

PERSONAL APPLICATION

ELISHA

Ask the Lord to open your heart that the Holy Spirit may guide you to understand the very interesting life of Elisha from Scripture passages in 2 Kings.

Review

1. As you reviewed the life of Elijah, what particularly impressed you?

2. What comparison can we make between the death of Elijah and our own death?

Read 2 Kings 2:1-15

3. What request did Elisha make when Elijah told him that he could ask for anything he wanted?

4. Tell what Elijah left behind when he ascended into heaven and explain why.

5. What wondrous thing did Elisha do at Jericho? (2 Kings 2:19-22)

6. In 2 Kings 2:23-24, what happened to the boys of Bethel and what lesson is being taught?

7. Describe the problem of the widow in 2 Kings 4:1-7 and give Elisha's solution to the problem.

8. Read the account found in 2 Kings 4:8-37.

What great need did the Shunammite woman have?

What great sorrow came into her life?

Elisha performed a miracle with the help of God. List some basics about the incident.

9. Give the details told about Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1-19.

What cure does Elisha suggest? What was Naaman's reaction?

Contrast Elisha's response to Naaman's gratitude with Gehazi's actions. (2 Kings 5:16-27).

10. Describe the miracle that Elisha performed at the school of the prophets. (2 Kings 6:1-7)

11. In 2 Kings 6:8-23, what ability did the prophet Elisha have that was helpful to the king of Israel?

What did the king of Assyria realize he would have to do if he was going to defeat Israel?

What do you learn from Elisha's response to his servant when he saw the enemy's army (2 Kings 6:16-17)?

How did Elisha — with God's help — take care of this enemy force?

12. To summarize the life of Elisha, study the context of the following Bible verses and write what each of them teaches us.

Luke 1:37

Genesis 18:14

Jeremiah 32:17

Matthew 19:26

Romans 4:21

13. How could you apply the verses listed in #12 to your life today?

14. Explain your understanding of Romans 8:28.



THE LAUNCHING OF HIS PROPHETIC CAREER	94
HEALING THE WATERS – 2 KINGS 2:19-22	94
THE BOYS OF BETHEL – 2 KINGS 2:23-25	94
HELPING THE WIDOW – 2 KINGS 4:1-7	94
THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN – 2 KINGS 4:8-37	95
THE HEALING OF THE SYRIAN CAPTAIN – 2 KINGS 5:1-27	95
THE IRON THAT FLOATED – 2 KINGS 6:1-7	95
ELISHA AND THE ASSYRIANS – 2 KINGS 6:8 TO 7:20	96
THE DEATH OF ELISHA – 2 KINGS 13:14-21	96
CONCLUSION	96
PERSONAL APPLICATION – HEZEKIAH	98

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ELISHA – WITH GOD, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

We are acquainted with the familiar labels “Made in the U.S.A.,” “Made in Japan,” “Made in China.” Did you know that on every piece of bread you eat, there is a label, invisible but nevertheless real, which says, “Made in Heaven”? Without the hand of God, all the scientific knowledge and skill of men could not produce a single slice of bread. The ingredients, the formula, the processes of nature that go into the making of our daily bread are all the property of heaven. How fortunate we are to have such a benevolent God who sees to it that we have far more than just a slice of bread.

The Lord preserved the story of the prophet Elisha in order to teach us some important truths. The age of miracles is not at an end, nor has the almighty power of God slackened. While man may have gained more knowledge or insight under the blessing of God, he is still a frail, sinful mortal. While focused on his own achievements, he frequently loses contact with almighty God.

In this study, we have the story of the Old Testament “Houdini,” the prophet Elisha, a devout man of God who accomplished his feats with the assistance of God. This man became the magician of the Bible. Talk about an escape artist! Houdini could not have escaped from the things that Elisha encountered. WITH GOD, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

THE LAUNCHING OF HIS PROPHETIC CAREER

As Elisha looked on, the prophet Elijah was carried into heaven in a fiery chariot. Elisha, upon the suggestion of Elijah (2 Kings 2:9), had requested a double portion of the spirit of Elijah in order to better serve as God's prophet in Israel. In his ascent into heaven, Elijah left his mantle behind, the mantle with which he struck the waters of the Jordan River and they parted. Elisha took up that mantle as a symbol that the power of God was now upon him. When those who attended the school of prophets saw him, they remarked that the spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha (2 Kings 2:15).

As Elisha went through the country visiting the various schools where the young men were being trained in their religious beliefs, he was continually confronted with problems. With the help of God, he was able to cope with these problems. He prayed for the Holy Spirit and the Lord answered his prayer. *Let's examine some of the miracles.*

HEALING THE WATERS

2 KINGS 2:19-22

Elisha had come to Jericho where the people had a big complaint. They had water, but it had become so polluted that they could not drink it, and it had lost its power to nourish their crops. They were suffering as if there were a famine.

The prophet dealt with the problem in a very simple way. He asked for a new bowl filled with salt. He then cast the salt into the spring from where their water came and, at once, the water was pure and sweet. This was the opposite of what you would expect, something only the Lord's help could accomplish.

THE BOYS OF BETHEL

2 KINGS 2:23-25

Elisha evidently was not a young man anymore, for as he approached Bethel some boys of that village came out and mocked the prophet because of his baldness. They likely knew that he was God's prophet, but still they showed disrespect. We, too, are acquainted with young people who have no respect for their elders.

This saintly man of God knew that disrespect for his office showed disrespect for God, and he placed God's curse upon them. Their punishment followed when two she-bears came out of the woods and attacked those boys. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7). God expects us to show the proper respect for the spiritual leaders He has given us. In dishonoring them, we dishonor Him (Luke 10:16). In order that our young people may enjoy a real blessing from God, we need to impress this fact upon them.

HELPING THE WIDOW

2 KINGS 4:1-7

One day the prophet was confronted with a very common situation. He met a woman who was a widow and unable to support herself and her family. Her creditors were demanding payment or else they would take her two sons as indentured servants.

Once again, Elisha had a simple solution. The one commodity she had left was a jar of olive oil. The prophet told her to borrow all the containers she could from her neighbors and to pour from her jar of oil into them. She kept pouring and the oil kept flowing and filled all those jars. The prophet then told her to sell this valuable oil. She then had enough income to satisfy all her creditors and to get a new start in life.

THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN

2 KINGS 4:8-37

As the prophet was travelling one day near Shunem, a wealthy woman invited him to come into her home for a bite to eat. She encouraged the prophet to come again when he passed that way. One day, Elisha noticed that the woman seemed very sad. He discovered the reason for her sadness was that she had no child, and because of the age of her husband, she had no prospect of having one. The prophet assured her, "About this time next year, you will hold a son in your arms." It happened just as Elisha said.

When the child became a little older, he went out into the field where his father was working. He suffered sunstroke and died. She took her dead son into the prophet's room. She then asked one of the servants to take her to the prophet to whom she expressed her great grief and disappointment. Elisha went with the Shunammite woman to her home and went alone into the death chamber. He prayed to the Lord and cast himself upon the dead child. He noticed that the flesh of the child became warm. He again lay upon the child who sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. Elisha thus gave back to this kind woman the son that meant so much to her.

THE HEALING OF THE SYRIAN CAPTAIN

2 KINGS 5:1-27

The general of the Syrian army was a man named Naaman. He had the horrible disease of leprosy, which made it impossible for him to function in his duties since he had to isolate himself from people. One day his young Jewish slave girl suggested that he go to her land and see Elisha, the prophet of the Lord.

What a wonderful example of the simple witness a child is able to give when the situation arises. This girl expressed her faith simply, knowing that God worked through Elisha to relieve the difficulties of people. She was confident that God could also help her master. When such opportunities come to us, do we hesitate or speak out?

Naaman expected the prophet would go out of his way in order to help him. Instead, when Elisha learned of the

problem, he did not go but sent his servant Gehazi to tell the captain to bathe seven times in the Jordan River. This was very offensive to Naaman. He said there are cleaner rivers than the Jordan in his country. In a rage, he turned to go home.

However, his servants prevailed upon him to try what Elisha suggested. They said that if the prophet had asked him to do some unusual thing he would have gladly done it. Why should he refuse to do something that seemed so natural as to wash and be clean? So Naaman went to the Jordan River, dipped himself seven times into its waters, and came out perfectly healed of his leprosy.

You may well imagine Naaman's joy. He went to the prophet to thank him and then offered him a gift. Elisha refused the gift, for he was merely carrying out the tasks God had given him to do (2 Kings 5:16). However, his servant Gehazi coveted the rich treasure that Naaman was ready to give his master, so he ran after Naaman and told him that some needy strangers had come to the home of the prophet and that his master could use the treasure. Thus, the servant was given the wealth. God revealed to Elisha what Gehazi had done. Elisha cursed the servant and the leprosy of Naaman fell upon Gehazi.

THE IRON THAT FLOATED

2 KINGS 6:1-7

One day Elisha visited one of the schools where the Jewish boys were studying the Scriptures. The young men were building an addition to their school and as they were cutting down a tree that overhung the river, the axe head flew off and went into the water. Of course, it sank to the bottom of the muddy slime. They didn't know what to do, for they had no other axe. With the help of the Lord, the prophet caused the axe head to float to the top of the water so the boys were able to retrieve it.

Elisha performed one miracle after another, always to help people who were in a crisis. We are reminded of our Lord Jesus as He went through the countryside always stopping to help someone who was in real need. We don't expect that the Lord will give us the ability

to perform such obvious miracles as Elisha, but the Lord does ask us to help and befriend our neighbor in need. We should always be ready and willing to do this. Thus, we become tools in the hand of God and the Lord may actually perform a miracle through us.

ELISHA AND THE ASSYRIANS

2 KINGS 6:8 TO 7:20

The king of Syria warred against Israel. Each time the king would attack, the armies of Israel were ready for him. Someone told him that it was the prophet Elisha who told the Israelites where the next attack would come. The king of Assyria sent a force to capture Elisha and thus put an end to these constant defeats. This force surrounded the area where Elisha was and the prophet's servant was terrified. Elisha very calmly declared, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (2 Kings 6:16). Then Elisha asked the Lord to open the eyes of his servant and he saw they were surrounded by a mighty host of horses and chariots of fire so that the king's forces could not harm God's prophet.

Elisha then asked the Lord to strike the enemy forces with blindness. Elisha himself became their guide and led them into Samaria. The king of Israel wanted to fall upon this force and destroy it but Elisha would not allow it. Instead, he suggested they treat them well and when this force returned to their headquarters and reported what had happened, the Syrians stopped their campaign. We are reminded of the words of Paul in Romans 12:20; "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." By rewarding good for evil, we may well cause our enemy to reconsider his actions.

In a later conflict with the Syrians (2 Kings 7:1-11), Samaria was besieged. There were four lepers who had been barred from their city and were destitute. When God caused the enemy to hear the sound of a great army, the Syrians fled in haste and left many things behind. But the lepers didn't know this, and thinking they would die anyway, decided to ask the Syrians for help.

When they came to the camp, they found it abandoned and were able to retrieve a great hoard of wealth. Then they realized that in their city there were many who were also destitute because of the Syrian siege. They said to each other, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news...let us go and tell the king's household" (2 Kings 7:9).

We can learn much from this event. There is a spiritual famine in the world today because people don't know God and His Son, our Savior. God has led us to discover a great wealth in Him, forgiveness, peace, joy, hope. But "we're not doing right" if we now hoard these blessings for ourselves. We must realize this is "a day of good news" and share our discovery with others. That is what these lepers did, and all were helped.

THE DEATH OF ELISHA

2 KINGS 13:14-21

Elisha became ill and died, and all including the king wept over him. He was buried with honors, but even in his death, there was still a miracle that was done. The Moabites now invaded Israel and in a skirmish, a man was killed. As his friends were digging a grave in which to bury him, they saw another group of the enemy approaching so they quickly threw his body into the tomb of Elisha. When his body touched the bones of Elisha, it revived and he stood on his feet (2 Kings 13:21).

CONCLUSION

The unusual story of Elisha prompts reflection. We all have some dire need, some problem, or some situation with which we cannot cope. The question is — how do we deal with such a difficulty? Do we try to meet it completely on our own? Do we have confidence in ourselves and think that with our own ability and ingenuity we can work out the problem? If that is the basis for our hope then we are doomed to failure. Certainly, we are to use the wisdom, the common sense that God has given us and we also are to turn to other people such as doctors, mechanics and lawyers. But we don't start there.

The first thing we need to learn when there is a problem confronting us is to turn to the Lord for guidance. In some way, He will always indicate to us what we should do either through His Word, one of our friends, or through other means. Yet God does not want us to sit in our rocking chair and say, “Lord, you take o’er!” and do absolutely nothing for ourselves. God has commanded us to pray, but also to work. He wants us to use the abilities and resources He has given us to find the help we need.

Did you notice how true this was in the miracles that the Lord allowed Elisha to perform? How did the widow get the money to pay her debts? How was Naaman healed from his leprosy? Each was given something to do. Some “natural means” was employed. When we are sick, God wants us to turn to Him and ask Him, if it is His will, to make us well. Then we should consult a doctor and use the treatment that he prescribes. It is only God who can make us well but He often does it through human agencies. The best doctor in the world cannot make us well if God’s plan for us is different. We are to put our complete trust in God and also use the resources that He has provided.

Why was Elisha able to do these wonderful things? Better, why was the Lord able to use Elisha as His agent to be of such great assistance to people who had some real problems? The reason was that the Lord awakened in Elisha a sincere faith and trust. Take note that the Lord did this, for people find it very difficult to see that they cannot establish a relationship with God themselves. They even are inclined to look upon their faith as an act on their part.

The truth is, that left to ourselves, we would not believe and trust in God, and certainly not accept what God has done for us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Elisha did believe that God could help in every need, even in the greatest need, for he knew that he was a sinner. He believed completely in God’s promises and because of his faith, God could use him. And it is because of our faith that God is going to be able to use us.

For what purpose did God want to use Elisha? Why did He allow him to perform these miracles? Very simply, through him, God wanted to help other people, and through him, God was to be glorified. The account given to us of his life leaves the impression that each time he performed a miracle the people always knew it was God who had done this wonderful thing. Usually the prophet quietly slipped away, perhaps before anyone had a chance to thank him.

We all need to be filled with the spirit of Elisha, the double spirit that he had inherited from Elijah. Think of what could happen if each of us had that spirit. Then God’s people would be gathered around the Word to study it and things would be happening. The people would know exactly what God wanted them to do. They would be excited because they would see themselves as God’s agents, witnessing to God’s grace, speaking about the peace they found in Christ, the joy that is theirs in the service of the Savior, and most important, the hope that fills their hearts because they know they are going to heaven.