

## Chapter 30

Elisha,  
Hezekiah,  
Daniel;  
Conclusion

THERE ARE many other instances of the exhibition of the visible hand of God in the life of Elisha and others, the consideration of which, in the minute manner of the foregoing chapters, would easily fill as many chapters again. Even in the remaining life of Elisha, there are: 1, The antidoting of the poisonous herbs accidentally used in the preparation of a meal for the sons of the prophets in the time of scarcity ([2 Kings 4:41](#)); 2, The multiplication of scanty supplies for the wants of a hundred men, who, after eating to their satisfaction, left something over ([42–44](#)); 3, The cure of Naaman's leprosy by seven dips in the Jordan ([5:1–14](#)); 4, the smiting of Gehazi, Elisha's servant, with leprosy, for falsehood ([20–27](#)); 5, The recovery of a borrowed axe head, which had fallen into a stream, by causing it to float ([6:1–7](#)); 6, The revealing of the secrets of the king of Syria ([12](#)); 7, The manifestation of the invisible heavenly host that opposed the movements of the Syrian army ([17](#)); 8, The smiting of the Syrian army with blindness ([18](#)); 9, The illusion of hearing by which the Syrian army were made to desert their camp and flee from Samaria, relieving the city from threatened starvation.

But these incidents only illustrate the principles already exhibited in the consideration of the life and work of Elisha's predecessor, Elijah, and the first part of Elisha's own life. To follow them out would be interesting, but could add nothing to what we have already learnt in these chapters, which have been already drawn out to a sufficient length.

We follow Elisha to his grave for a last glimpse of the power that rested upon him in double measure during the days of his life as requested from Elijah, and which had not quite forsaken him in death. He had not been long in his last resting place when a funeral approached where he lay. Before the funeral was finished, an invasion of the land by the Moabites became visible from the spot. Seeing the marching bands, the people who had charge of the funeral got into a panic, and hastily threw the corpse into Elisha's sepulchre, and made off. The result was wonderful. The dead man on coming into contact with the bones of Elisha, revived and stood upon his feet ([2 Kings 13:21](#)). No explanation is offered by the narrative of this remarkable incident. The fact simply is stated. But the variety of facts recorded in various places enable us to have a glimpse of the explanation. First, there is the fact just seen, that the power of God rested on Elisha in an intenser degree than even on Elijah. Second, there is the fact that this power is transmissible, and, therefore, storable, as shown by the luminosity of the face of Moses after a forty days' association with angelic glory; by Elisha's sending his staff to the dead child with the expectation that life would return; and as shown more particularly in the New Testament, where we read that virtue went out of Jesus, and healed them all ([Luke 6:19](#); [Mark 5:30](#)); and that a woman was healed by but a touch of his garment ([Luke 8:46–47](#)); that "from the body of Paul were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them" ([Acts 19:12](#)). These facts suggest that the divine energy that brooded on Elisha during his prophetic ministry, so permeated his substance, that even his bones remained charged with it in death, in

sufficient power to re-animate a dead body brought into contact with them. The Spirit of God has passive relations, in which its effects are irrespective of divine volition, and spring from what it is in its own nature. From such a conception, conventional theology may recoil in horror: but blindness only can fail to see that such a conception is yielded by the Scripture illustrations referred to—a conception, at the same time, which in no way interfered with that higher phase of the subject in which the Spirit of God is seen as the agent or power by which the volitional Eternal Father in the heavens accomplishes the designs of His wisdom, directly, or by the hand of His angels, as the case may be.

In the other cases remaining to be noticed, the facts are amply narrated, and free from obscurity. They differ little from those already passed in review, except in this, that they were miraculous deliverances of the Lord's people in trouble, rather than acts intended to manifest the divine name in the earth, though this aim (inextricably blended with all deliverances) was subserved in a way scarcely subordinate. We refer to the cases of Hezekiah, Daniel, and Daniel's companion captives in Babylon.

Hezekiah, the fourteenth successor of David on the throne of Judah, was a king whose ways were all pleasing to Yahweh. "He did that which was fight in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that his father David did... He clave to Yahweh and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which Yahweh commanded Moses" ([2 Kings 18:3–6](#)). In this character is to be found the explanation of the wonderful response to prayer with which Hezekiah was honoured in the time of trouble. The trouble was a sore and threatening one. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had overrun and devastated all surrounding countries. He then cast his eyes upon Jerusalem, which Hezekiah had purged from idolatry. From Lachish, the siege of which he was finishing, he sent a summons to Hezekiah, demanding the surrender of Jerusalem. The demand was insolently delivered in an open manner before the people gathered on and near the wall; and it aimed directly at Yahweh, in whose service Hezekiah had shown such zeal. Sennacherib's messengers said: "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? Have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of mine hands, that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?" ([2 Kings 18:33–35](#)).

Hezekiah commanded silence on the part of all his people in the presence of these blasphemous words. But he was greatly perturbed. He knew the overpowering strength of the Assyrian host, to which Sennacherib's ambassadors appealed; and he knew that what they said about Hezekiah's inability to muster even two decent cavalry regiments, was true. But he dared not to surrender. With rent clothes and in covering of sackcloth, he submitted the matter to Yahweh in His temple, and at the same time sent a message to Isaiah, the prophet. Sennacherib's ambassadors, understanding that the summons was refused, returned with the report to their master, whom they found to have shifted from Lachish to Libnah. Sennacherib then wrote a despatch, probably the only State document of his that has come down to posterity; and which, like a few other documents and human utterances, would never have been heard of but for their relation (hostile or otherwise) to matters involved in Bible narrative. He wrote a letter to Hezekiah. "Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee," and repeating in substance the argument of his ambassadors. Hezekiah, having read the letter, was deeply distressed by it. What could he do? There was only one thing left him. There come times when all human resources fail. He went to the temple and spread it before the Lord, and submitted the matter to Yahweh in prayer. He acknowledged the prowess of the Assyrians against the divinities of the surrounding

nations; but said, “They were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. Now, therefore, O Lord, our God, *save us from his hand* THAT ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH MAY KNOW THAT THOU ART THE LORD, EVEN THOU ONLY.” Such a prayer from such a man received the direct and immediate response that characterised the Mosaic operations in Egypt, and which will again be a joyful experience upon earth when Yahweh by the hand of His Son returned, will “revive his work in the midst of the years.” “Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, King of Assyria ... He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake. *Then the angel of Yahweh went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and four score and five thousand*; and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib, King of Assyria, departed, and went and returned and dwelt at Nineveh” ([Isaiah 37:21–23](#)).

David tells us that the angels “do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word.” Here was a practical illustration. The destruction of the bulk of Sennacherib’s army was ordered for the deliverance of Hezekiah, and the vindication of the divine name against reproach. The angel went forth, and executed the command. “The angel of the Lord campeth round about them that fear Him,” but he is terrible to Yahweh’s enemies. It is easy for an angel, having control of nature’s elements, to snuff out the fragile lives of a military host, however numerous. Paralysis of the breathing nerves, or stoppage of the action of the heart, soon lays the proudest will in the dust. To show this power on the wicked, the glory of God called for in this case, and the same cause will call for it again when “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven,” at his second coming, for the purpose of excuting judgment on the ungodly. Divine power is never specifically exerted, except for some such large and lofty end, and when it is put forth it is for ends that could not be reached without the employment of power which men speak of as miraculous.

In a later age, when the corruptions of Jerusalem led to her divine abandonment, the same power was shown in an individual case and in a strange land. Daniel, among the royal captives taken from Jerusalem to Babylon, excited jealousy by his ability and success among those above whom he was promoted in the days of Darius, the Mede. His envious compeers, knowing that Daniel was in the habit of praying three times a day, obtained a decree forbidding, for thirty days, all prayer except to Darius, under the penalty of being thrown to the wild beasts. The publication of this decree did not deter Daniel from his daily duty; and being caught in the act of prayer, he was thrown to the lions. The whole world has heard of this, and of the result; that God stopped the mouths of the lions, and preserved him from their claws till the morning, when he was liberated safe and sound. It was a miracle, that is, a divine act, but not an inexplicable or unreasonable one. The angel commissioned in the case ([Dan. 6:22](#)) acted on the nervous systems of the brutes, with the restraining power which even a high human magnetism possesses in a small degree, but which in the hand of an angel, who is spirit-substance itself, is irresistible wheresoever brought to bear. Under its influence, the lions felt no more inclination to eat Daniel than to eat stones. But when the influence was removed, on Daniel’s liberation, the native ferocity of the animals came back with redoubled power, and enabled them to mutilate and destroy Daniel’s enemies (thrown to them) before they reached the bottom of the den in their fall. The reasonableness of God’s interposition on behalf of His faithful servant, does not require a word of vindication.

The next, and last case, is also of world-wide notoriety, though received with world-wide

incredulity (that is, meanwhile: by and by, the incredulity will all vanish before events that will confound the logic of the schools). The names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are household words. They were Jewish officials, high in power and position in the state of Babylon during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. On a certain occasion, during that monarch's reign, an idolatrous feast was ordained in dedication of a new image which Nebuchadnezzar had made. At a given signal, a mighty concourse of people, to assemble on the occasion (including the officials of the empire), were to prostrate themselves in the presence of the image, on pain of being cast into a "burning fiery furnace." As officials of the empire Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were present, but refused the adoration commanded. Their non-compliance was reported to Nebuchadnezzar, who summoned them to his presence. He asked if the report was true, which they acknowledged. He gave them another chance. They said they would not worship the image whatever the consequences might be. Enraged at their obstinacy, Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to be cast into the furnace without delay. The whole world knows the marvellous sequel, though this, too, is scornfully received and will be till the day near at hand, when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will themselves confound their adversaries by reappearing among men, with all the other saints of God. Thrown into the furnace, bound, they were not burnt, but presently appeared loose, and walking in the midst of the fire with a fourth companion, a godlike being, in whom Nebuchadnezzar recognised the angel of Yahweh ([Dan. 3:28](#)). The prodigy excited Nebuchadnezzar's extremest surprise and admiration. He ordered the men to come forth, which they did, among the crowding courtiers of the King, who satisfied themselves by personal inspection that even the smell of fire had not passed upon them. Here again, there was nothing truly out of the way of reason. Even men can neutralise the action of fire for a certain length of time by various artificial contrivances. How much more easy for an angel, throwing a mantle of the spirit over these three men, to keep them unscathed in the midst of the roaring flame. The possibility of such an exercise of power in the abstract is beyond contradiction; its fitness and reasonableness in the circumstances is beyond the need of demonstration.

In such a miracle there is nothing puerile: nothing beyond the capability of a fully developed understanding to receive. This, indeed, is true of all the miracles recorded in the Bible. They are within the range of abstract possibility, as illustrated in actual experience in other forms, and they were all performed for purposes that were in the highest degree noble and good, and for purposes which could not have been achieved apart from their occurrence.

---

We have now reached the end of the Old Testament section of this most interesting and important subject. We have by no means exhausted it. The entire ministry of the prophets, as represented in the books ranging from Isaiah to Malachi, was an exhibition of the visible hand of GOD, of the highest and most valuable form. But it is not necessary to deal separately with this. In substance, the subject is entirely covered by the early chapters of our treatise. Faith in the prophets is most surely established by the contemplation of all the historic marvels which enter into the essence of Jewish history, and lie at the foundation of the Bible's literary development. Neither the Bible's existence nor the history of the Jewish nation is susceptible of a rational explanation apart from a recognition of the "miracles, signs, and wonders" which we have looked at in the foregoing chapters. If we have given a somewhat prominent place to the Mosaic phase of these wonders, it is because here the foundation exists for the whole Biblical superstructure. Let a man fairly master the principles involved in the opening chapters of Jewish history, and he will find no difficulty in anything that comes after.

We had purposed, in commencing these chapters, to extend them to the consideration of that

most wonderful of all exhibitions of the visible hand of God which occurred in the beginning of our era, when Christ appeared in Judea, and arrested attention as attention never was before arrested, by his wonderful words and works; and when the world was revolutionised shortly afterwards by the apostolic testimony that Christ, whose enemies had got rid of him by crucifixion, had risen from the dead, and had commanded a proclamation to all the world, that by him, and by him alone, could men be saved from death, and the world delivered from its woes. On re-consideration, however, we have abandoned this purpose, and have decided to devote to this phase of the matter a separate series of chapters in the hope being able to present such a “Life of Christ” as the nature of our times calls for, and in such form and aspect as the apprehension of Bible truth in its harmonious entirety alone makes it possible to present. Whether we shall accomplish this purpose (or, accomplishing it, shall carry it out successfully), is known alone to Him in whose honour these pages have humbly been inscribed. “Man deviseth his own way. but the Lord directeth his steps.”