

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

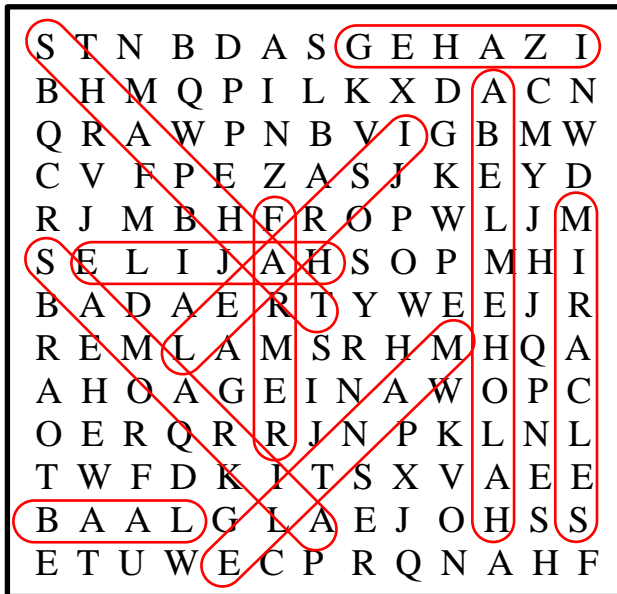
Wednesday September 28, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



FINAL EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF ELISHA – PART 3 “Even in Death Your Life Still Speaks” 2 Kings 13:14-21

If I was to ask you, **“What is the one thing that stands out to you in the life of Elisha and why?”** How would you answer that? *Allow time for an answer

WORD SCRAMBLE REVIEW: Just for review and a little fun see if you can answer the questions on the right, and then find the answer in the words scramble on the left.



1. The pagan god worshiped in Israel = (Baal)
2. Elisha's father = (Shaphat)
3. Early occupation of Elisha = (farmer)
4. Elisha's predecessor = (Elijah)
5. Hometown of Elisha = (Abelmeholah)
6. Main area of Elisha's ministry = (Israel)
7. Symbol of prophetic ministry = (mantle)
8. Elisha's leprous servant = (Gehazi)
9. Sieged Capitol of Israel = (Samaria)
10. Characterized Elisha's ministry = (miracles)

Highlights from Elisha: A Persevering Faith:

- (1) Our study began with an introduction to Elisha and his call to the ministry... remember he was known at the “miracle” prophet.
- (2) We have focused some of our study on the passing of the “mantle” of prophetic ministry to the northern kingdom of Israel from Elijah, the very powerful prophet, to Elisha... remember that dramatic scene as God carried Elijah (who never tasted

death) in that whirlwind to heaven and literally Elijah's mantle fell to Elisha, he picked up the mantle and carried on Elijah's ministry in Elisha's way.

- (3) We have followed Elisha now as he has begun to retrace Elijah's steps of prophetic ministry to the rebellions and wayward people of God, Israel, who had rejected their God and begun to worship the pagan God, Baal.
- (4) We have tracked with Elisha to Jericho where we've seen God protect Him through two female bears, we have seen him heal the water at Jericho... we have seen God defeat the King of Moab and provide water in the desert for the dying troops of Israel and her unlikely allies through Elisha, we've seen Elijah minister to the poor widowed whom (the widowed wife of a another prophet) and her son who were about to die in poverty... there he multiplied the widow's oil. We've seen Elisha heal a leapers spots, miraculously make a pot of poison stew edible, cause an iron axe head float, and blind an entire army of Syrian taken them captive and then miraculously restore their eye-site and set them free, all as a powerful message of God's salvation.
- (5) As the "miracle" prophet Elisha performed more than 20 miracle... more than anyone in scripture with the exception of Moses.
- (6) We've now tracked with Elisha through some powerful moments in his life and ministry... and his message couldn't be clearer. And now we move to what are some of the final episodes of his life and ministry.



This is the third and final lesson of our studies focused on concluding episodes of Elisha's life and ministry – **Final Episodes in the Life of Elisha (Part 3)**. The last two weeks we looked at the siege of the capital city of Israel, Samaria, and God's miraculous deliverance of His people through the prophet Elisha. It was a powerful picture of man's problem (sin) and God provision and deliverance of man from his problem and unto God's Salvation. As we come to the conclusion of Elisha's life and ministry it become abundantly clear that the main emphasis, the message, the primary focus of the prophet Elisha's life was exactly as his name bore... God is salvation. God's salvation is pictured for His people in the Biblical account of Elisha's life and ministry, and it's a picture for all mankind including you and I.

As we conclude our study we are going to jump ahead through several chapter of 2 Kings that tell the continuing story of God's redemption of the Northern Kingdom of Israel from her enemies, as God drew His people back to Himself, especially through the prophetic ministry of Elisha. But we want to jump ahead to chapter 13, of 2 Kings and the dramatic ending to Elisha's life and ministry. Although Elisha's departure from this life is quite different from his predecessor Elijah who was taken to heaven in a whirlwind and never tasted death itself... Elisha's death is not without it's own powerful drama and significance. Okay if you have your Bible, look with me at 2 Kings, chapter and we are going to focus on just verse 14-21. Follow along with me as I read (**READ: 2 Kings 13:14-21**)

¹⁴ Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!" ¹⁵ And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took himself a bow and some arrows. ¹⁶ Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. ¹⁷ And he said, "Open the east window"; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot"; and he shot. And he said, "The arrow of the LORD's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them." ¹⁸ Then he said, "Take the arrows"; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground"; so he struck three times, and stopped. ¹⁹ And the man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times." ²⁰ Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the raiding bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year. ²¹ So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band of raiders; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet. -2 Kings 13:14-21 (NKJV)

EVEN IN DEATH YOUR LIFE STILL SPEAKS (2 Kings 13:14-21)

When your life is said and done, what will others say of you? What do you want your legacy to be? What do you want others to say of you when your gone? How will your life still speak when you are gone?

ONLY JESUS (Casting Crowns)

Make it count, leave a mark, build a name for yourself
 Dream your dreams, chase your heart, above all else
 Make a name the world remembers
 But all an empty world can sell is empty dreams
 I got lost in the lie that it was up to me
 To make a name the world remembers
 But Jesus is the only name to remember

I don't want to leave a legacy, I don't care if they remember me, only Jesus
 And I've only got one life to live, I'll let every second point to Him, only Jesus

All the kingdoms built, all the trophies won
 Will crumble into dust when it's said and done
 'Cause all that really matters
 Did I live the truth to the ones I love
 Was my life the proof that there is only One
 Whose name will last forever

I don't want to leave a legacy, I don't care if they remember me, only Jesus
 And I've only got one life to live, I'll let every second point to Him, only Jesus

Songwriters: Mark Hall, Matthew Joseph West, Bernhard Herms. For non-commercial use only.

A Collection of Last Words

As many of you know, I love quotes. I collect them. I collect great quotes that especially speak to me. They challenge me. They often present a perspective of life and nuances of life that you haven't thought of before and that make you look at things perhaps in a different way. But I've got to confess that I especially love quotes that are sort of "epitaphs" of a man or a woman's life... especially their last words. So, I've started collecting "exit lines"—a dying man's final utterance—his last words.

My collection of quotes is not as morbid as you may think. I've observed that these terminal lines are, in many cases, a summary statement of the life of the person speaking them. They not only tell you how a man died but also how he lived. These last words are the bookend of the legacy (if you will) a person leaves.

Consider the last words and legacy of these men:

Henry David Thoreau, the writer known as a stubborn, arrogant individualist (said to have loved a snowstorm more than Christ and wanted nothing to do with the church), died on **May 6, 1862**. Shortly before his death, his aunt asked him if he'd made peace with God. Thoreau responded to her with his final cynical words—**"I didn't know we'd ever quarreled."**

Contrast Thoreau's legacy with the great evangelist **D.L. Moody's** deathbed words. He was reported to have turned to his boys who were at his bedside and said, **"If God be your partner, make your plans large."**

Two themes are continually repeated and contrasted by those who are near to death's door.

2 Themes Emerge in the Dying's Last Words:

- (1) **Hopelessness** - Ominous and depressing, whispers of a feared fate
- (2) **Hopefulness** - Gleefully shouts its confident message—"This isn't it! Death is not the end—IT'S THE BEGINNING!"

Famous Last Words of Historical Christian

Ponder these contrasting deathbed quotes of hopelessness and hopefulness:

"Bring down the curtain—the farce is over."

-French philosopher and comic, **Francois Rabelais**, who died in 1553.

"Our God is the God from whom cometh salvation. God is the Lord by whom we escape death." -**Martin Luther**.

"I am abandoned by God and man! I shall go to hell! O Christ, O Jesus Christ!"

-**Voltaire**.

"I enjoy heaven already in my soul. My prayers are all converted into praises."

-**Augustus Toplady**, author of the great hymn "Rock of Ages," who died at age 38.

Thomas Paine, the great writer, has these final words attributed to him—"I would give worlds, if I had them, if **The Age of Reason** had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me! Stay with me! It is hell to be left alone!"

"I have pain—but I have peace, I have peace."

-**Richard Baxter**, 17th Century Puritan Theologian.

Winston Churchill, the man whose vision and battle cry was to "never give up," said on his deathbed, **"I am convinced that there is no hope."**

John Knox uttered these piercing words and then died, *"Live in Christ, die in Christ, and the flesh need not fear death."*

Before dying of a heart attack, **Italo Svevo**, a Jewish novelist, told a nurse who was trying to administer last rites—*"When you haven't prayed all your life, it's no use at the last moment!"*

Billy Graham notes that when the great saint **Joseph Everett** was dying, he said, *"GLORY! GLORY! GLORY!"* and continued exclaiming "GLORY!" for over twenty-five minutes until he was whisked away by angels to the gates of heaven.

"When I lived, I provided for everything but death; now I must die, and I am unprepared to die."
-**Cesare Borgia**.

August Strindberg, a Swedish dramatist who died May 14, 1912, left a legacy of forgiveness and redemption by dying with a Bible clasped tightly to his chest, saying, *"It is atoned for."*

Edgar Allen Poe was said to have lived an erratic life of lies and drunkenness. He died in 1849 at the age of 40 having been found in a street near death—*"Lord help my poor soul!"*

A legacy of betrayal was left by **Judas Iscariot**. *"I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood."* He then went out and hanged himself.

Stephen died a martyr's death of stoning with these words, *"Lord lay not this sin to their charge."*

A Summary of Life

Why the visit to death's door, you ask?

Ecclesiastes 7:2 gives us a hint, *"It is better to go to a house of mourning, than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man. And the living takes it to heart."*

What do you think your last words would be if you knew they would be your last? How would they be a summary of your life?

The legacy you are passing on to those who will come behind you and others is the life you are living today.

Perhaps we should consider the last words of Jesus Christ, who, even in His death, taught us how to live and what our priorities ought to be, **"IT IS FINISHED!" -John 19:30** The three most profound words in all of human history. Sin had been paid for in full with the life and love of Christ that demands our obedience.

Have you experienced the forgiveness of the Son of God? How then will you live?

After the resurrection, on the Mount of Olives before departing for heaven in a cloud, Christ gave us a profound promise and command by which to measure our lives in **Acts 1:8, ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."**

What will your final words be?

How do you want to be remembered?

How is your life today another investment in the legacy you leave?

Do you measure your life by the world's yardstick or by Christ's words?

If Christ is not Lord of your life today, then what guarantee is there that you will be a person of hopefulness when you die?

"Only one life will soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."

-Jim Elliott, a missionary who was martyred in 1956 for his faith at age 29.

Be wise about the days you live.

THE DEATH OF ELISHA (13:14-21)

Even in his final days and in his death, God used the prophet to demonstrate that the God of Israel, *Yahweh*, was the true God and that the prophets of God who proclaim God's truth are sources of strength and life to the nation. Again we must emphasize the miracles of Elisha (as with Elijah) were designed to demonstrate this fact and to call Israel to repentance and faith. They were messengers authenticating the message of God, and calling God's people back to Him and His salvation.

This fact is here stressed even in the death of the prophet by the context. In verses 10-13, we have reference to the reigns of Joash king of Judah and of the sixteen-year reign of Jehoash who became king over Israel in Samaria. But note what the record reveals regarding Jehoash up in **verse 11, "¹¹ And he did evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, but walked in them."**(2 Kings 13:11)

It is in this context that we read of two final miraculous acts of the prophet...

2 Final Miraculous Acts of Elisha:

(1) The prophecy of the victories of Israel over Syria

(2) The death of Elisha and the miracle at his tomb

**Note that the “Joash” of the NASB and KJV is a variant form of Jehoash and should not be confused with the Joash of Judah mentioned in verse 1. So this may get confusing as you are reading these names in the these verses depending on the translation you are reading form*

THE PROPHECIES OF THE VICTORIES OF JOASH (2 Kings 13:14-19)

¹⁴ Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, “O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!” ¹⁵ And Elisha said to him, “Take a bow and some arrows.” So he took himself a bow and some arrows. ¹⁶ Then he said to the king of Israel, “Put your hand on the bow.” So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands. ¹⁷ And he said, “Open the east window”; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, “Shoot”; and he shot. And he said, “The arrow of the LORD’s deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them.” ¹⁸ Then he said, “Take the arrows”; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, “Strike the ground”; so he struck three times, and stopped. ¹⁹ And the man of God was angry with him, and said, “You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times.”

In verse 14 we read of the visit that Joash (Jehoash) made to see the prophet when he was ill. Elisha the prophet now reenters the narrative. **He was suffering from a terminal illness.**

- Out of respect for this man of God, King Joash paid him a visit.
- The fact that the king wept over him reveals that though Joash followed in the ways of Jeroboam I (v. 11) he also revered Yahweh.
- He anticipated the great loss that the death of this servant of God would be to Israel.
- He regarded Elisha as superior to himself, calling him my father in true humility.
- By the phrase **“the chariots of Israel and their horsemen,”** he showed that he recognized in Elisha, and behind him in the Lord, the real defense and power of Israel against all her adversaries. It also tied Elisha to the ministry of Elijah.
- Elisha had used the same expressions himself when Elijah’s ministry was terminated by God (2 Kings 2:12).

Elisha had been a tower of strength to the nation and he was highly respected. The king knew he would be missed, but again, we see how men in high places are often so dominated by their love for power and position and possessions that they refuse to allow the testimony of men of God to impact their lives to the degree that they will wholly turn to the Lord and follow Him in faith. Many of our own leaders have been influenced by well-known men of God like Billy Graham, but not to the degree that it transformed them from capricious

politicians into statesmen as was the case with so many of the founding fathers of this country.

But let's not just point to our political arena. Where do these political leaders come from? They come from the homes of the populace--from people like you and me. In other words we have reaped what we have sown. ***So the question is, how responsive are we to the testimony and ministry of the godly men and women of this country who have ministered to us through their lives, their writings, and their teaching?*** This, of course, includes godly parents and teachers where we have had the privilege of that kind of influence at home and in the classroom.

With verse 15, Elisha gives his last prophecy.

¹⁵ And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took himself a bow and some arrows. ¹⁶ Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. ¹⁷ And he said, "Open the east window"; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot"; and he shot. And he said, "The arrow of the LORD's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them." ¹⁸ Then he said, "Take the arrows"; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground"; so he struck three times, and stopped. ¹⁹ And the man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times." ²⁰ Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the raiding bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year.

- Elisha instructed Israel's king to pick up his bow.
- When he had done so, the prophet placed his own hands on those of the king, thereby indicating that what he was about to do would be full of spiritual symbolism.
- That act was the shooting of an arrow out the east window--toward Aram (Syria).
- Elisha explained the deed... Joash would win a total victory at Aphek against Syrians.
- But the divine promise was to be boosted by personal participation.
- Accordingly, Joash was told next to shoot arrows into the ground... obviously victory at Aphek was to be followed by subsequent victories over the hated Syrians.
- Joash obediently complied, but with his own reasoning powers. He struck the ground only three times with his arrows rather than using the five or six arrows that he had with him.
- Elisha was justifiably angry with the king. Had he used all his arrows, the Syrians would have been completely vanquished.
- Now Joash would gain but three victories.
- With this pronouncement the aged prophet had finished his earthly course.

Observation: *In other words, even though he had seen the power of God in the life and ministry of Elisha and appreciated the prophet, Joash had failed to completely trust God even though he knew what God had promised.*

How often are we guilty of the same things? We believe God, but we don't fully believe God. We trust God, but we don't fully trust God... at least not enough to put feet to our faith and fully walk by faith in what He has told us, His promises, and His ways. Why is this the case? We have the full power and confidence of God in our lives, yet like the king of Israel (Joash) we don't fully take advantage of what God is offering us? Why?

Some reasons we may fail to fully trust God:

- (1) **Worldliness** – Colossians 3:2, *“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”* Romans 12:2, *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*
- (2) **Flesh** – Romans 8:6-8, *“For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”*
- (3) **Fear** – Proverbs 29:25, *“Fear of man will prove a snare, but whoever trust in the Lord is kept safe.”* 1 John 4:18, *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”*
- (4) **Lack of faith** – Hebrews 11:6, *“But with out faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”* James 4:2, *“... you do not have because you do not ask.”*
- (5) **Doubt** – James 1:6-8, *“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”* Matthew 21:21, *“... if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done.”*

THE DEATH OF ELISHA AND THE MIRACLE AT HIS TOMB (2 Kings 13:20-21)

²⁰ Then Elisha ¹⁰died, and they buried him. And the raiding bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year. ²¹ So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band of raiders; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.

Soon after the incident described above Elisha died. His ministry spanned at least 56 years, having begun as a servant of Elijah during Ahab's reign (which ended in 853 B.C.) and dying during Joash's reign (which began in 798 B.C.). After his body was wrapped in linen

cloths, the prophet was probably buried in a cave or tomb hewn out of a rock as were most of the early Israelites (v. 21).

- Some time later, we are told, some men were laying another man's body to rest near Elisha's tomb.
- They were surprised by a group of Moabite raiders who were apparently going to rob whomever they met.
- To flee quickly, the Israelite pallbearers removed the stone in front of Elisha's tomb, threw the corpse of their friend in the tomb, and retreated.
- When the new corpse touched Elisha's he came to life and stood up on his feet.
- Evidently the men who placed the body in Elisha's tomb observed this.
- Doubtless they told their story far and wide, and it probably reached the ears of Joash for whom this miracle seems to have been intended primarily.
- Such a sign of the power of God working even through His prophet's corpse may have both encouraged the king as he anticipated his battles with the Syrians and rebuked him for his lack of faith (cf. comments on vv. 18-19).

3 Things Elisha's Resurrection Story Points To:

- (1) **It points particularly to the resurrection of Jesus Christ** – In Elisha's death, we see not only the miracle of resurrection in anticipation of the life and ministry of Christ, but we see another vital principle.
- (2) **It reminds us that every life touched by the resurrected Christ receives new life, salvation –**
- (3) **It reminds us of the hope of resurrection in our own lives -**

The mention of the invading Moabite raiders immediately upon the death of Elisha is also instructive. I believe it shows us that a nation can expect divine judgment in the form of spiritual and moral degeneration, as well as other forms of judgment, when there is the removal of God's faithful teachers of the Word, or when there is a famine of sound theological teaching that instructs people about God and how to know and love him.

But why does God do this? For the same reason that parents who loves their children will discipline them--to correct their behavior. God disciplines us to draw us back to Himself, which is always the place of blessing and peace.

CONCLUSION

In bringing the study in the life of Elisha to a close, we perhaps would do well to look at the main emphasis seen throughout his life and work. The main emphasis all through his ministry is that of resurrection and hope of new life... God's salvation. J. Sidlow Baxter has an excellent summary of this. He wrote, "The nation has now sunk into such a state that it can scarcely be recovered except by something equal to resurrection. Therefore, through the ministry of Elisha, the people are given to see, in a succession of symbolic miracles, the

power of resurrection at work, and the hope of new life which is theirs in Jehovah, if they but return to him. God is their salvation.”

Just let the mind run through some of Elisha's miracles. See how characteristic is this suggestion of life out of death

A Summary of Elisha's Miracles and the Picture of Salvation (new life):

- (1) **Salvation at the waters of Jericho** - His very first miracle is the healing of the death-giving waters of Jericho, so that what had given death now gave life ***Remember: Jesus is the Living Water***
- (2) **Salvation at the water supply for the armies** - Then comes the saving of the armies from death by miraculous water supply ***Remember: Jesus is the Living Water***
- (3) **Salvation at the raising of the Shunammite's son** - And in the next chapter we find the raising of the Shunammite woman's son from death to new life ***Remember: Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life***
- (4) **Salvation at the healing of the stew** - This is followed by the healing of the poisoned pottage... "Death in the pot" is changed to life and wholesomeness ***Remember: Jesus is the Bread of Life***
- (5) **Salvation at the multiplying the loaves** - And in the same chapter we have the miraculous multiplication of the barley loaves. ***Remember: Jesus is the Bread of Life***
- (6) **Salvation at the healing of Naaman** - Then comes the healing of Naaman, by that symbolic baptism in Jordan, with its washing away of death, and the coming up in new life. ***Remember: Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life***
- (7) **Salvation at the floating axe-head** - The miracle of the recovered axe-head, which next follows, speaks of the same thing in a different way. "The iron did swim"--a new life-power overcoming the downward pull of death ***Remember: Jesus is the Resurrection and Life***
- (8) **Salvation at Elisha's bones** - Finally, not to mention the intervening miracles, we have the strange miracle in which the man is brought to life at Elisha's grave, by accidental contact with the deceased prophet's bones. ***Remember: Jesus is the Resurrection and Life***

The miracle prophet's life pointed to the miracle of salvation... the dead is brought to live. The emphasis on resurrection and new hope running through these miracles is surely clear to see.