

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, April 20, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



ELISHA'S RESPONSE TO ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION "Casting Shadows" *2 Kings 2:12-15*



5 Important Background Facts About Elisha to Remember:

1. The name Elisha means “God is Salvation” and gives us an idea of the purpose of His ministry (v.19) -
2. Elisha was the son of a farmer named Shaphat, and was himself a farmer when God called him (v.19) –

3. **Elisha was from the town of Abel-Meholah in Israel which means “Meadow of Dancing” which may reflect something of Elisha’s personality (*which was one of compassion, mercy and joy*) (v.19)** – That is where Elijah found Elisha plowing the fields. Verse 16 tell us the was from Abel-Meholah, “...*And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.*” Remember that where as Elijah had been more firey and stern as a prophet, Elisha was characterized as being somewhat kinder, more joyful, full of compassion and mercy, which we shall see in our study of his life.
4. **Elisha’s call to ministry was from God not man, and was issued through the Prophet Elijah (v.19)** – An important note here is that Elijah didn’t call Elisha, God did. Elijah, throughout his ministry was simply the messenger of God, and no less here was Elijah the messenger to Elisha of God’s call on his life. Look up at verse 16 in 1 Kings 19, “*Also you (Elijah) shall appoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.*” God calls! If you are not called of God, but rather called by man your ministry will fail.
5. **When God called Elisha he surrendered his life fully to God’s call, no turning back (v.20-21)** – Listen to it again in our passage in verses 20-21, “*20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” 21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen’s equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.*” Some have questioned Elisha’s reluctance to follow as indicated in verse 20 by his desire to turn back and kiss his mother and father. But that is a misread of this passage. Notice more importantly in verse 21 that Elisha indicated his full surrender to God’s call on his life with not turning back by the fact that he slaughtered his work animals and burned his plows in order to dedicate his life to God in worship and adoration... and surrender. He burned up his previous work equipment to surrender himself to God. He had nothing to go back to. Elisha was a fully surrendered prophet of God. He was all in... and that is what it took to build an persevering faith.

One more important fact about Elisha’s life that might be of interest to you and that sets him apart from other prophets in the Old Testament... Elisha was incredibly blessed by God. He did more miracles in the Old Testament than anyone except Moses. (READ: 2 Kings 2:12-15)

“12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. 13 He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over. 15 Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him.” -2 Kings 2:12-15 (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION

How do we respond to difficult life situations generally? How do people respond? Doubt, fears, anger, bitterness, resentment, panic? **Now what about as believers/Christians... how do we (or should we) respond to difficult or challenging life situations?**

How we respond to the situations of life, whether pleasant or painful, is tremendously telling and illuminating about our life.

Some things our response to situations of life may reveal about our life:

Our response to situations of life may reveal...

1. **Our true spiritual condition** - Our responses expose our true spiritual condition.
2. **Our belief system** - How we respond to situations of life that hit our life may reveal what we believe about God and faith, about God's love and promised faithfulness, even about God's sovereignty, etc.
3. **Our values in life** - In other words, what is most important to us, what we value highest. Why is this one so important? Because as believers our highest value, the One that we should value most is God and what He thinks beyond all others.
4. **Our priorities** -
5. **Our focus in life at any particular moment** -
6. **A correct or incorrect view of Scripture** - In other words, a correct or incorrect biblical understanding and Christian worldview. And even if our beliefs, values, and priorities may be right or biblical,
7. **Who's ability we are trusting in** - If we may be walking by our own abilities or trusting in God's ability. If we are walking in our own strength then we will surely act in ways that contradict our basic beliefs.

I think this is why Peter describes the varied trials of life as **"the proof of your faith"** (1 Peter 1:6-7). Listen to Peter's words, **"⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which perishes though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."** "Proof" in verse 7 there is the Greek **"dokimion,"** a word used of the smelting process for refining and testing precious metals to either remove the impurities or prove the quality of the metal. Where have we seen that before? Zaphan and the life of Elijah! The word, **"dokimion"** comes from a word group that was used of the test or trial itself, or of the results, the proof, the pure gold that was left.

What is Peter telling us about how Christians respond (or should respond to) life situations... especially life's more difficult situations.

5 Things Peter May Be Telling about Properly Responding to Life's Challenges:

1. **Life situations should be met with an unusual joy** - Remember James 1:2-4, **"²My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."** James is saying something similar to what Peter says in 1 Peter 1:6-7. Interestingly both connect this unusual aspect of "joy" and trials or pain.
2. **Life situations pleasant and painful are temporary** - The only last for a season. "This too shall pass!"

3. **Life situations have a necessity to them at times** – As indicated earlier, God works in our life through our trials and challenging situation to build us up, grow us, mature us in our own faith. “No pain, no gain!”
4. **Life situations give proof (“*dokimion*”) of genuine faith** –
5. **Life situations accurately responded to bring praise to God** -

Because we live in a fallen world, every day is filled with trials, obstacles, and irritations--things that test us. As with the smelting process, they not only expose our true spiritual metal at any given moment, but, by God’s design, they are designed to purify us. Someone once said, “talent is formed in solitude, but character in the storms of life.”

➡ Phillips Brooks is quoted as saying, “O, do not pray for easy lives; pray to be stronger men! Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers; pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle, but you shall be a miracle.”

What is Brooks saying? How may this quote help us navigate through especially the more challenging situations of life? Discuss

The translation of Elijah was a test designed to reveal the character and qualification of Elisha to be the successor to Elijah. In 2 Kings 2:12-14 we see Elisha’s response to the painful loss of his mentor and teacher. It is a response that tells us even more about the spiritual character of the prophet Elisha. Let’s look at it **(READ: 2 Kings 2:12-15).**

“¹² And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. ¹³ He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over. ¹⁵ Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him.” -2 Kings 2:12-15 (NKJV)

THE CRY OF ELISHA (VS. 12)

When Elijah was transitioned and transported to heaven Elisha, his understudy did two initial things according to our passage in verse 12, “And Elisha saw it, and he cried out...”

2 Things Elisha Did Initially When Elijah Was Translated:

1. **He saw it** - “And Elisha saw it.” This focuses our attention on the fact he met the condition given by Elijah back up in verse 10, “¹⁰ So he said, “You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.”

This is perhaps not as easy as it might appear. If he had looked off for just a moment he could have missed the departure and the blessing, but Elisha had been faithful to stay with Elijah and to faithfully watch for the translation. He would be the one to take on the responsibility of his mentor and follow in his footsteps...

- How many times do we as believers miss God's will because we become preoccupied with our own problems, or people, or success, or, well, you name it.
- Elisha could have become occupied with himself and the new position of authority and responsibility that he was about to receive, but his response as seen in the words he cried out as he saw Elijah pass from the scene demonstrates a different heart, one that exposes the young prophet's heart and perspective about life itself.

2. **He cried out** – Verse 12, *"And Elisha saw it, and he cried out..."* What did he cry out? Look at it in verse 12, *"¹² And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!' So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces."* Notice how, as an apprentice and student, Elisha called Elijah *"my father,"* which was a term of endearment, respect, and submission. There may be at least 2 things being indicated by this cry from Elijah...

Things Indicated Elisha's Cry:

- (1) **Respect and submission** – It was a cry to one under whose authority he saw himself and one whom he deeply respected and adored. This stands out in stark contrast to the independent spirit of self-willed rebellion so often found today in our society. Ours is a day when all the accepted authorities... parents, school, university, state, church, the police, even the Bible and God... are being challenged and resisted. The prevailing mentality is, *"I am going to do my own thing in my way. Nobody has the right to tell me what to do."* Now, I am not for a minute promoting blind submission to authority. There is certainly a need for responsible, mature, and wise evaluation of those to whom we submit and why. But clearly a vital element of any strong society is careful discipling or mentoring that promotes spiritual maturity and ministry in others.
- (2) **Grief and mourning** – Also, verse 12 indicated a sense of grief and mourning. Verse 12, *"¹² And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!' So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces."* By the words that followed along with the tearing of his clothes, itself a sign of mourning, we get a glimpse of the pain he felt at the loss of this warrior in Israel and his faithful mentor. It truly demonstrated Elisha's love and respect for his teacher. It demonstrated Elisha's attitude regarding the importance of such a man as the prophet Elijah to the nation.
- (3) **God's power and strength (in the Word of God)** - But what about the strange statement that he made at Elijah's departure, *"My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"*? What does this mean and what does it say to us today? The chariot and horsemen represented one of the strongest military instruments of ancient times. It stood for military power at its greatest. If you recall, God's power and presence are pictured by horses and chariots encircling Elisha and his servant in 2 Kings 6:15. There it portrays God's power and His ability to protect and deliver Elijah and His servant. Here, however, Elisha was speaking of Elijah and declaring that the real strength and the ultimate protection and defense of Israel lay in the ministry of this great prophet. Why? Because he was a herald of the Word of the Lord. He was also the head of the schools of the prophets, the place where other teachers of the Word were trained and prepared to minister the Word to others. Not only did this demonstrate

Elisha's perspective and faith in God's Word, but it demonstrates a vital principle, one echoed over and over again throughout the Old Testament:

2 Vital Principles Regarding the Word of God:

- (1) On the one hand knowing, believing, and obeying the righteous principles of God's Word produces wisdom and justice and brings blessing and the prosperity of God to a nation
- (2) On the other hand, ignorance, unbelief, and disobedience to God's Word leads to foolishness, unrighteousness, injustice, and moral collapse

This in turn eventually brings God's discipline and the fall of a nation unless there is repentance and a return to God. **The ultimate defense or source of blessing for any nation is never its military or economic policies. Its ultimate defense always lies in a godliness based on biblical absolutes.** I am reminded of a statement made by Francis

➔ DeToqueville, a French philosopher, at about the turn of the century. He had just returned from touring America to discover for himself what had made America great. When asked what he found, he replied, **"The secret to America was its pulpits ablaze with righteousness."** In other words, it was the preaching of the Word of God and its impact on the lives of people.

- Proverbs 14:34 reads, **"Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people."**
- Psalm 33:12-19 says, **"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance. The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; From His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth. He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works. The king is not saved by a mighty army; A warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, On those who hope for His loving kindness, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine."**
- Psalm 127:1-2 echoes a similar principle, **"Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep."**

Now listen, certainly nations need to be strong militarily and they need wise and just social and economic policies, but for that to be effective, they must know the righteous principles of the Word; they need the absolutes of God's Word as a foundation for morality.

More importantly, if this is going to take place, people must be prepared spiritually to know, believe, and obey the principles of God's eternal Word.

- For that to happen, people need men who are trained and skilled in the proclamation of the Word, men who are adept at wielding the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

- Our nation has fallen to its present state in part because many of our seminaries, and church, and many who stand in the pulpits of America today have departed from the Bible as their primary focus and trust, and put their trust in the philosophies and ideas of man.
- And surely this is aided when the church sits back and does nothing about it... itself waters down the word, compromises the word, or allows those in the pulpit (present day preachers and teacher) to get by with nice little dittys that make everyone feel good, but fail to teach and preach the word of God in it's full counsel.
- Obviously, if we are going to have a nation of godly leaders, men and women of integrity instead of capricious politicians (cf. Isa. 2:22-3:5), and a constituency of people who know the Lord and are sound in Scripture, we need schools and churches that are committed, not to a social gospel or some watered-down version of what God has called the church to believe and be, but to the faithful proclamation of the truth of the Bible (cf. Acts 20:28f; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Jude 1:3-4).

So, with Elijah gone, how would Elisha respond? Would he go back to farming? Would he complain and question God's timing in removing Elijah. After all, was not the nation still in a degenerate condition; and who could truly replace the great prophet?

THE ACTIONS OF ELISHA (VS. 13-14)

Look at verses 13-14 of our text, *"¹³ He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, 'Where is the LORD God of Elijah?' And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over."* Please note the very first words of verse 13 are, *"He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him..."* What can we learn from this?

The mantle of Elijah spoke of a couple of things...

2 Things the Mantle Spoke Of:

- 1. The mantle of Elijah spoke of the prophetic office and gift** – That Elijah had been called to, which he had faithfully carried out in his time on earth.
- 2. The mantle also spoke of God's call of Elisha to this ministry and responsibility** - For Elisha this meant responding to God's call on his life. It meant carrying on and taking Elijah's place as the head of the schools of the prophets, a daunting task to say the least.

Then notice in verse 13, *"He (Elisha) also took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him..."* Note that the text says, *"He also took up . . ."* The word I want us to focus on is *"also."*

Think of it... though he had experienced pain at the loss of his good friend and teacher, this did not neutralize him or make him bitter or feel that all was hopeless. He wasn't grieved beyond all hope and help... it didn't make him quite or "throw in the mantle/towel"... He also took the mantle!

Rather, Elisha saw this as a call to move forward and carry on the work that Elijah had been engaged in. I'm sure you can see the obvious application here.

Let's compare this with Paul's words about his ministry, especially his chain (difficult life situation) in his ministry in **Philippians 1:12-14**... listen to this and compare it to **2 Kings 2:13-14**... here it is in **Philippians 1:12-14**... just listen, ***"¹² But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; ¹⁴ and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."***

- ***What did Paul say concerning the correct view of his life situation (in chains)? What did it "turn out for"?***
- ***How might this compare with Elijah and Elisha and Elisha call?***
- ***How might this speak to us and our challenges in life?***

This is not only a challenge to church leaders--to elders and deacons--but to all of us for we are all called to be ambassadors and ministers in the service of the Savior.

Now let's not miss the picture here. Looming before Elisha was the River Jordan, which stood as a barrier to his entrance back into the land where the other prophets were also waiting for his leadership. Isn't this interesting? Before he could begin, God put Elisha on the other side of the Jordan. Historically and literally, the Jordan River was representative of the barriers and problems of life which would stand in the way of Elisha's ministry, and which likewise stand in the way of our ministries today. **So Elisha's actions, striking the water as Elijah had done previously, demonstrated Elisha's faith in the power and provision of God and his willingness and determination to fulfill the calling and ministry to which God had called him** (cf. 2 Tim 4:1-5).

Now let's recap and note the movement of the events of these verses...

5 Point Recap of the Story:

- (1) **Elijah is taken away leaving a vacancy and a need - Note that though Elijah was taken, his mantle was not.** His mantle was left which meant God was calling Elisha to pick up where Elijah left off. So today, God takes men and women who have ministered to us, but not their mantles or the need of others to step into their places of ministry. This is why it is so important that we each be not only involved in ministry, but in building and multiplying ourselves in others.
- (2) **Elisha cried out and tore his clothes in mourning indicating he recognized the value and importance of men like Elijah to the nation -** His parting was painful, but not fatal to God's work and purpose.
- (3) **In faith, Elisha picked up the mantle, which represented his calling and gift, moved to the Jordan, which represented the barriers he would face in ministry, and then cried out, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" -** By this question he was not questioning God's presence or actions, but demonstrating three things:

3 Things Indicated by Elisha words, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah”:

- 1. His faith and dependence on the Lord**
 - 2. Regardless of his gifts, Elisha knew he was totally insufficient in himself to be and do what lay ahead of him**
 - 3. As God had been with Elijah, so God would be with him - He knew that power and sufficiency for ministry always belongs to God (2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5).**
- (4) The waters parted and he walked across on dry ground - This demonstrated that the Lord was truly with Elisha as He had been with Elijah.**
- (5) The sons of the prophets saw this and became convinced of Elisha’s character and qualifications to lead them and they bowed in respect to demonstrate they recognized him as Elijah’s successor –**

Elisha was a gifted and capable man. In addition, he had excellent training as the apprentice of Elijah. He may have had many other exceptional qualities mentally and physically, but being blessed, gifted, and well trained in the best schools or churches is simply not enough--essential as that is. So what does this mean?

3 Application from Elisha’s Call: (that apply to us)

- (1) We must each be faithful like Elisha to draw upon our resources in the Lord so we can develop true, honest, godly and faithful character (Heb. 12:15; Phil 4:13).**
- (2) We must be genuine like Elisha in our walk with God and be willing to deal honestly with those things in our lives, which if unchecked, ignored or rationalized, will hurt our walk with the Lord and our ability to serve.**
- (3) We must like Elisha each look for the Jordan Rivers in our lives--our fears, our excuses, our lack of involvement, or whatever, and become willing to trust God to remove them so we can take on the ministries He has called us to.**

THE RESPONSE OF THE PROPHETS (VS. 15)

15 Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him.”

Here we see the effect of reality in a man’s life. **The prophets recognized he was Elijah’s successor and truly qualified to become their leader.** Elisha had proven the reality of his walk with the Lord and demonstrated he was qualified for the ministry he was called on to do.

It is never enough for us to make claims to giftedness or qualifications for ministry. People need to see the reality in our daily walk over a period of time which tests us in the ups and downs of life. It’s far too easy to fake it and play the game of religion, but if we are authentic in our walk with the Savior, in time, the reality of our walk with God will show through as we are faced with the tests of life.

This is why Scripture warns us against laying hands suddenly on someone without prior knowledge of their faithfulness or without the time needed to test their qualifications and the quality of their walk with the Lord. How do we do this? Through appointment via the recommendations of others

or prior knowledge through those who know (Acts 16:1-3) and through appointment via observation over time (Acts 6:3; 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; note especially vs. 10).

CONCLUSION

Elijah and Elisha form good examples for what God wants in each of our lives. Depending on where we are in our Christian walk and growth, there are a couple of obvious applications here:

2 Concluding Application from Elisha Response to Elijah's Translation:

- (1) **The Lord wants us to be reproducing believers** – In a way, influencing, drawing, attracting other to Christ, but more than that helping them grow into fully maturing believers in Jesus Christ who will in turn produce more believers. The Lord wants to be mentoring others and preparing them to take up our mantle, i.e., to become reproducing believers. Are you mentoring others? Are you available to teach, train, or disciple others in their walk with Christ?
- (2) **The Lord want us to be overcoming the barriers that hinder and stop our own growth and faith, and that of others** - The Lord wants us to pick up the mantle that has been dropped in front of us. In other words to face the Jordan-like barriers that may stand in the way of ministry (our fears, ignorance, indifference, lack of training, finances, etc.) and cross over by the power of God to serve the king.