

the great Hazael, but by his weaker son, Ben-hadad, and won from their grasp all the lands which had been lost. The prophet Elisha, though dead, was still mighty, and the plans he inaugurated continued to influence the people. Nay, his very bones sent forth power; for when a dead man was laid beside them and touched them life seemed to shoot through the corpse, and it stood erect in the sepulcher.

**Verse 14. Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died.** He was now fully eighty years of age. During his long life he had faithfully served both his God and his king. After the vision at Dothan, which we studied in our last lesson, the city of Samaria was besieged by the Syrians. Their armies surrounded it closely, and the agony and distress of the garrison and the inhabitants have seldom been surpassed. Even children were eaten, and the most repulsive articles of food were sold for fabulous prices. In his desperation the king sent to behold Elisha, but Elisha announced that within twenty-four hours the famine would be replaced by superabundance; and it was so. The whole story is full of suggestion. And now after more years of unrecorded goodness Elisha is dying. **Joash the king of Israel came down unto him.** Things had strangely changed in Israel since Elisha began his ministrations. The godly work of his predecessor, Elijah, had had deep effect on the national character and sentiment, and when Elisha as a young man picked up the older prophet's mantle and started on his career as the prophet of Israel it was quite another Israel from that which he was now about to leave. Then the influence of Ahab's family and the foul worship of Baal were felt everywhere; now Ahab's dynasty was no more, and Baal for a while was forgotten in Israel. It is true there was much of sin and some open idolatry. It is also true, however, that the most of the people accepted the true doctrine of Jehovah. For forty-five years and more Elisha has not been mentioned in the Bible record. Joash was a descendant of Jehu, who had usurped the throne and put to death all the representatives of Ahab's family that he could find. Vigorous as Jehu was, he had not been able to maintain himself successfully against the Syrians and Assyrians, but the kingdom had grown up to comparative strength again, and the influence of Elisha had come to be regarded by both king and subjects as one of the powerful forces working toward national prosperity. **Wept over his face.** The king's sorrow for Elisha's death was sincere, and it should have been, for he owed his royal inheritance to Elisha's influence and acts. **O my father, my father!** In all religions ministers have been addressed as "father." That is the ordinary title of a Roman Catholic priest. It is frequently

used by all sorts of Protestants. Padre and papa are the names that other nations give to the ministers of the Gospel, and the title pope has the same origin. **The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.** A phrase equivalent to the standing army of the nation. It was a compliment of the highest sort, phrased in exactly the words that Elisha himself had used when his "father," Elijah, had been taken from him to heaven. It was more or less proverbial, and in any case carried the idea that no fortifications that Israel could construct were equal in their defensive power to one good man whose eyes were opened by the Spirit of God. That a king should visit a prophet was astounding, and in the East prophets were kept by kings as servants. The reverence of Joash for Elisha gives us a favorable view of some phases of the king's character.

**15. Take bow and arrows.** The East was the land of symbols, and when the prophet gave this command the king and the bystanders would know that a symbolic act was about to be performed. **He took unto him bow and arrows.** Very likely the king, whose faith was not of the strongest, was bored by the prophet's command.

**16. Put thine hand upon the bow.** "Hold it in position for shooting an arrow." **He put his hand upon it.** That is, he set the arrow, pulled the string, and took aim. **Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.** Elisha was the "man of God," and whatever he did was looked upon as being done by God. The bow and arrows represented the king's endeavors to conquer his enemies, and Elisha's hands put on them indicated that God was about to give power to the king's efforts. "Christ himself deigns to put his hand upon our hand in order that we may draw the bow aright. It is his arrows that must be shot, and it is we who must shoot them, but if we do our part with faith, earnestness, strength, and perseverance, we will have a blessing from him."—*Wordsworth.*

**17. Open the window eastward.** Windows in that day were not made of glass, but of lattice work, which could be opened and closed at pleasure. Of course Elisha's command was not addressed to the king, but to a servant. "Eastward" was in the direction of the territory which Hazael, king of Syria, had wrested from Israel. Elisha was by prophecy about to