

Don't Miss Your Breakthrough Moment | 2 Kings 13

Introduction

I am super excited to be here at Metro today to honor my friend and my pastor, Cornell Jordan. He and his wife, Kristin, are a huge blessing to this church, our AG Region 4, and to the entire Ohio Ministry Network of AG churches. Pastor Cornell has been a personal encouragement and blessing to my wife, Jamie, and me. A few years ago, we walked through some challenging things in leadership, and Pastor Cornell was there to encourage and support us through it. He is a gift and a friend, and I am so honored that he invited us to come and share.

How many of you know there are some strange stories in the Bible that when you come to them, you are like, What is going on there? Sometimes, when we encounter these passages of scripture, it is easier to go, well, that is weird, and just move on. Honestly, for some, the story we are going to look at today may be one of those stories. The story involves the prophet Elisha (not to be confused with Elijah) and the king of Israel at the time, Joash (Jehoash – same guy).

Yet, when we consider the context and look into the symbolism that surrounds it, there is a great lesson for us when it comes to embracing the breakthrough that God desires to bring to our lives. And as we will see today, this breakthrough is not something that will affect just the king of Israel, but it is a breakthrough that has the potential to impact an entire nation.

Does anyone who has come today or who is watching online need a breakthrough in their lives? Is there anyone tired of the same old problems or the same old enemy stealing your victory and taking ground in your life? I believe God wants to stir the faith of somebody today to keep fighting and to receive the breakthrough you've been waiting for.

Backstory

If you have your Bible, turn to 2 Kings 13. As your turning there, let's get a little context. Throughout the days that Elisha was prophet, the nation of Israel continually battled the same enemy who just kept coming. We get a first glimpse of them in 2 Kings 5 when one of their army commanders who had leprosy comes to Samaria for healing. He does so because there was a young servant girl from Israel that he had carried off in one of his raids in the land of Israel. Yep, you heard that right, raids.

It was common practice among enemy nations to send armies to raid certain camps, cities, and territories. We learn that these particular raids against Israel came from the armies of Syria.

As we progress, we learn that these raids turn into battles for territory. In 2 Kings 6, the Syrian King looks to set up ambush sites to take captive the army of Israel. But his plans are foiled when the Lord reveals them to Elisha, the prophet, who tells the king of Israel. Later, we discover that Elisha, the prophet, leads the entire Syrian army into the city of Samaria, where he commands them to be fed and sent home as a sign of peace.

These attacks from Israel's enemy, Syria, stop for just a short time until the Syrians once again surround the city of Samaria in a siege tactic, which causes people to do desperate and inhumane things.

Yet once again, God miraculously showed up and delivered the Israelites. Throughout this season in Israel's history, Elisha has been that prophetic voice and spiritual father to the nation during every battle. Yet, spiritually speaking, Israel continued to worship other gods, which led the nation into a place of spiritual darkness.

Throughout Elisha's time as prophet, God tried to get the attention of Israel to turn back to Him. He demonstrated his power to deliver, to provide, to save, and to heal. He allowed them to experience famine and allowed their enemy to take ground and inflict pain so that they would turn to Him and see that their victory comes from Him alone.

Fast forward to 2 Kings 13, and things have not changed. Jehoahaz, Joash's father, is king, and he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and led Israel to do the same.

2 Kings 13:3 (ESV): **Slide 2:** *And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them continually into the hand of Hazael king of Syria and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael. (2 Kings 13:3, ESV)*

The enemy of Israel, the Syrians, continued to have their way with Israel, attacking and taking ground because of their sin.

2 Kings 13:7 (ESV): **Slide 3:** *For there was not left to Jehoahaz an army of more than fifty horsemen and ten chariots and ten thousand footmen, for the king of Syria had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing. (2 Kings 13:7, ESV)*

Do you see this? The Syrian army had continually battled Israel, weakening its defenses. The enemy had continually taken ground. They were continually coming against Israel.

This is how some of you feel. The enemy just keeps attacking and taking ground. You struggle and never feel as if you truly get victory. Same enemy, same battles, same struggles, same feeling of defeat.

Joash, king of Israel, is at a critical moment in his life and in his leadership. Elisha, the prophet who has been so instrumental in providing wisdom to the kings of Israel, who

God used to bring victory time and again, has fallen ill, nearing the place of death. And Joash went down to visit with him.

2 Kings 13:14 (ESV): **Slide 4: Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash king of Israel went down to him and wept before him, crying, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"** (2 Kings 13:14, ESV)

Joash realized that Elisha was not going to be with them much longer, and he knew the power and wisdom that Elisha had. He had been the man of God for Israel. So Joash was coming to get something from Elisha before he died.

The cry that Joash utters is seen in one other place in Scripture, and it involves Elisha. If we go back to 2 Kings 2, we find the final days of Elisha's mentor, Elijah. Elijah had been told that his days were limited and that God was going to take him. Elisha was aware of it and wanted something from Elijah before he was taken by the Lord. He wanted a double portion of the prophet Elijah's anointing. And Elijah told him that if he saw him when he departed, it would be his. And Elisha wouldn't let Elijah out of his sight. And the time came and they were separated as Elijah was taken up, 2 Kings 2:12 (ESV): **Slide 5: And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more.** (2 Kings 2:12, ESV).

These are the same words spoken in 2 Kings 13 by Joash. These were not just any words but words from a man who knew a transition of spiritual leadership in Israel was changing, the enemy was not defeated, and he didn't know what to do!

This is critical for Joash and Israel, and Elisha knows it. Do you see how this parallels the end of Elijah's ministry and life and the beginning of Elisha? Yet, at this moment, Elisha is dying and Joash, the king of Israel is with him.

Friends, I believe there are some of you are at a critical place spiritually just like Joash. You are a place of transition. You are at a place where the enemy has just been attacking you over and over again, and you need a breakthrough in your life.

Today, I want to show you three principles for breakthrough.

Slide 6: Three Principles for Breakthrough

1. It's All About God's Power, Not Ours

Joash understands that Elisha is filled with the power of God. He has been the man that God has used to continually provide wisdom to kings and who has been used to help Israel overcome their enemies. But Elisha is ill and about to die. Where will our power come from now?

Following this desperate plea from Joash, Elisha gives him some instructions.

2 Kings 13:15-17 (ESV): **Slide 7:** *And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows." So he took a bow and arrows. Then he said to the king of Israel, "Draw the bow," and he drew it. And Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. And he said, "Open the window eastward," and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot," and he shot. And he said, "The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Syria! For you shall fight the Syrians in Aphek until you have made an end of them."* (2 Kings 13:15-17, ESV)

The bow and arrows were symbolic of victory, battle, and God's power. Allow me to explain. When Joash picks up the bow and arrows, he is instructed to open the east window and shoot an arrow. East was the direction of Syria, the enemy that had so often plagued Israel. This was the enemy they could not seem to gain complete victory over. To shoot an arrow in the direction of an enemy nation was an act of provocation against an enemy declaring war.

The problem was that the army of Israel was not strong enough to defeat the enemy. As I mentioned earlier, they were depleted. The Syrian army was much stronger. This was more of an act of faith that Elisha was asking King Joash to take. Taking the bow and arrows was symbolic of taking hold of the power of God through obedience and faith.

Notice in verse 17 that Elisha declares that the arrow that was shot out of the east window was "The Lord's arrow of victory!" The battle had not taken place yet, but God's victory was promised.

How is that possible? What Elisha wanted Joash to understand at that moment was that the breakthrough Israel needed would come because of the Lord and His power.

Earlier in Israel's history, 2 Kings 7, the Syrian army surrounded Samaria, laying siege to it. The people in the city were desperate for a breakthrough. There seemed to be no way out, and the famine was great. No food, super high cost of living, the people were desperate as the huge enemy army surrounded the city. But in 2 Kings 7:1, Elisha prophesies: **Slide 8:** *Elisha replied, "Hear the word of the Lord. This is what the Lord says: About this time tomorrow, a seah of the finest flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria."* (2 Kings 7:1, NIV)

What Elisha prophesied seemed impossible to the King's second-in-command, but God did it! The enemy left without a fight because of God! The victory over the enemy did not come from the strength or size of Israel's army; it came because of the power of God.

In 2 Kings 6, when Elisha and his servant were surrounded by the Syrian army, it was

not the might or power of Elisha that delivered them, it was because Elisha understood how to lean into the power of God.

This act of shooting the arrow out the window in the direction of the enemy army was Elisha's way of encouraging Joash that victory would come from the Lord.

If we are going to experience breakthrough in our lives over the enemies that continually come at us, we need to learn to rely on the power of God, not our own power. It is not about our strength, our willpower, our resources, our gifts, or our wisdom. True victory comes when we learn to trust in the power of God.

2 Peter 1:3 (God's Word Translation): **Slide 9: *God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and for godliness.*** (2 Peter 1:3, GW)

The bow and the arrows symbolize the Lord's power to deliver Israel once and for all. Joash was encouraged by Elisha to take hold of God's power. True breakthrough comes when we learn to take hold of the power of God rather than rely on our own strength.

Slide 10: Three Principles for Breakthrough

2. Learn to Discern the Moment

Going back to 2 Kings 13, there is a small detail that is easily overlooked that holds great significance.

2 Kings 13:16 (ESV): **Slide 11: *Then he said to the king of Israel, "Draw the bow," and he drew it. And Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands.*** (2 Kings 13:16, ESV)

Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. What is happening with this? Going back to the declaration that Joash made in verse 14, "*My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!*" and knowing that this is the same cry that Elisha uttered when Elijah was taken to heaven, we can make the connection that something is about to be transferred. Elisha is at the end of his life and when Joash draws the bow, Elisha lays his hands on the king's hands.

Friends, do you see the significance of what is happening in this moment? When Elijah was about to be taken, Elisha had kept his eyes on his master and uttered the same cry. Then the mantle of Elijah fell from Heaven and Elisha took hold of it. Now in this moment, Joash draws back the bow and Elisha lays his hands on the king's hands.

This is a moment when God desires to transfer power to Joash to lead Israel to complete victory over their enemy. This is a special moment and this is a divine moment.

Friends, if we want breakthrough in our lives, we need to learn to discern the moments when God is empowering us to defeat the enemy. We need to learn to discern the moments when God may be wanting to bring change in our lives spiritually. We need to learn to discern the moments when God wants to increase our anointing and elevate our authority. The prophet Elisha had long held a position of spiritual leadership in Israel. But at this moment, Elisha, by the hand of God, told Joash to pick up the bow and the arrows, to draw it back to shoot. The bow and the arrows were in the hand of Joash, not Elisha. This was something God was calling Joash to do! God was elevating the authority of Joash in this moment and was going to give him complete victory over the enemy. And God was going to empower Joash to do it. Elisha's hand being laid on Joash represents a transfer of the anointing and the authority that Joash would need to defeat the enemy of Israel once and for all!

Friends, if you want to experience breakthrough over the enemy who continually comes to steal your joy, your peace, your purity, your passion, and your victory, you need to learn to discern the moment. God says, take hold of the bow and take hold of the arrows and by faith declare war on the enemy. Not by your power, but through God! Through God's power and anointing!

Friends, don't miss the moment! Don't miss the transfer of power that God wants to give you through the Holy Spirit! Don't miss the moment when God wants to increase your anointing and authority so you can walk in victory.

You can miss an appointment but don't miss the moment. You can reschedule an appointment, but you can't reschedule a moment with God.

You see, the sad thing in this story is that Joash missed the moment. What follows is tragic. After laying hands on the hands of the king and after the arrow is shot, Elisha declared: **Slide 12: And he said, "The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Syria! For you shall fight the Syrians in Aphek until you have made an end of them."** (2 Kings 13:17, ESV)

The Lord's arrow of victory. Then Elisha gives these instructions to Joash:

2 Kings 13:18-19 (ESV): **Slide 13: And he said, "Take the arrows," and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground with them." And he struck three times and stopped. Then the man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Syria until you had made an end of it, but now you will strike down Syria only three times."** (2 Kings 13:17-19, ESV)

Slide 14: Three Principles for Breakthrough

3. Keep Striking the Ground

Friends, Joash did not discern the moment he was in. Elisha tells him the arrows represent the Lord's victory over Syria, the enemy that continually plagued Israel. And when he was told to strike the ground, he only struck it three times and stopped.

Elisha is so upset! You should have struck the ground five or six times; then, you would have had complete victory!

But how could the king of Israel have known how many times to strike the ground? Is this fair for Elisha to be upset? I can hear the king of Israel saying, but you didn't tell me how many times to strike the ground. And I can hear Elisha saying, and I didn't tell you to stop either.

Friends, if we want to experience breakthrough in our lives, we need to keep taking those steps of faith. We need to keep on striking the ground. What do I mean? I mean that...

- You need to keep praying for that loved one who has walked away from Jesus and who is bound in addiction, and not give up!
- You need to keep inviting that friend or coworker who doesn't know Jesus to come to church or small group with you.
- You need to keep passionately loving your wife or your husband, even when you don't feel they are loving you.
- You need to keep resisting temptation.
- You need to keep reading your Bible, keep seeking Jesus, and keep pressing in until the breakthrough comes.

King Joash missed the moment to walk in complete victory over the enemy because he half-heartedly did what Elisha told him to do. His half-hearted faith not only affected him, but also affected the nation he led.

Your half-hearted devotion to God, your shortcut faith, won't lead to victory over the enemies that keep plaguing your life. God is calling people to full-hearted devotion and to pursue a faith in Jesus that is without compromise.

When Elisha desired a double-portion anointing, he did not let Elijah out of his sight. He walked with him and walked with him and kept on following despite repeated attempts from others to dissuade him. He kept his eyes on his master and received the anointing he needed for the call that was on his life.

He wanted the same for Joash. Elisha was angry at the half-hearted commitment to take the arrows that were declared to be the Lord's arrows of victory and passively fall short of complete victory.

Conclusion

Joash missed the moment. He missed out on the opportunity to experience complete victory. He missed the moment to walk into a new level of authority and power.

And check out the very next verse.

2 Kings 13:20a (ESV): **Slide 15: *So Elisha died, and they buried him. (2 Kings 13:20a, ESV)***

Talk about anticlimactic. Here you have this intense spiritual moment, Joash misses it, Elisha is angry, and then he dies and is buried. And we move from this to something very strange and disconnected. Let's read the full verse.

2 Kings 13:20-21 (ESV): **Slide 16: *So Elisha died, and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the land in the spring of the year. And as a man was being buried, behold, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the grave of Elisha, and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet. (2 Kings 13:20-21, ESV)***

How does this possibly tie in besides being super cool that a dead man comes back to life after touching the bones of Elisha?

Friends, when Elijah was taken to heaven, his mantle of anointing fell to the earth, and Elisha picked it up. Why? Because you do not need a mantle of anointing in heaven. The anointing of God is for the ministry that needs to take place on earth.

But when Elisha dies, his anointing is not transferred to anyone. It is with him in the grave. For when a dead man is thrown on his bones, he comes to life! That is both amazing and sad when you think about it.

Joash had the opportunity to walk in a new level of anointing, power, authority, and victory, but he missed his moment due to half-hearted faith.

What about you? Are you tired of battling the same spiritual enemies that steal your joy, your peace, your purity, and your hope, and that continually take up territory that is yours? Then discern the moment. God wants to fill you with His Spirit, His power, His anointing so that you can walk in victory.

If you need a breakthrough, I want to invite you to take a step of faith, let us lay hands on you, and believe God to fill you with His power so that you may walk in His anointing.

I want to encourage you to keep striking the arrows of victory and don't give up! Keep striking the ground! Keep praying, keep giving, keep fasting, keep believing, keep trusting, keep loving. Don't stop! Somebody needs to discern the moment right now! God is calling someone to receive His power, His healing, and His victory today!