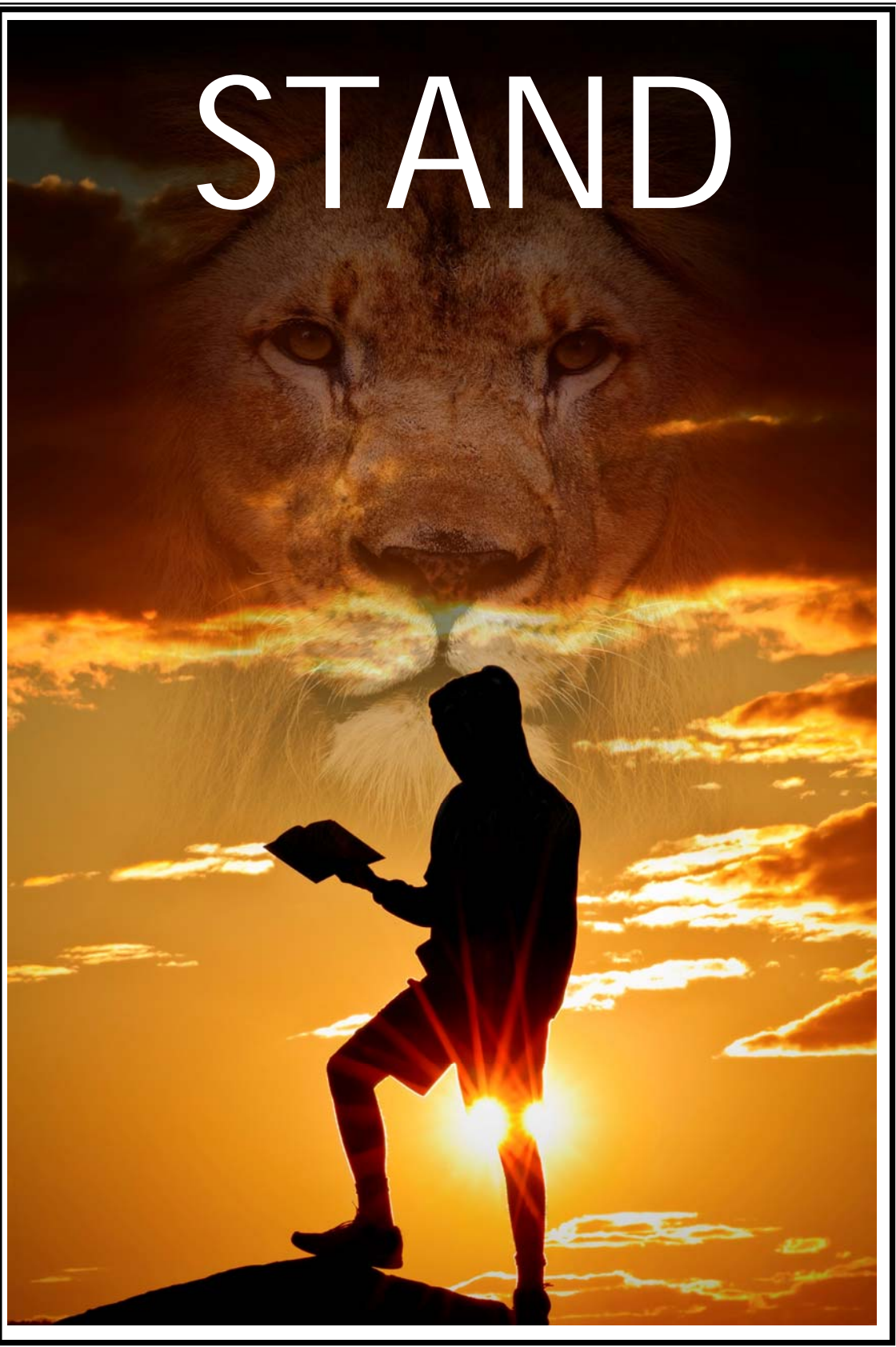


STAND



ELISHA
A Study in 2 Kings

Elisha: A Study in 2 Kings

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Lesson 1: Changing Times

1 Kings 19.19-21; 2 Kings 2.1-14

Introduction:

Welcome back to the tumultuous world of Israel in the 9th century BC. And welcome to a journey through an often neglected section of Scripture. These chapters in 2 Kings are packed with miracles, and thrilling episodes that illustrate the way ordinary life can be transformed when the saving power of God is fully unleashed. Elisha's name means "God is salvation," and truly, through studying his life and the ministry given him by God, we will experience afresh the saving nature of Yahweh, Elisha's God and our God.

READ 1 Kings 19.19-21

Last study we observed some intriguing parallels between two of Israel's great prophets—Moses and Elijah. As we dive back into 1 Kings for just a few verses, we will pick up on another parallel: God supplied His servants, both Moses and Elijah, with a hand-picked successor. In His kindness, God chose another individual first to support and encourage the prophet's ministry, and then to continue and even expand it after the master prophet's death. Let's begin. We will marvel at the way that Elisha, initially Elijah's "attendant" or "aide," will be led by God into a crucial ministry as a prophet himself within Israel.

REVIEW

1. In the previous verses (19.15-18), we read that God had re-commissioned Elijah to a new phase of ministry—including designating (lit, "anointing") Elisha as his successor. In verses 19 to 21, we witness the initial and intriguing encounter between Elijah and Elisha. What can we deduce about the life of Elisha from his first appearance in v. 19?
2. Elijah cast his "cloak" upon Elisha while he was still in the field. What did Elijah's cloak symbolise? What, then, was the significance of this action?

OPTIONAL: Learn more about the way a "cloak" functioned as a prophet's badge of office. Read 2 Kings 1.7-8; Zech. 13.4; Matt. 3.4.

3. What actions of Elisha's seem to reflect a single-minded commitment to abandon his former way of living and dedicate himself to the living God by following Elijah?
v. 20
v. 21

OPTIONAL: Could this incident have been in Jesus' mind in Luke 9.62? What is the same? What is different?

READ 2 Kings 2.1-14

After our fleeting glimpse of Elisha during his initial call, Elisha disappears from our view for some while. We know next to nothing of his "apprenticeship" to Elijah, although he will be later recognised by King Jehoshaphat as the one who "*poured water on the hands on Elijah*" (2 Kings 3.11), a description that hints at years of hidden, possibly even menial, service.

REVIEW

4. How does 2 Kings 2 open? How does verse one prepare us for the astounding event to come (v. 1)? How does this affect how we read the chapter?
5. Elijah, we learn, will be by-passing the usual channels of leaving earthly life. What other individuals also ended their time on earth, leaving no body to be found?

Genesis 5.23-24

Deuteronomy 34.5-6

Acts 1.1-2, 9

6. For the first time since 1 Kings, Elisha speaks. What are his first words?

_____ (v.2)

Review 1 Kings 17.1. In what way does Elisha echo Elijah's first words?

7. The words spoken by Elisha in v. 2 will be repeated for a total of three times (vv. 2, 4, 6). What aspect of Elisha's character is highlighted by this repetition?

8. Elijah's ministry opened with the prophet travelling from place to place at God's command (cf. 1 Kings 17.2-3, 8-9; 18.1). His final days also entail moving at God's command.
- a. To what three places was he directed?
 - v. 2
 - v. 4
 - v. 6
 - b. Why are these names significant within the history of God's people in the Promised Land? HINT: See Joshua 3; 5.13ff; 7.2. Stay tuned: we'll discuss this more next study.
9. Whom did Elijah and Elisha meet at each stop (vv. 3, 5, 7)? What do these meetings suggest may have been another purpose which Elijah's farewell tour accomplished?
10. Finally the pair arrives at the Jordan. Elijah performs his final miracle (v. 8).
- a. What was it?
 - b. How does Elijah's miracle trigger memories of God's past faithfulness? Review Exodus 14.15-16, 21-22, Joshua 3.14-17, 4.15-18
11. What spectacular sight accompanied Elijah's whirlwind departure for heaven (v.11)?

What were these *chariots* and *horses*? (lit., "a chariot of fire and horses of fire") and what did they signify?

- a. Who are often described as being the army (or "host") of the Lord?
See 1 Kings 22.19 (cf. 2 Kings 6.17; Psalms 68.17; 103.20-21).
- b. Whose presence is often signalled by fire and wind?
1 Kings 19.11-12 (cf. Ex. 19.16-20; Ps. 18.7-15).
- c. Who is frequently pictured (in Old Testament poetry) as riding a chariot?
Psalm 104.1-4 (cf. Deut. 33.26; Isa. 66.15; Hab. 3.8).

Elijah's extraordinary life ends (what we can see of it anyway) in a suitably spectacular manner. The courageous prophet who had called down fire from heaven in his battle against Baal, who had been protected from King Azariah by fire from heaven, now is removed from earth amidst more of that heavenly fire. And after a lifetime of opposition to Baal—the Canaanite's storm god and so-called "Rider of the Clouds"—Elijah is met by the True Rider of the Clouds (Isa.19.1), the Lord of Hosts, the Yahweh of Israel.

What a grand exit! What a great God!

12. Earlier this lesson we considered how the cloak of Elijah functioned as a symbol of his role as prophet, as his badge of office. What does Elisha's parting of the Jordan with that same cloak tell us (v. 14)? (See v. 15 to learn how the other prophets interpreted this act).

How does the miraculous division of the Jordan's water answer his question of v. 14?

REFLECT

1. This week, we've witnessed the transition of Elisha from Elijah's assistant to his successor. This movement from learning to leadership was a common model in our culture's past, when children laboured first under, then beside, then instead of, their parents, as did apprentices with craftsmen. Is there still value in such an approach to leadership? Should we be fostering this pattern in our Christian community? If so, how?
2. In our previous study of Elijah, we saw how the people of Israel had abandoned God and His Word (1 Kings 18.18; 19.10, 14) and transferred their fundamental allegiance to Baal. Now this study we've discovered that Elisha, in a refreshing contrast, responded to God's call by leaving (literally, "abandoning") his oxen (his means of living) and running after Elijah. Compare Elisha with the disciples in Mark 1.16-20. What similarities do you notice?

What does such complete abandonment of old ways and allegiance to Christ look like today?

3. The Bible records that God “took” Enoch (Gen. 5.24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2.1). Consider the sweet confidence of the psalmist:

“Yet I am always with You; You hold me by my right hand. You guide me with Your counsel and afterward, You will take me into glory” (73.23-24; NIV).

Throughout the OT we catch glimmers of hope concerning our continued life and fellowship with God after death (Psalms 16.10-11; 49.15). How does Jesus’ resurrection and ascension bring even further hope to our hearts about our ultimate futures? Read one or more of:

Luke 23.39-43

John 14.1-3

2 Cor. 5.1-5

Heb. 6.19-20

RESPOND

We look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4.18

1. MEMORISE: 2 Corinthians 4.18.
2. 2 Kings 2 reminds us that even the most ordinary of activities (like Elijah and Elisha walking along a riverbank) occur against the backdrop of heavenly reality (chariots of fire!). Write “Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” on a piece of paper and display it where it will remind you of His presence, of the unseen yet powerful heavenly realities that undergird *your* daily routines.
3. Prayerfully look at your life. Are you currently in an Elijah-Elisha relationship? If not, is there one you need to foster? What steps can you take this week?

DIGGING DEEPER



1. In 1Kings 19.20, Elisha's request to kiss his father and mother likely referred to more than a sentimental smooch good-bye. Just two verses earlier, the faithful remnant of Israel had been described as those who had not *kissed* Baal. Likely the "kisses" of v. 20 also carried similar weight—more than tokens of affection; "kisses" signalled allegiance and submission (e.g., 1 Sam. 10.1). In Elisha's case, his were farewell kisses, as he transferred his ultimate allegiance from his parents to Elijah, his new master. With this background in mind, consider Psalm 2.10-12. What point is being made here? OPTION: cf. Hos. 13.1-4.

2. Elisha's request for *a double portion* of Elijah's spirit might seem puzzling to us. Once again, reading the passage in light of its biblical background is immensely enlightening. Read Deuteronomy 21.15-17. How do Israel's inheritance laws about firstborn sons give perspective on Elisha's request? In what way will Elisha be an heir to Elijah? What does Elisha's cry of v. 12 reveal?

3. Why did Elisha cry, "*The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!*" upon Elijah's departure?
 - a. What heavenly reality had just been seen by Elisha(v. 11)?

This awesome sight of God's heavenly hosts deeply impacted Elisha's faith. Years later, Elisha would pray that his servant also would be given a glimpse of these fiery forces. That servant did, indeed, have his eyes opened, and he too saw firsthand the normally unseen angelic army of the Lord, His *horses and chariots of fire* (2 Kings 6.17).

 - b. Read 2 Kings 13.14. When does the phrase "*The chariots of Israel and its horseman*" make another, surprising, appearance? Who cries out these words? To whom? Why?

The phrase may suggest that the prophetic ministry of the (departed or dying) prophet was, in fact, the true source of Israel's might and strength (as opposed to her literal military resources of horses and chariots).

Perhaps the best interpretation of 2 Kings 2.12 is to accept that Elisha, having seen a fleeting glimpse of the hosts of the Lord, recognises that Elijah, the one who served and spoke for the Lord of Hosts, represented the source of Israel's stability and might. Years later, King Joash would acknowledge Elisha also as the servant of the Lord of hosts.

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

Each person [is] engaged in the perfectly legitimate activities of making a living and building a life. Yet all the time there is another parallel event going on to which we all are invited. Not an event of our own making or organising, but the free gift of living fellowship with God in the midst of a teeming world.

D. Lennon

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

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Lesson 2: Salvation & Judgement

2 KINGS 2.19-25

READ 2 Kings 2.19-25

This week we'll be studying the earliest days of Elisha's prophetic ministry. As we travel through 2 Kings, we'll discover that Elisha's life as a prophet not only continued the ministry initiated by Elijah, in some senses it expanded it. We'll be amazed by the astounding miracles God performs during Elisha's life. We'll be awed by His powerful work of salvation and judgement.

Our text this week introduces two inaugural miracles, both somewhat obscure and, initially, both somewhat puzzling: the "healing" of Jericho's water supply, and the dramatic confrontation with the mocking boys of Bethel. These often ignored narratives may *strike Western readers as either trivial . . . or objectionable . . . So they are worth paying attention to because they push us into different ways of thinking from ones that come naturally to us (J. Goldingay)*. Are you ready to have God's Word and ways enlarge your thinking? Let's begin.

REVIEW

1. Last study we noted some interesting parallels between Joshua (Moses' aide-turned-successor) and Elisha (Elijah's aide-turned-successor).

a. After Elijah's departure, what are Elisha's first two movements?

Vv. 13-14 He crossed _____.

V. 18 He went to _____.

After Joshua had led Israel across the Jordan, what city formed the 1st major challenge in Israel's God-given mission to claim God's gift of the land (see Josh. 6.1-2)?

a) Now, looking ahead to v. 23, where did Elisha go after the Jordan River and Jericho?

After Joshua and Israel had defeated Jericho, and renewed the covenant, to what region did they next move (Josh. 7.2)?

Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in. And the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor."

Joshua 6:1-2

The attentive Bible reader will find in Elisha's early movements echoes of Joshua's early mission of salvation and blessing for God's people, and judgement on the Canaanites. The shape of Elisha's first journey reminds us of God's earlier faithfulness—the land of Israel was a covenant gift from God. And Israel's covenant obligation was still to remain completely faithful to Yahweh, the God of Israel, alone.

Elijah's part had drawn to a close, but God's battle against Baal, the god of the Canaanites, would continue under Elisha.

2. How does reading this chapter in light of the background story of the Bible enhance our understanding of Elisha's ministry? How does it highlight God's ongoing plans for His people?
3. What is the complaint of the people of Jericho (v. 19)?
4. Why ought we not to be surprised at the dire conditions in Jericho? Review the OT background in Josh. 6.26: "_____ *before the LORD be the one who . . . rebuilds this city, Jericho.*" Note that Jericho was, in fact, rebuilt during the reign of Ahab (1 Kings 16.34).
5. What is Elisha's response to Jericho's cursed condition (vv. 20-21)?
6. Are the salt and Elisha's action in themselves restorative?
7. How does the Bible ensure we credit God Himself for this "healing" miracle? (v.21) How does the curing of the water illustrate the truth of Deut. 32.39?
8. Why is the healing of Jericho's (cursed) waters an appropriate inaugural miracle in Elisha's ministry? How does it authenticate him as a genuine and worthy successor to Elijah (cf. 1 Kings 17)?

Elisha's first public act was to extend God's mercy and provision even to those living in a cursed city. God's saving blessing could be extended to anyone! As we move into vv. 23-25, we'll discover that Elisha also would be a mediator of the Lord's (long restrained) judgement on Israel's idolatry and mockery of Him.

As a true prophet of God ... Elisha brought with him not only blessing, but also curse, not only salvation, but also judgment.

I. Provan

9. Where does Elisha next travel (v. 23)? What background knowledge has 1-2 Kings already given us about this city? Review:
1 Kings 12.28-30a
1 Kings 12.32-33

10. How did the gang of Bethel boys taunt God's representative (v. 23)? Why is their chant repeated in v. 23? Is this a copying mistake? Or is it making a point?
11. What is Elisha's response to the mockery of Bethel (v. 24)?
12. In the face of this group ridicule (and, incidentally, major challenge to his new leadership), how did Elisha entrust his own "honour," as well as that of the God he served, to the LORD Himself (v. 24)?
13. As we attend to this story, we realise this is more than a case of boyish teasing. Elisha, the representative of Israel's true God, is being publically mocked and his ministry jeopardised by the next generation of Bethel, a city described as *the focal point for Israel's apostasy* (ESV Study Bible).

What happens to some of the jeering crowd (v. 24)?

14. Although the bear attack is drastic and initially horrifying, can you detect any measures of grace, even here?

OPTION: How might the events of 2 Kings 2.23-25 have reminded Israel of the enormous risk in rejecting or ridiculing (even indirectly) God? See Leviticus 26.21-22.

The LORD said ... "If anyone does not listen to My words that the prophet speaks in My name, I Myself will call him to account"
Deuteronomy 18:19 (NIV)

15. Elisha concludes his initial tour of Israel by visiting Mount Carmel and Samaria. Why are these two places significant?

Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18)

Samaria (1 Kings 16.29; 22.51; 2 Kings 3.1)

Elijah had prepared the way. Now, in this ministry of Elisha, we will witness *God's final victory over the powers of darkness* (I. Provan) as the LORD moves towards His defeat of Baal. Extraordinary days of salvation and judgement lay ahead. Keep reading!

REFLECT

1. Elisha's ministry has already proven to be a source of blessing as well as cursing. How is Elisha like Christ in this respect—mediating both salvation and judgement?
2. Miracles in the OT usually anticipate, even if only in part, something greater to come. How do the healing of the waters and reversal of Jericho's ancient curse point to the future?
OPTION: See Isa. 53.5; Rom. 8.20-22; Gal. 3.13-14.
3. The miraculous provision of water at the onset of Elisha's ministry authenticated him as a genuine prophet in the line of Elijah. As believers, how are we authenticated? What are the characteristics of an authentic Christ-follower?
4. Elisha seems to have recognised that the ridicule of himself was actually the mockery of God. So rather than seek personal retaliation, he thrust the matter into God's hands. Read Psalm 70. How do praying through psalms such as this assist us in relinquishing our desire for revenge? (OPTION: Read also Romans 12.17-21)
5. Look back: Read 2 Chronicles 36.15-16. What were the symptoms of hard-heartedness in Israel and Judah? OPTION: See Isa. 30.9-11.
Look ahead: Read 2 Tim. 3.1, 4; 4.3-4.
Look inside: What sobering truths do we need to take to heart about showing contempt for God's message and His messengers?

RESPOND

1. MEMORISE: Isaiah 66.2.

This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word

Isaiah 66:2

2. Have you been wronged or insulted lately? Is there an insult or slight that is, perhaps secretly, rankling? Like Elisha, entrust your honour to God. Specifically leave each issue with the Lord. Praying through Psalm 35 may bring deep relief.

3. This week's text pushed us a bit—to examine and deeply engage with seven verses that hold, at first glance, little “devotional” appeal. Yet these are, indeed, inspired words of God, words whose unfolding brings light (Ps. 119.130). Make time this week to re-visit another passage of Scripture that doesn't particularly appeal to you. Reverence the Author Who breathed out this Word; ask Him for His enabling to study, understand and apply its truth.

DIGGING DEEPER



1. *Then [Elisha] went to the spring of water and threw salt in it* (1 Kings 2.21). Obviously hurling salt into water doesn't make it drinkable. In fact, one commentator concludes that “the whole point of the salt in the new jar is to distinguish this prophetic action from all other common techniques that might be used in “healing” the water” (A. Konkel). But why choose salt as a symbol? For some insight, read these informing descriptions of salt, and consider how salt is used symbolically in the Old Testament in Lev. 2.13; Num. 18.19; & 2 Chron. 13.5.
2. Between our first week's study and this week's text lies a small but interesting passage—Elisha's first interactions with the company of prophets and their fruitless search for Elijah's body. Read 2 Kings 2.15-18, then contemplate:
 - a. Why did the community of prophets transfer their allegiance to Elisha (v. 15)? How do we know that they did so (v. 15)?
 - b. What request did they make (v. 16)? What was their rationale (v. 16)? How does their suggestion echo that of Obadiah's? Review 1 Kings 18.11-12.
 - c. How does v. 17 re-enforce the validity of Elijah's miraculous translation to heaven?
3. In view of what we're learning about Elisha's role in executing God's judgement on Baal worship, it is interesting to return to 1 Kings 19 and review the Bible's introduction of him there. What is Elisha's full designation in 1 Kings 19.19? *Elisha, son of _____*. The original readers would have enjoyed the rich meaning of Elisha's name in Hebrew: “Elisha, meaning ‘God is salvation,’ son of Shaphat, meaning ‘judgement.’”

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

We must remember that, besides being loving, God is also a God of judgment. To omit that from our view of God is to worship an idol – an idea of God that falls far short of who He really is.

R. Hubbard

Iain Povan observes that the modern reader has more difficulty [than they biblical author] here in coming to terms with the thought that young persons, as well as old, should be subject to divine judgment for their sins.

The mauling of the youthful mob is not vindictive anger on behalf of Elisha, but divine judgment for culpable denial of the divine purpose. The bears are no less divinely appointed than the wale that swallowed Jonah.

A. Konkel

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS



Lesson 3: Resurrection Faith

2 KINGS 4.8-37

READ 2 Kings 4.8-37

As you read through this passage, did it seem like biblical *déjà vu*? Did you find yourself comparing it to a similar event in 1 Kings, featuring Elijah and the widow of Zarephath? And did you wonder (be honest now!) whether it might not be more interesting to study a narrative about something different, more original, instead of the familiar scenario of one prophet, one mother, one son, one raising to life? Before you embark on this week's study, consider—and be energised by!—the words of one commentator:

So why this story? So you'll know about the Shunammite and Elisha? Hear of an instance of Iron Age home remodelling? No, the story is here to reveal your God—the God who delights to amaze his “ordinary” people with his good gifts; who sometimes baffles us with the mysterious sorrow he brings; who places limitations upon his servants so that we will never esteem them too highly; and who gives us a sneak preview in 800 B.C. that not even death will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! (R. Davis). Suddenly this text is beckoning us! Let's enter it and encounter God anew.

REVIEW

1. God had unexpectedly provided for Elijah through an impoverished, non-Israelite widow. Now Elisha also is fed and housed by a woman, although this one is an Israelite. What do we initially learn about the Shunammite woman? What does she do for Elisha (vv. 8-10)?
2. How does she describe Elisha: a _____ (v. 9)?
Nowhere else in the OT is a prophet called “holy.” What does this suggest about her motivation in hosting and honouring him?
3. In what ways can the Shunammite woman be considered to be blessed already?
v. 8
v. 9
v. 13
4. Although the woman is wealthy, married, and secure in her position within the community, she carries a double heartache. What is this (v. 14)?

- Centuries later Jesus would say, *“Whoever receives you [the disciples] receives me . . . The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward”* (Matt.10.40a, 41a). How is the woman’s hospitality to the prophet rewarded (vv. 15-17)?
- Imagine the woman’s joy—*now* she truly has all her heart’s desire. We need to appreciate this background to grasp fully the appalling enormity of the tragedy that follows.

What happens to this beloved son a few years later (vv. 18-20)?

What are the mother’s actions following this tragedy (vv. 21-25)?

OPTIONAL: How does the Shunammite avoid publicising her son’s death (vv. 21, 22, 23, 26)? What might have been her reason for this?

- Upon sighting the Shunammite, Elisha commissions Gehazi to find out *“Is all well?”* Look to v. 27 to discover why Elisha was forced to do this:

“The LORD has _____ it from me and has _____ me.”

What do we learn from Elisha’s honest admission about the limitations of his knowledge, even though he is a prophet?

What do we infer about the sovereign ways of the LORD?

- Evaluate the woman’s actions—her urgency, making the journey to Elisha at Mount Carmel, her insistence upon speaking with Elisha himself, clasping his feet and refusing to leave him. Even though we can see she is *hurt, confused and anxious* (A. Konkel), what emerges about her and her faith?

Her faith stands out in a book [1-2 Kings] filled with descriptions of persons who reject belief and obedience.

P. House

- What are the woman’s words in v. 30? Where have you recently heard just such determined insistence (Hint: Review 2 Kings 2. 2, 4, 6)? How did these words galvanise Elisha into active response?

10. When Gehazi, the servant commissioned by Elisha to function on his behalf, attempts to raise the boy, what happens (vv. 29, 31)?

The woman's son died but her faith did not die. Her faith persisted and asserted itself even in the face of death.

R. Dillard

Why did nothing happen for Gehazi? This is never explicitly explained, but perhaps we're given a clue in Hebrews 11. Amongst the great deeds of faith this chapter catalogues is this phrase: *"Through faith . . . women received back their dead by resurrection"* (Heb. 11.35). What difference might there have been between the men?

11. What are Elisha's first actions upon seeing the boy (vv. 32-33)?

So he _____ in, and _____ the door . . . and _____ to the LORD.

What does this tell us about Elisha's faith and dependence on God?

12. Notice that Elisha shut the door behind him. Earlier in this chapter, he had instructed a prophet's widow to do the same thing before she was to experience God's miraculous provision of oil (4.4). Jesus also sought privacy when raising a child from the dead (Mark 5.40) as did Peter in the raising of Dorcas (Acts 9.40). What's the point of this hiddenness?

Ralph Davis comments, *Sometimes God's mighty acts in our behalf are not to be the object of public gaze or report. Sometimes God works quietly, in a hidden way. When do we parade God's mighty acts for the wrong reasons?*

13. What is the satisfying conclusion to this narrative (vv. 35-37)?

Once again, we marvel at the power of Israel's true God, Yahweh, over both death and life. Once again, we are pushed by a biblical text to expand our puny expectations of God. Once again, we marvel at His personal involvement in the quiet lives of ordinary people. Once again, we marvel at the way He uses His servants as *agents of God's healing mercy and kind compassion* (P. House).

We marvel at His grace, His gift of new life, His saving power.

We marvel, because He is marvellous.

This is the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes

Psalm 118: 23

REFLECT

1. The Shunammite woman's initial act of simple hospitality began a train of events that transformed her life. What does it mean for us to be hospitable? Read Romans 12.13; Heb. 13.1-2; 1 Peter 4.8-9. Craft a list of what these NT verses teach about hospitality.

Read Matthew 25.34-40. How do Jesus' words further motivate us?

2. *God is not a vending machine that pours out oracles when primed with prophetic pennies* (I. Provan). Even the prophet Elisha had to live by faith, to depend on God for guidance, and accept that only He is all-knowing. A perennial human desire is have our questions answered, our problems explained, our uncertainties resolved. What comfort and challenge does Deuteronomy 29.29 offer us? How has the human quest for the knowledge that belongs to God led us astray? What is the remedy?
3. *The upper room is in this story, as in 1 Kings. 17, both the location of the miracle and a private place of prayer* (I. Provan). Consider Elijah's and Elisha's actions in light of Jesus' command: *"But when you pray, go into your room, and shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret"* (Matt. 6.6). Why do we need regular times of communion with God? What are the greatest obstacles to cultivating private, personal connection with God?
4. Once again we've witnessed the compassionate heart of the Lord, through His tender provision for those who are most vulnerable. In 1 Kings 17, it was to a penniless widow; in 2 Kings 4, it's for a childless woman. How did Jesus' ministry also reflect the compassionate heart of His father? Review Luke 7.11-16. How did Elisha's ministry anticipate Jesus' even greater ministry. Can you offer some examples? How well do we, as a body and as individuals, reflect our Father's heart?

The place of prayer to which Jesus is calling us is this place of solitude and silence - far away from the "pray and display" of performed piety.

G. Kelly

RESPOND

1. MEMORISE: Romans 12.13

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality

Romans 12:13

2. Is there an individual in your sphere who is vulnerable, one of *"the least of these?"* How can you express to him or her, through your actions, the tender heart of God this week?
3. *"Go into a room, and shut the door, and pray"* (Matt. 6.6) Be ruthless with your calendar—ensure that you spend extended time this week talking with your heavenly Father in a secret, solitary place.

DIGGING DEEPER



1. The Shunammite woman initially refused to accept Elisha's prediction of bearing a son. Perhaps she felt that to believe *in such a seemingly unattainable hope was to cherish a promise too precious for disappointment* (H. Austel). Do we, too, sometimes shrink back from cherishing His promises, afraid of disappointment? How does knowing Christ help us face such fear? See 2 Cor. 1.20-22.

2. Our narrative ends abruptly, with the Shunammite woman picking up her son and departing. If you're not ready to say good-bye to this courageous and generous woman, turn to 2 Kings 8.1-6 where you'll find a final vignette which lets us check in on her many years later. What do you learn about the role of divine providence in her life? How had the Lord again provided for her and her son?

3. A motif of the OT is God's ability to bless, despite a couple's childlessness. You might find it interesting to follow His intervention in the lives of others:

Genesis 16.1a; 17.15-19; 18.1-15; 21.1-7

Genesis 25.20-21, 26

Genesis 29.14-30; 30.1-2, 22-24

1 Samuel 1.1-28

Luke 1.5-25

4. Second Kings 4.1-7 holds the fascinating story of another miracle the Lord granted through Elisha, this time to the widow of a prophet. As usual, our appreciation of the passage is enhanced by reading it in its inspired setting. Read the teaching of Lev. 25.25-28. How does Elisha act as a kinsman-redeemer to the prophet's family? In this sense, how does he point us ahead to Christ? Hint: Cf. Gal. 4.3-7; Titus 2.14.

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

Both Elisha and the Shunammite woman had seen their faith successfully tested and they were rewarded with the desires of their hearts and correspondingly increased in faith.

H. Austel

These many miracles ... displayed Yahweh's power to meet needs and control events (R. Hubbard). Imbibe today's passage. Let it refresh your confidence in God as your Savior who meets your needs and your Sovereign who controls the events of your life.

One can't produce generalisations from this story about the way healing works; one simply stands astonished and hopeful ... [These] miraculous stories are present in Scripture to invite us to wonder at God's capacity to make extraordinary things happen.

J. Goldingay

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS



Lesson 4: Confounding Grace

2 KINGS 5.1-19a

READ 2 Kings 5.1-19a

This week's passage proves to be a riveting read. We are disconcerted as the action of 2 Kings unexpectedly shifts from Israel to enemy territory (Syria / Aram). We realise that the man at the story's centre is (gasp!) the commander of the *enemy's* army. We are stunned by the grace-filled forgiveness of a little girl trapped in slave labour. And we once again find ourselves confounded by the wildly creative ways of the Lord, Whose plan for healing has infected skin being plunged into the bacteria-laden waters of an often sluggish river!

Yet we know that this text is more than a disconcerting story. This is *Scripture*. These are words breathed out by the living God. Breathed out for us. We read 2 Kings 5 and claim, "*How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth*" (Ps. 119.103). So let's digest this text. Let's savour its sweetness: the renewed emphasis on the living nature of our God, His healing and saving power, His sovereignty over all peoples, and His inexhaustible grace, which embraces the insider and the outsider, male and female, the prominent and the nameless, the old and the young. Savour the sweetness and let it feed your hunger for the living God of grace.

REVIEW

1. Welcome to Syria! Without warning, the narrative of 2 Kings shifts its focus from Israel to Syria (or "Aram," *W/I*) and one of its military heroes.
 - a. Flip the page to 2 Kings 6.8, 24. Describe Israel's relationship with Syria.
 - b. List all that v. 1 reveals about Naaman.
 - c. What do we learn about the scope of God's sovereignty?
The LORD had _____ victory to Syria (v. 1).

How does 2 Kings 5.1 illustrate the truth of Psalm 22.28?

Lesson 4

2. First we meet Naaman—male, mature, powerful, prominent. Whom do we next encounter in v. 2? List all you can glean / infer about her life.

3. The young Israelite girl was a victim of Syria's hostilities to Israel.
 - a. Yet what is her reaction to her captor's skin disease (v. 3)?

 - b. The more deeply we engage in Scripture, the more we discover. So don't race through vv. 2-3. Pause and think: Who had led the raids on Israel? Who was responsibly (humanly speaking) for the girl's being wrenched from her family, likely forever? Who had destroyed her world, shattered her dreams, and enslaved her? How does her response to Naaman's illness remind us of Jesus?

4. The self-less, faith-filled recommendation of the slave girl quickly moved through her mistress to Naaman, and from him to the king (v. 4). How does the king's action depart from the Israelite girl's recommendation (v. 5)?

5. Naaman left for Israel loaded with lavish gifts. The silver alone was worth five times more than the original purchase price for the site of Samaria, Israel's capital city (cf. 1 Kings 16.24). What does the staggering value of Naaman's payment reveal about his beliefs about Israel's God and how to gain His healing?

6. How does the king of Israel respond to the letter's request (vv. 6-7)?

What ulterior motive does he suspect (v. 7)?

We've already commented on the contrast between the Israelite girl and Naaman. Now consider the girl and the Israelite king. How is she wiser than he? What has she, in captivity, remembered that he has (deliberately) forgotten? (Hint: v. 8)

Naaman was ready to go to enormous expense ... The garments alone could have been a king's ransom. But who would believe it? God's grace for Naaman is not going to cost him a cent!

R. Dillard

7. Tucked in the king's panicky rant is an amazing statement. By which words does the king, in that unguarded moment, actually acknowledge that Yahweh, not Baal, is the true and powerful God of Israel? (OPTION: See also Deut. 32.39; 1 Sam. 2.6.)

Naaman was incensed. Here was a person whom he considered to be both ethnically and socially inferior to himself who failed to receive him!

H. Austel

8. Review vv. 8-12.
- Why might Elisha have refused to meet with Naaman?
 - How did Elisha's instructions fail to meet Naaman's expectations (v. 11) ?
 - How did the instructions insult Naaman's pride (v. 12)?

9. Naaman is enraged! The Jordan will certainly not make him cleaner! But was that actually the point of Elisha's instructions? Re-read them again, noting the phrase which Naaman has missed. What will occur *before* the cleaning?

"Wash in the Jordan seven times and _____ and you shall be clean" (v. 10).

10. Once again, the unnamed and powerless show more wisdom than their superiors. How do Naaman's humble servants correct his perspective (v. 13)? What's the result (v. 14)?
11. Naaman is healed and his flesh is restored to that of a *little child* (v. 14). In Hebrew, this phrase is the exact, masculine equivalent to a *little girl* (v.2). In what other way does the healed Naaman now resemble the Israelite slave girl?

- 12 a. What is Naaman's confession (of v. 15) before Elisha?

- b. Why is this whole story "bad news for Israel?" (R. Davis)
How does it put Israel to shame?

Yahweh's grace didn't only heal Naaman of his leprosy, but made him a faithful, fearful worshipper.

R. Davis

To know the grace of God, we must abandon our pride & pretensions.

R. Dillard

- 13 a. How does Naaman refer to himself in relation to Elisha (vv. 15, 17a, 17b, 18a, 18b)?

b. How does this subtly reflect the fact that there had been renewal and healing of more than just Naaman's flesh in the river?

14. Elisha resolutely refuses to take anything for Naaman's healing (v. 16). How does this focus Naaman's attention onto the living God, not the prophet? How does this shatter some of Naaman's expectations about the way Israel's Yahweh operated?

15. What on earth?! Why were two loads of dirt supposed to help Naaman worship (v. 17)?

See Exodus 20.24-25: *"An altar of _____ you shall make for Me . . . In _____ place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you."*

16. What are Elisha's final words to Naaman (v. 19a)?

REFLECT

1. Were you surprised to discover that, before he ever even acknowledged Yahweh, Naaman's military success was due to the Lord? How does Naaman's story stretch our thinking about our sovereign God and the extent of His involvement in human affairs?

2. Read 1 Kings 8.41-43, a portion of Solomon's great prayer for the Temple's dedication. For what did he pray? *" . . . that _____ the _____ of the earth may know Your name and fear You."*

a. How is Naaman's faith a partial answer to this prayer?

b. How did Christ's life and teaching echo Solomon's desire (John 12.32; Acts 1.8)?

c. What's the implication for us?

3. **Ralph Davis observes that initially, Naaman had already written God's script for Him.** He continues, *We are not so far from Naaman. How often we already have our idea of how God ought to operate. When He doesn't mesh with our expectation, we become 'disappointed' with God.* **Share with the group a time when you had to abandon your expectations of God, in order to accept His plan.**

God's grace is to be found everywhere in the book of King's confounding the expectations that the reader has formed

I. Provan

4. 2 Kings 5 dazzles us with God's lavish grace, poured out to nameless slaves and prestigious military campaigners.

Reflect: How have you seen His sovereign grace? How have you seen His saving grace? How is the Cross the ultimate expression of God's grace?

5. God's plan began with His people but didn't end with them: *"And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing . . . In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Gen. 12.2, 3). The little girl's forgiveness allowed her to be a blessing among the nations. What other OT believers also were a blessing, even in captivity? How can *we* bless our surrounding communities? How does Galatians 3.8-9 expand our understanding of what it means to bless others?

RESPOND

1. MEMORISE: Colossians 3.13

Forgive each other; As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive

Colossians 3: 13

2. Do your thinking patterns place a box around God, limiting Him to religious or "spiritual" concerns? Using today's headlines from the paper or on-line news, pray for today's world, remembering that the living Lord is God over all the globe.

God commands us to love our enemies, because in loving our enemies, we are imitating Him

R. Dillard

3. Search your heart: do you need to show generous, undeserved forgiveness to anybody? Talk to God about this. Then do it.

DIGGING DEEPER



1. Today's passage is followed by the disturbing account of Gehazi's opportunism. The servant resented Elisha's refusal to accept anything from Naaman. Read 2 Kings 5.19b-27.
 - a. How did Gehazi misuse his position as Elisha's trusted aide?
 - b. Contrast Naaman with Gehazi. In what ways is Naaman "more faithful to his new Lord than Gehazi was to his" (D. Wiseman)?
 - c. Re-read the concluding verse of the passage. Just as Naaman's obedient faith became reflected by his restored skin, how is Gehazi's inward condition symbolised outwardly?
 - d. Read Acts 8.20-23; 2 Corinthians 2.17. How do these verses speak to Gehazi's actions? How do they comment on the seeming severity of his being smitten with leprosy?
 - e. Gehazi jeopardised Naaman's new-found understanding of God's limitless grace. Read Galatians 1.8-9, then evaluate the following:

Grace is both marvellous and dangerous, dangerous when it is obscured. Ask Gehazi, standing there with leprosy. He was fortunate. It could be worse.

R. Davis

2. Second Kings 5 is full of irony and reversal, flipping common human values on their head! Review the story. In what ways does it reflect kingdom values (the lowly instructing the mighty, the weak being greater than the strong, the outsider becoming an insider)? How does this anticipate Galatians 3.28?
3. In this passage we encounter another aspect of the way that Elisha's ministry looks ahead to Christ's greater ministry. Notice Jesus' tender heart towards lepers as evidenced in Matthew 8.1-4; 10.8; 11.4-5; Luke 17.11-19
4. Jesus refers to "Naaman the Syrian's" healing in Luke 4.27-28. What point was He making to the Jews about the consequences of their rejecting Him?

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

There is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry, "This is mine - this belongs to me!"

Abraham Kuyper

We may expect some "great thing" while God often tests us with small things!

D. Wisemand

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

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Lesson 5: Open Eyes & Unseen Armies

2 KINGS 6.8-23

READ 2 Kings 6.8-23

As we move deeper into 2 Kings, we find Elisha continuing his prophetic ministry within Israel. And God too is still working out His purposes for both His people (Israel) as well as the surrounding nations, such as Syria. Last study reminded us of the boundless nature of God's love and power, which bathes in grace both the humble and the "great," the insiders and the outsiders. This week our vision will be further stretched, as we witness God's sovereignty over not just the physical realm, but the invisible, spiritual one also. And, once more, we are confronted by grace—in God's (usually) unseen protection of His servants from their enemies, in His provision of angelic aide, in His gracious treatment of all peoples. Get into this text . . . and let the truth of this text get into you!

REVIEW

1. Naaman, a prominent Syrian, was at the centre of 2 Kings 5. Now, in 2 Kings 6, another prominent Syrian plays a major role.

Who is that individual (v. 8)? What is his interest in Israel (v. 8)?

2. Two Israelites from chapter 5 also re-appear. Who are they (v. 9)?

- 3 a. How does the knowledge of Elisha here (vv. 9-10) contrast with that of 2 Kings 4. 27? (also with 6.6)

- b. Reading this event against its inspired background of the earlier parts of 2 Kings reminds us of the *omniscience* ("all-knowingness") of God. *Elisha* is not all-knowing; it is the *LORD* who reveals the Syrians' top-secret strategies. Read the observations of two other kings (one Israelite, one not) about the extent of God's knowledge: 1 Chron. 28.9; Daniel 2.20-22.

OPTION: See 1 Kings 22.19ff. for an account of how another prophet, Micaiah, also was granted heavenly knowledge and insight about international affairs.

4. What did these seeming “leaks” cause the Syrian king to assume about his council of military advisors (v. 11)?

5. How did the king’s advisors defend themselves (v. 12)? Note the ironic contrast between their familiarity with the prophet Elisha, and king of Israel’s ignorance (5.8).

6. What action does the Syrian king then order (vv. 12-14)?

7. Imagine the ominous sight which assaulted the sleepy eyes of Elisha’s servant! Review vv. 14-15 and list all the factors which seemed to spell doom for Elisha.

8 a. What does Elisha order his servant, despite their ambushed predicament?

“Do _____ be _____!” (v. 16a)

b. What reason does Elisha give for this command? (v. 16b)

Elisha knew that there was greater strength in the unseen reality of the hosts of heaven than in the visible reality of the [Syrian] forces
NIV Study Bible, 2 King’s 6:16 note

Elisha’s words of assurance to his servant have become a source of comfort to many subsequent servants of God who have faced seemingly overwhelming adversity
H, Austel

c. Deuteronomy 20.1 reads, *“When you got out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them for the LORD your God is with you.”* How does Elisha’s confidence reflect his covenant faith?

d. Throughout the Scriptures, the angelic beings who worship and serve God are often depicted as an army, a magnificent heavenly “host.” What do we learn about this usually invisible yet mighty army from:

Ps. 68.17?

Matt. 26.53?

- e. Elisha rests confidently in God's angelic provision for him. What does the Bible reveal about angels in: Psalm 34.7?

Psalm 91.11?

9. The physical reality was that Syrian horses and chariots surrounded the city (vv. 14-15). Now what greater reality is Elisha's servant enabled to see (v. 17)?

The Syrian king's shrewdest military manoeuvres are countered by the might of God's angelic army! *[Syrians] may surround the city, as his anxious servant sees only too well, but Elisha himself is surrounded by the army of the LORD (I. Provan).*

*Some trust in chariots,
and some in horses, but
we trust in the name of
the LORD our God!*

Psalm 20:7

10. Elisha prays three times within this short but intense period (vv. 17, 18, 20). What does his frequent recourse to prayer tell us about the source of illumination or true sight?

*The whole episode
underscores the
power of prayer*
H. Austel

11. 2 Kings is chock-full of reversals. Now here is another. While the servant is given greater (in)sight (his eyes are "opened"), what happens to the sight of the Syrians (v. 18)?

12. For the third time, Elisha prays, in v. 20. For the second time, the LORD "opens" eyes so that they can truly perceive reality. What surprising reversal did the Syrian besiegers see with their renewed vision?

- 13 a. How does Elisha respond to the Israelite king's eager request to slaughter the duped Syrians (vv. 21-22)?

- b. How does Elisha's merciful counsel reflect the wisdom of Proverbs 25.21-22?

*The siege of
Dothan had
been reversed
and now the
[Syrian]
soldiers were
surrounded!*

R. Dillard

Note: Isn't it fascinating to observe this grace-full treatment of those outside the community of faith? They were dazzled with the power of God, thrown a banquet, and then in an astonishing act of grace, sent home in peace.

14. What is the outcome, at least for a while, of the Israelites' merciful treatment of their enemies, the Syrians (v. 23)?

REFLECT

1. *There is a whole other realm of reality and activity that . . . needs [to be taken] into account. What you see (with ordinary eyes) is not the only clue to what you get (J. Goldingay). Although we often, sadly, remain oblivious to it, we also enjoy angelic company and protection. Why do we tend to ignore this whole realm of reality? How, in fact, do angels affect us? (OPTION: Cf. Heb.1.14)*

2. When our eyes detect threats and disasters surrounding us, our cry instinctively repeats the servant's: *"Alas! What shall we do?"* But the response of biblically-nourished faith, while not denying the threats, remains the same: *"Do not be afraid."* How does / can your relationship with Christ and heart-knowledge of His Word enable you to face fear?

3. Elisha urges Israel away from vengeance, and towards mercy. Read Romans 12.14, 17-21. Which phrase reminds you most of 2 Kings 6? How does relating to Jesus as our Saviour move us towards responses of mercy?

4. How are Elisha's words to his servant echoed in Jesus' rebuke to Peter in Matthew 26.52-53? What does Jesus understand to be God's unseen yet potent protection and aide? See also Matthew 4.11.

5. Read Psalm 33.13-18. What do twenty-first century Canadian Christians rely on for security?

RESPOND

1. MEMORISE: Romans 8:31

If God is for us, who can be against us?
Romans 8:31

2. Steep yourself in 2 Kings 6 this week. Let these God-breathed words saturate your thoughts and nourish your faith in the God.

*Our fears prevail
when we don't
see the unseen*

R. Davis

*It is one thing to
hear, "Don't be
afraid"... It is another
to be strongly,
consciously and
vividly impressed by
that reality*

R. Davis

3. Do you know someone feeling swamped, surrounded by trouble or threatening circumstances? Using Psalm 20 as a guide, pray for them—that they would be able to perceive the saving presence of the LORD right where they are.

DIGGING DEEPER



1. *"Do not be afraid for those who are with us are more than those who are with them!"* (2 Kings 6:16). Elisha's words to his servant appear in a similar form in the mouth of King Hezekiah of Judah. Read 2 Chron. 32:1-8. How did the people of Judah respond to this reassurance?

2. We have had to skip over the opening seven verses of 2 Kings 6. Take some time to visit this interesting account of "the floating axe-head."

a. How did the prophet respond to losing the axe-head? (v. 5)

b. Consider the historical context of this event: *We are worlds away from Israel in the 9th century B.C. . . . Iron implements would have been tremendously expensive. Losing a borrowed axe-head then would be comparable to wrecking a borrowed car now . . . The young prophet . . . had tremendous debt [facing] him (R. Dillard). And the most likely means to repaying such debt was to become a bond-servant. Keeping this reality in mind, recall 2 Kings 4:1-7 and what we learnt about how Elisha functioned as a kinsman-redeemer there. How does the miraculous retrieval of the axe-head also have *redemptive* significance?*

- c. The previous passage, 2 Kings 5, featured that impressive individual, Naaman whose well-being had international implications. This passage relates a much simpler need—individual and personal. Yet what does God’s response (through Elisha) reveal about Him?
- d. *The goodness of God, in large measure, consists in the fact that He is “faithful in little” ... He does attend to small problems . . . the mundane and ordinary affairs of the believer’s life (R. Davis).* How has God met a simple and personal need of yours? Thank Him for this. And trust for tomorrow’s simple needs too.

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

We see all around us the battle between good and evil, right and wrong. But what we see in so many ways is just the battling shadows - the real fight is behind the scenes, where the army of heaven is drawn up against the forces of hell. We often underestimate the power and might of the divine warrior who has fought on our behalf

R. Dillard

What if God doesn’t show you the horses and chariots of fire? Then you must go on, leaning on the fact of verse 16 if the sight of verse 17 is denied you. How we need those unseen legions

R. Davis

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS



Lesson 6: The Power & The Fury

2 King's 8, 9 -10, 13

READ

Voyaging through 1 & 2 Kings, we've watched God's unparalleled plans for His people unfold. And we've been blessed by the river of grace flowing through these chapters: God has raised up Elisha to carry on Elijah's work, He has transformed curse into blessing, He has miraculously provided life-giving water, and supplied nourishment and redemption. In grace, He has acted as the defeater of death, the miraculous healer, the Lord who cares about even the seemingly mundane details of His children's lives, and the mighty One Whose fiery forces surround and protect His people. But, Elisha's ministry has been an interlude—an interlude of grace and salvation. And rather than repenting during this divine delay, *Israel has sinned away her day of grace* (R. Davis). Now, at long last, the time has come for God's judgement to fall, fast and fiercely, on Baal and those who rejected their covenant God to worship Baal. Judgement looms on the horizon.

God's quiet ways, for the moment, are at an end. Earthquake is the order of day.

I Provan

This week we'll examine some highlights of 2 Kings 8, 9, 10 and 13. (We'll omit chapters 11 & 12, which, although equally worthy of our study, are focused on Judah). Before heading to our texts, it will be helpful to return to 1 Kings 19 and review God's plan for cleansing Israel, judging Baalism, and preserving the faithful.

READ 1 Kings 19.15-18

God revealed that He would use three people to accomplish His purposes. Who were these individuals to be?

"Anoint _____ to be king over Syria, and _____ you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and _____ you shall anoint to be prophet in your [Elijah's] place."

HAZAEL: READ 2 Kings 8.7-15

1. How is more of God's three-part plan (of 1 Kings 19) set in motion (vv. 7-9)?

2. What did Elisha reveal that the LORD had shown him?

v. 10

v. 13

3. How was his prophecy fulfilled (vv. 14-15)?

4. How would Hazael later function as an agent of judgement on Israel?
2 Kings 10.32

2 Kings 13.3, 22

Note that even in the darkness of judgement, God's grace still shines. See 2 Kings 13.4-5.

HAZAEEL: 2 Kings 8.7-15

- 5 a. Elisha "sees" the ruthless and barbaric treatment (typical warfare for that that time) that his own people would endure at the hands of the Syrians. How does he react (v. 11)?

- b. OPTION. Consider the burden that other prophets also carried as they anguished over the message they conveyed to their people from God:

Jeremiah 4.19; 9.1; Daniel 10.1, 2-3

In their grief over the future suffering of their people, the prophets reflected the heart of the God they represented:

Elisha's tears are sent from above, for that is how Yahweh views it. There is no fiendish delight in Yahweh's judgement. Here is your God and you should prize him for his nature, the God who mingles tears with the fire and brimstone.

R. Davis

JEHU: 2 Kings 9-10

6. Read 2 Kings 9.1-10. How is God's commission to Elijah now further fulfilled?

"I anoint you [Jehu] _____ over the people of the LORD . . ." (v. 6).

"You shall strike down the house of _____ (v. 7) . . . The whole house of Ahab shall _____" (v. 8).

" . . . that I [the LORD] may avenge on _____ the blood of My servants (v. 7)"

7. How did Jehu ferociously execute God's judgement on:
...the reigning king, Joram, son of Ahab (and Jezebel)? Read & summarise 2 Kings 9.21-26.

...the whole "house" of Ahab? Read & summarise 2 Kings 10.11, 17 (cf. 1 Kings 21.20-21).

...Queen Jezebel? Read & summarise 2 Kings 10.30-37.

8. The Bible specifies that not only did Jehu express God's judgement, he also exercised God's *vengeance*.

(OPTION: See also Lev. 26.25)

Review 1 Kings 18.3-4, 13; 19.10, 14. Then consider: How does God (in *His* timing) respond to the atrocities committed against His prophets? Read 2 Kings 9.7.

JEHU: 2 Kings 9-10

9. The next group to fall under "the power and the fury" (R. Davis) of God's judgement implemented by Jehu were the Baal prophets. If your group has the time, read 2 Kings 10.18-28. Otherwise, copy out 2 Kings 10.28 below:

To complete his denunciation of Baalism, Jehu turns [Baal's] temple into a latrine. One could hardly imagine a more thorough expurgation of Baalism!

P. House

How does this event drastically resolve the evil recorded in 1 Kings 16.30-33?

ELISHA: 2 Kings 13.14, 20-23

After over 40 years of silence (from the anointing of Jehu in 841 BC to Jehoash's reign in 798), an elderly Elisha—the third agent in God's plan—reappears one last time in 2 Kings.

10. Read 2 Kings 13.14. What do we learn about Elisha?

11. After Elisha offers one final prophecy of deliverance (vv. 15-19), what happens (v. 20)?

12. Read 2 Kings 13.20-21. How does this incident reassure us of God's presence and power, even though Elisha, that great prophet and agent of God's grace, is dead and gone?

Not even death provides an unbreachable barrier between God's help and God's people

P. House

It's as if the last word from both Elijah and Elisha is - Don't think death has dominion over you!

R. Davis

13. Compare Elisha's departure with Elijah's. How do they differ? How are they similar?

14. Verse 22 reminds us of the terrible price Israel paid for her waywardness. Yet as we review 2 Kings so far we realise that *grace had underlain the entire story* (J. Goldingay) and now, God's grace has broken in yet again. Review v. 23. How does it summarise the astonishing, tenacious love of our God for His people?

"BUT the LORD . .

was _____ to them,

and had _____ on them, and

He _____ them,

because of His _____ with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

and would not destroy them, nor has He cast them from His presence until now."

Meditate on the beauty of God's character, showcased in 2 Kings 13.23, as a fitting way to conclude your studies in 2 Kings. Savour the hope we cherish because of His faithfulness.

REFLECT

1. We witnessed Elisha's anguish as he prophesied to Hazael and remarked that in this grief, he mirrored God Himself. Consider for a moment *the mysterious tension between the divine willingness to chastise and the divine grief in doing so* (J. Goldingay). How did Jesus reveal such sorrow in Luke 13.34-35? How does this "tension" influence how we interpret the Bible's accounts of judgement? OPTION: Cf. Jer. 31.20; Hos. 11.8-9.

God has the tally of every prophet silenced and every servant butchered... The Bible is clear that the vindication of God's people is at the top of God's agenda and their welfare is constant anxiety of his heart

R. Davis

2. Read Rev. 6.9-11). What impact does God's unflagging care for His servants have on us? How can we share in God's passionate concern for the welfare of His servants?

3. As you read forward from 1 Kings 19, were you wondering what was going on? What had happened to God's plan for Jehu and Hazael? Ponder: *Patience radiates from God's personal character . . . God is patient enough to delay punishment but not oblivious to human sin* (P. House). What do the following passages teach us about how to submit to the timing of our patient God?

Isaiah 8.17

Habakkuk 2.1-4

Hebrews 10.35-39

4. How does 2 Peter 3.8-9 give us more insight about "divine delays" such as the interlude of grace in 2 Kings?

5. The events of 2 Kings 8-13 might unfold in ways that surprise (unsettle?) us, yet running through these chapters is the unalterable reality that this is God's word being fulfilled, and that His Word never fails (cf. 2 Kings 9.26| 10.10, 17). How is this truth taught or illustrated elsewhere in the Bible? How does this reality affect our daily lives?

RESPOND

1. MEMORISE: Deuteronomy 32.36

The LORD will judge His people and have compassion on His servants
Deuteronomy 32: 36

2. What is one specific way that this week you can be an agent of God's great compassion for His servants, especially those who suffer unjustly for His sake?

3. Examine your perspective. Is there an area of life where you impatiently await God's action? Copy out Isaiah 8.17 and review it regularly each day this week. Incorporate these robust words of faith into your daily prayer time. And keep waiting on Him.

DIGGING DEEPER



1. Return to 2 Kings 13.21 to reflect on a subtle word play which can be discerned in the original Hebrew language. What happened to the dead man?

The man was _____ into the grave of Elisha (v. 21).

Now flip over to 2 Kings 17.20. How was Israel's going into exile described?

The LORD rejected the descendents of Israel . . . He gave them into the hands of their plunderers . . .

He _____ them from His sight.

2. The same word in Hebrew appears in both 2 Kings 13.21 and 2 Kings 17.20, translated as “cast” or “throw” (or “thrust,” so *WJ*). Some commentators feel that this was not a coincidence, but a deliberate “word play.” Just as the dead man “cast” into Elisha’s grave was resurrected by the living and powerful God of Elisha, so too would the remnant be restored and revitalised.

*Even in exile, there is hope ...
God's love is ultimately
strong enough to overcome
death ... [He] would ensure
the survival of a remnant*

I. Provan

3. Scripture does not “whitewash” its account of the saints and sinners who populate its pages. After all, only God is the true Hero of every Bible story. We see this in today’s study of God’s three agents who first come to our notice as an oxen owner (1 Kings 19.19-21), a Syrian assassin (2 Kings 9), and a dangerous driver (1 Kings 10). Consider how 2 Kings evaluates, for instance, Jehu. Why / how is he commended? Why / how is he condemned? V. 28

v. 29

v. 30

v. 31

Hosea 1.4 also may assess the acts of Jehu.

Why does a man of gore carry out the will of God? The Bible shows that God frequently works, we might say, indirectly – through human instruments, and unlike surgeons, God has no sterilized instruments; all of them are flawed and many of them opportunistic, self-serving. Jehu ... Jehu’s story testifies that one can be used by God and judged by God ... It is very solemn. Let Jehu haunt us – to fear and faithfulness

R. Davis

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

Make no mistake about it: it was not the dead corpse of Elisha that brought life to this man. It was the command of the living God. It was not magic, but the magnificent grace and power of God

R. Dillard

One of Scripture's consistent themes is God's preference for working out his purposes through "unqualified" people

P. Hoggarth

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

ELISHA: Concluding Comments

As we reflect on our weeks in 2 Kings, we realise that through our engagement with these chapters, we have encountered new ways of understanding familiar truths about God. We've marvelled at His grace, witnessed His salvation, and seen Him to be the ultimate source of provision, protection, and preservation. We've entered into texts that testify that this God—Yahweh, the LORD of Israel—rules over every inch of creation and every individual on this earth.

As we conclude, let's return to the account of Naaman, that high-ranking Syrian official who was healed of his leprosy. Drawn by grace, Naaman arrived at this marvellous statement: *"There is no God in all the earth but in Israel"* (2 Kings 5.15). Naaman had encountered Yahweh, the true and living God. And Naaman had discovered first-hand the powerful and personally directed grace of the LORD. And so Naaman confesses what, sadly, most Israelites failed to acknowledge: that there is only one God, the saving and sovereign LORD of Elisha. Furthermore, Naaman realised that the only worthy response to this God was worship.

As you conclude your journey in the life of Elisha, spend some time alone with that very same Lord—the living and mighty One whom Elisha served.

Rejoice that He is still the only One who heals, who brings life, who provides nourishment, who can transform cursing to blessing, who conquers even death, who knows all, who protects His own, who judges sin with patience and justice.

Review the ways in which the ministry of Elisha pulls our attention forward to the ministry of the Lord Jesus, who continues to radiate grace and love to both the great and the "nameless."

Reflect on the ways the Lord has been both Saviour and Sovereign in your life.

Respond by thanking Him for this. Commit yourself anew to serve Christ with love and loyalty.

Remember the lessons you've learned alongside Elisha.

ELISHA. RESOURCE GUIDE

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