what would they have done at Bethel what would they have done at Jericho what would all the teaching and instruction that they had received have done this is where you want to look as inexplicable as it all might be to you this is where you want to go until it was a shame and he said go and in saying go he opened the flood gates and in listening to the devil you open the flood gates you don't just lift up the hatch like the mill keeper or the water keeper does to let a little trickle through to keep the river at proper level no you open the flood gates and in he comes when the air maze will come in like a flood you can't do much with a flood can you how terrible some of these floods we hear of we know about a little of it here in this country that says the word of God that the enemy shall come in like a flood which it does the spirit of the

Lord shall lift up a standard against it that's the only power that can stand against this flood so when Elisha says now he stands first he keeps the flood gate shut when he says go I open and he raises the question well perhaps after all my dear master hasn't gone no heaven is defeated the projects of the devil are not allowed to exceed the purposes of Jehovah and although these things need strong faith to believe in life undoubtedly they are true that the

Lord God omnipotent reign so that in your case and my my dear anxious fears the temptations and trials and suggestions well perhaps her adventure it's not a very secure platform you know her adventure it creaks horribly her adventure it may be no the whole testimony beforehand stood in the balance and the Lord did take away their master from their head that day and he was safely translated that he should not see death and we hear no more of him until he appears and talks upon the mount of transfiguration in the time of the

Lord Jesus Christ there appeared unto him we read Moses and Elias and they spake of his deceit amen and they are taking out