

People of the Bible

ELISHA, prophet of God

To the reader: Keep your Bible beside you. Always read your Bible first, then read these notes. Check the references and read them also. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.

Read: 1 Kings 18:1-15

INTRODUCTION

God's people were slaves in Egypt for 430 years. God used Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Over and over again, God reminded His people of this great rescue (Judges 2:12). Every great rescue in the Old Testament pointed forward to God in Christ saving men from sin. Paul wrote, "God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:13). God used Joshua to lead His people, Israel, into the promised land. He promised to drive out the seven nations who lived in Canaan and make room for the twelve tribes of Israel. For many years they let the heathen nations live among them. The heathen Canaanites soon led God's people into sin (Judges 1:21,29).

When the people of Israel obeyed God they had peace. When they followed the evil ways of the nations living among them, God allowed their neighbours to come against them.

At that time God raised up Judges who led the people against their enemies. The Judges rallied the local people and led them to deliver that part of the country where their tribe lived. This happened many times.

In the days of Samuel the prophet, the people asked for a king. God told Samuel He would give them a king. Samuel anointed Saul, son of Kish, king over Israel (1 Samuel 10:1).

The Books of 1st and 2nd Kings follow the Books of Samuel. They give the history of Israel when kings ruled the land. At first one king ruled over the whole area called Israel. After Solomon's death, the land was divided into Israel with ten tribes to the north and Judah with two tribes in the south. Jerusalem was in Judah. When good kings reigned, the people did well. Other kings led the people into idol worship which made God angry.

TALK ABOUT

1. Who led God's people out of Egypt?
2. Who led them into the promised land?
3. What happened in the days of the Judges?
4. In the days of Samuel, what did the people ask God for (1 Sam 10:1)?
5. Did God give them a king?
6. How was Israel divided after King Solomon died?

GOD SENT PROPHETS

God sent prophets to warn kings and people that they would be punished for their sins if they did not repent. God's prophets spoke His words to the people. God spoke to His prophets directly, or in dreams and visions.

When God's prophets spoke, they said, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Isaiah 1:20), Or "the Lord Almighty has revealed this in my hearing . . ." (Isaiah 22:14; Matthew 4:4). They spoke the very words of God to the people.

When no message came to the prophet from God, he did not speak. God sealed the prophet's lips (Ezekiel 3:26-27).

Elijah was one of God's greatest prophets. He was raised among the Bedouin peoples of Tishbe in Transjordan. He was a rugged man who probably lived in the caves of the desert. He wore the roughest of garments and a long, flowing beard.

Because of Israel's wicked king Ahab, Elijah had prayed that it would not rain. God did not send rain for three and a half years (James 5:17). He answered Elijah's prayer and had held back the rain because of the nation's sins. Famine killed most of the herds of cattle. Even King Ahab's donkeys died because they could not find grass for them. Elisha prayed that his people would repent and that God would answer with rain.

OBADIAH, THE KING'S SERVANT

One day, as Ahab's servant Obadiah was walking along the road looking for grass for his master's horses, he met the old prophet of God, Elijah. Obadiah worshipped the true God. He recognized the prophet Elijah and bowed to the ground. He asked, "Is it really you, my lord Elijah" (1 Kings 18:7)?

Elijah sent Obadiah to tell Ahab he had come out of hiding. Obadiah answered, "I don't know where the Spirit of the Lord might carry you, when I leave you." But Elijah assured him he would be at that spot when Ahab came to find him.

Ahab went out to meet Elijah. He was very angry: "So it's you, is it? - the man who brought this disaster upon Israel!" Ahab exclaimed when he saw Elijah.

Elijah answered the King, "You're talking about yourself. For you and your family have refused to worship the Lord . . ." (1 Kings 18:16-17, TLB).

Sin was at its worst in Israel in the reign of wicked king Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel. She had set up the idol Baal and was leading the people to worship Baal.

TALK ABOUT

1. How did God speak to His prophets?
2. Why did God hold back the rain (James 5:17)?
3. Who did Elijah show himself to?
4. Why was King Ahab angry?
5. Who was Queen in Israel?
6. What did she do?

Read: 1 Kings 19:16-21

THE PROPHET ELISHA

Some call Elijah "the Prophet of Fire" because he called down fire from Heaven on his sacrifice on Mount Carmel. God sent fire and burned up Elijah's sacrifice while wicked King Ahab and all the people watched. The prophets of Baal tried to do the same. They could not (1 Kings 18:16-39).

After God gave Elijah this victory at Mt Carmel, 400 priests of Baal fell by the sword. Queen Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah (1 Kings 19:2). To escape the queen's wrath, he fled southward, to Beersheba, and further . . .

The Lord met Elijah in the Negev desert and told him: "Go back the way you came, and go to the desert of Damascus." That was far north, it was an area of the country the old prophet knew well. He probably travelled the road east of the Dead Sea to get there.

After that, God hid Elijah for a long time because wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel wanted to kill him. God caused the ravens to bring him bread and meat and he drank water from the brook (1 Kings 17:6).

Later, we find Elijah at Mount Horeb, close to the borders of Aram, and not too far from Abelmeholah where Elisha lived. God had told him to anoint Elisha to be his servant (Judges 7:22; 1 Kings 19:15-16).

ELISHA WAS PLOWING THE FIELD

The earth broke up and rolled over. The dust blew. The two oxen plodded up the field. Elisha and his team of oxen followed eleven other teams with drivers (1 Kings 19:19). Each man drove

a pair of oxen pulling a wooden plough that broke up the hard ground. Many families shared in the work of ploughing and later the work of planting.

Elisha drove the twelfth or last pair of oxen so that he could watch those ahead of him.

The day's work was ending. Elisha was hot and tired after the hard work, but the broken earth was ready for planting now. Tomorrow he would help to scatter the grain on the earth. Then his family would pray for rain. Rain had not fallen for a long time in this northern part of the Jordan Valley.

Just as Elisha and his team passed the boundary stones and turned out of the field, a man came into view. Elisha recognized him at once. His long cloak and staff were those of a prophet . . . perhaps the prophet Elijah!

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

The old man of God came up to young Elisha and stood for a moment. Then he took off his cloak and threw it around the young man's shoulders.

Elisha knew at once what the sign meant. It was a prophet's cloak and one day he would wear it himself. The old prophet was choosing him to serve the Lord God of Israel, even as the old prophet had done. He saw the intense look in Elijah's eyes; he had to make a choice.

Elijah was ready to go on his way; there was no time to waste.

"Let me kiss my father and mother good-bye," Elisha said. Then I will come with you" (1 Kings 19:20),

"Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?"

So Elisha handed the reins to a servant and went to kiss his father and mother. When he got home, Elisha made a sacrifice to the Lord. He shared the meal with his family. Then he said good-bye to them and set out to follow the old prophet Elijah. He left the farm to take up a new vocation . . . Paul said it was a 'calling' (Eph 4:1; 5:17).

We do not know how old Elisha was at this time, but he served the Lord for the rest of his life. He followed Elijah and became his personal servant. He lit the fire and cooked their food and carried the water. When the old prophet wanted to wash his hands, Elisha poured water on them from a goat skin (2 Kings 3:11). He did the things most of us don't like doing!

As Elisha followed God's prophet Elijah, so he followed the Lord God. Elisha had only one goal in life and that was to be a servant of the Lord,

Elisha served the Lord for some 60 years before he heard his Master in Heaven say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt 25:21).

Jesus called twelve disciples. He called them "to be with Him" (Matt 4:18-22). They followed him through Galilee. They saw His miracles and heard His teaching. He called them to put their full faith in Him. When they followed Him, they left their jobs and homes for a different 'calling.' Once Peter said to Jesus, "We have left everything to follow You!" (Matt 19:27). Then he added, "What then will there be for us?"

Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome: "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship . . ." (Romans 12:1-2). God asks the same of each of us. Our offering pleases Him.

TALK ABOUT

1. Do you think Elisha's father and mother tried to stop him leaving home?
2. Elisha probably knew Elijah lived a rough life in the desert. What made him follow the old prophet?
3. How did Elisha serve his master, Elijah?
4. Does God have a plan for each of our lives?
5. What did Paul tell the Christians in Rome (and Christians today) to do (Romans 12:1-2)?

Read: 2 Kings 2:1-18

ELIJAH TAKEN AND ELISHA LEFT

God had told Elijah it was time for him to come home to Heaven. The old prophet, wanted to say good-bye to the “company of prophets” before he died. There were schools of prophets – groups of fifty men – in Bethel, Jericho, and at other cities, maybe even in Samaria. These young men were like apprentices and Elijah had been teaching them the things of God.

Elijah and Elisha were walking to Gilgal. Suddenly, Elijah turned to his servant and said, “Stay here, the Lord has sent me to Bethel.”

Elisha replied, “As surely as the Lord lives, I will not leave you” (2 Kings 2:2), So the two men went down to Bethel.

Word had gone out that Elijah did not have long to live. The young prophets at Bethel knew that Elisha would miss his master, so they came out to meet him and asked, “Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?”

Elisha replied, “Yes, I know, but do not speak of it.”

Elisha knew God had a plan for him and he wanted to stay close to his master till the end. If He did not follow closely, he might miss God’s plan for him.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA AT BETHEL

At Bethel the old prophet turned to young Elisha and said, “Stay here, Elisha, the Lord has sent me to Jericho” (2 Kings 2:4).

Elisha replied, “As surely as the Lord lives . . . I will not leave you.” So the two of them walked on together.

Again men from the prophets’ school met them. The young prophets asked Elisha, “Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?”

Elisha gave the same answer. He was not turned aside by their talk. He knew God had more work for him to do. He had served old Elijah, but now he would serve the Lord God.

Elijah went from Jericho to the Jordan River. It was planting time and the water was running fast and deep.

Many years before, God’s people came out of Egypt. After wandering in the desert for forty years, they came to the plains of Moab. Between their camp and the Promised Land lay the Jordan River. At that season of the year, it was in flood. The Jordan River had stopped them from crossing over.

At that time, God worked a miracle for them. As the priests carried the Ark of the Covenant to the edge of the Jordan and put their feet into the water, the water stopped flowing and some two million people crossed over on dry land (Joshua 3:13).

TALK ABOUT

1. Do you think the young prophets were trying to make Elisha afraid or to turn him aside from following Elijah?
2. What did Elisha say to them (2 Kings 2:4,5)?
3. Did Elisha feel able to serve the Lord? Do you?

ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER JORDAN

Elijah and Elisha stood on the Jordan River bank and looked into the swirling waters. Fifty men from “the company of the prophets” stood at a distance and watched. They were curious. What would Elijah do to cross the river?

Elijah faced toward the country of his birth. They could have been close to mount Nebo where Moses, the great leader of God’s people had died.

Then the prophets saw Elijah take off his cloak, roll it up and strike the water with it. The waters of the Jordan divided to the right hand and to the left and the two men crossed over to the east side of the river (2 Kings 2:8).

Elisha still stood at Elijah’s side, so they went on walking and talking together. Elijah probably shared the practical issues of life. He was not separated from the world to a life of prayer and fasting, as we might think.

Then the old prophet stopped and asked his servant, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?”

Elisha did not hesitate: "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," he replied. In Israel, the firstborn son received a double portion of his father's estate. In this way, he carried on the family name and business (Deuteronomy 21:17).

Elisha was not being greedy. He did not want to do greater works than Elijah had done. But he wanted the same ministry and he knew that he needed the Spirit of Elijah's God to equip him for it. Perhaps he wanted to be recognized by the young prophets as their new leader.

A CHARIOT OF FIRE SEPARATED THEM

"You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours." (2 Kings 2:10).

Elisha's request was not a hard thing for God to give. We can have His Spirit without measure. He said, "Ask . . ." (Luke 11:13). He is willing to give the Holy Spirit's enabling to those who are ready to lead or serve.

As Elijah and Elisha walked and talked together, "Suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to Heaven in a whirlwind" (2 Kings 2:11). Elisha was left alone.

There was no special ritual before Elijah was translated to Heaven. The great Bible scholar Matthew Henry said, "God showed how men should have left the world if they had not sinned - not by death, but by translation."

Only Elisha saw the chariot of fire. The curious prophets did not see what happened to Elijah and they were puzzled, "My Father! My Father!" Elisha shouted, "The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And there on the ground lay Elijah's cloak, just as it had fallen from the old prophet's shoulders.

Elisha took up the old cloak, rolled it as he had seen Elijah do, and went down to the bank of the Jordan, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" he cried and struck the waters with Elijah's cloak. At once, the waters divided and Elisha crossed over to his new work of serving God's people,

The company of prophets from Jericho were still watching. "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha," they said. They received him as their leader.

In opening Heaven and receiving Elijah, God gave us a glimpse of the resurrection and of the eternal life and immortality He offers to men and women in the gospel. By Christ's gospel, God opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all who will believe (Acts 16:31; 2 Timothy 1:10).

THEY WENT OUT TO LOOK FOR ELIJAH

The curious prophets wanted to be sure that Elijah was not hiding somewhere!

"Look," they said to Elisha, "we are fifty able men. Let us go and look for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the Lord has picked him up and has set him down on some mountain or in some valley." (2 Kings 2:16)

Elisha tried to stop them, but they wanted to go and search for Elijah.

After three days searching the rugged hills and valleys, they came back without finding any trace of Elijah.

The simply curious are seldom rewarded for their searches.

TALK ABOUT

1. What should we do when others question our desire to follow Jesus with all our hearts?
2. What was Elisha hoping to gain by saying close to Elijah?
3. How did Elisha answer the young prophets' taunts?
4. How can we do greater things than Jesus did (John 14:12-13)?
5. Can we serve God without the Holy Spirit's power?
6. What is your potential? Can God do all that He wants to do through you?

Read: 2 Kings 2:19-22
THE SALT OF THE EARTH

Elijah was a man of the desert, but Elisha lived among the people.

Elisha was always there in a crisis, to help and comfort. Remember the crisis at the wedding in Cana (John 2)? Jesus was there to help in the crisis.

Some say Elisha did more miracles than Elijah; some say just double the number.

ELISHA STAYED IN JERICHO

Elisha stayed in Jericho while the fifty young prophets searched for his master. When the people of Israel first came into the promised land, God enabled Joshua to destroy the wicked city of Jericho (Joshua 6). God spoke a curse on anyone who tried to rebuild Jericho. This curse fell on the man who worked to rebuild Jericho. In Ahab's time, Heil of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. Both his firstborn son and his youngest son died (1 Kings 16:34), and God's curse on the city lingered on.

Jericho's springs had bad water in them. The bad water made the people sick and the land around the city did not produce good crops.

For a long time, the city fathers had tried to overcome this problem, but they could not. They had not told old Elijah about the water. He was always too hard to reach. He was like a preacher who appeared on Sunday and delivered his message, then left town.

Now the city fathers found Elisha and told him: "Look, our lord, this town is well situated, but the water is bad and the land unproductive" (2 Kings 2:19).

Elisha saw that God wanted to help these people, so he told the men, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." When Elisha told them what to do they did it. They obeyed the Lord's word through His prophet. When God tells us what to do, we must hurry to do His bidding.

Samuel asked king Saul, "does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" In the small things and large things God says, "Obedience is better than sacrifice . . ." (1 Samuel 15:22).

When the men brought Elisha a new bowl and salt, he went out to the spring. He did not throw the salt into the spring. He first spoke the word of the Lord, "I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death." (2 Kings 2:21). Then he threw the salt into the spring. At once the waters were 'healed.'

Salt was always a part of the sacrifices offered to God (Leviticus 2:13). It was bought with public funds and stored at the temple (Ezra 6:9). God said salt made His sacrifice "sweet." It was called "the salt of the covenant" (Leviticus 2:13).

To Christians, Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth." or "you are the world's seasoning, to make it tolerable. If you lose your flavour, what will happen to the world?" (Matthew 5:13 TLB). He also said, "Let your speech be seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6).

Salt makes food taste better. Salt stops food from going bad. You are salt, Jesus said, you can make this world better.

Jesus told His disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last . . ." (John 15:16). He chose you to be salt in the earth. Elisha asked for a clean vessel and so does God. That is the only kind He can use. And salt - like our Christian witness - will heal the bitter lives around us. Our world is full of hurt and death. God wants to use your witness and your actions to heal the hurts.

TALK ABOUT

1. Elisha could have said, "Your city is cursed. I cannot help you."
2. God is looking for clean vessels. Will He take up a dirty vessel and use it?
3. How can God's servants be always clean and ready for Him to use?
4. If Christians are "the salt of the earth" what happens when there are no Christians around?
5. How was Elisha like Jesus?

Read: 2 Kings 4:1-7

SERVANTS ARE NOT FOR SHOW

God gives miracles for His own honour, and that men may believe.

Jesus told the disciples, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe" (John 11:14-15). Then He raised Lazarus from the dead.

We have much to learn about God's demonstrations of power. He does not demonstrate His power to entertain us, though men of God often look for a 'big show' of His power. God gives us power to serve Him. This power is "like unto that which raised Jesus from the dead" (Ephesians 1:18). It is not the same power, for that power broke open the rocks and graves, and shut out the sun at noonday. That power which raised Jesus was mighty and majestic and accompanied by many spectacular miracles (Matthew 27:51-53).

The Spirit's power which works in us is quiet and often goes unnoticed. We do not notice Him at work until we see change. It is like the pearl that grows in an oyster shell. It lies hidden in the ocean bottom until it is brought to light (Matt 13:46).

A WIDOW WOMAN

One day Elisha went to visit "a company of the prophets." A widow met him. She cried out, "My husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord; and the creditor has come to take my two children (sons) to be his slaves" (4:1 NASB). Her husband had died in poverty and in debt.

In those days a whole family could be taken as slaves to pay a debt that was owed to a creditor (Exodus 21:2). This widow of one of the prophets had two strong sons and the creditor would take her and them as his slaves.

Elisha knew the woman needed her sons to help her and he wanted to help her. God had told His people to care for orphans and widows (Deut 26:12; James 1:27). But Elisha was a prophet. He owned no money or property.

He had nothing to share with this widow,

Elisha asked her, "Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil." Then he said to her, "Ask your neighbours for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side" (2 Kings 4:3-4).

THE WOMAN HURRIED HOME

The woman hurried home. And she sent her sons to the neighbours to borrow jars. They brought as many as they could borrow and, for a long time, the widow poured oil into the jars. As each jar filled, she set it aside as Elisha had told her. "When all the jars were full, she said to her son, 'Bring me another one.' But he replied, 'There is not a jar left,' Then the oil stopped flowing."

When Elisha heard her story, he told her, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left" (2 Kings 4:7).

God is pleased to use what we have, if we put it into His hands. It might be only a "cup of cold water" given in His name (Matthew 10:42).

TALK ABOUT

1. What would the creditor do with the widow's sons?
2. Why did Elisha tell the woman to go inside and shut the door?
3. Do you feel you have nothing to share with orphans and widows?
4. Does God expect us to help the poor?
5. The way to fruitful service is to 'pour out' what God has put into our hands. What has God put into your hands?

Read: 2 Kings 4:38-44

DEATH IN THE POT

Elisha was visiting the prophets at Gilgal. This town may have been different to the Gilgal where the people of Israel camped the first night after crossing the Jordan River (Joshua 4:19-20). This town may have been close to Bethel. The name means 'a circle of stones.' There was a school of prophets at Gilgal like the schools of prophets at Jericho and Bethel.

No rain had fallen for a long time and there was a famine in that part of the country. The prophets may have run short of food, so Elisha said to his servant, "Put on the large pot and cook some stew for these men" (2 Kings 4:38).

Elisha's servant hurried to find a few vegetables to put into the stew. There was little enough in the house, so one of the men went out into the field to gather some herbs.

Out in the field the man saw a wild vine with fruit growing on it. He hurried and "filled the fold of his cloak" with the fruit.

He took them to the kitchen to prepare them. In the kitchen, he cut the fruit and put them into the pot of stew. Elisha's servant may have wondered what they were, but he did not stop the young prophet.

Later, Elisha sat down to eat with the company of prophets. Suddenly one of the men jumped to his feet. He was holding his stomach. "O man of God," he shouted, "there is death in the pot!" (2 Kings 4:40). They were all hungry, but no one dared to eat the stew.

Elisha said to his servant, "Get some flour," Elisha added the flour to the pot while the servant stirred the stew. "Serve it to the people to eat," Elisha told him. So the servant served the stew to the men. They all ate the stew and no harm came to them,

Jesus' disciples came back from preaching and said: "Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name" (Luke 10:17).

Jesus told them, "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in Heaven" (Luke 10:19-20).

All power in Heaven and earth belongs to Jesus Christ and He gives His authority to those who believe in Him and do His will.

Snakes and scorpions are picture words. They represent all kinds of evil. Satan may kill the body, but Jesus promised His followers power to overcome all evil (Matt 10:28). The disciples were not to rejoice in God's power, but to use it to bless others and extend His Kingdom in the world.

Jesus told the disciples that the greatest blessing was that their names were written in Heaven (Rev 20:12).

All day, a large crowd had listened to Jesus (Mark 8:1-8). So He said to His disciples, "I have compassion on these people. They have already been with Me three days and (they) have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." The disciples did not know what to say. It was a remote place - no shops, no food. They felt foolish. Was Jesus asking them to give up their own food? "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. They had seven loaves in their food baskets. Jesus told the crowd to sit down. "When He had given thanks, He broke them (the loaves) and gave them to the disciples, to set before the people, and they did so," We take what He gives, we give out what He has blessed. The people ate and were filled - about 4,000 men as well as women and children - and the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of pieces (Mark 8:8). If you have a talent or skill, use it for the Lord. Ask Him how He wants you to use your talent. Ask Him for new gifts to use for Him.

TALK ABOUT

1. What made the stew bad?
2. Who 'healed' the pot of stew?
3. What authority did Jesus give His disciples?
4. Do Christians have this authority today (Matt 28:18)?
5. How should we use the authority Jesus has given to us?
6. Can we do foolish things and ask God's angels to protect us?
7. Is it better to know you are a son of God or to claim to work wonders?

Read: 2 Kings 5:1-27

NAAMAN THE LEPER

Naaman was a general in the Army of Syria, but he was a leper. A slave girl from Israel served in Naaman's house. She told her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria. He would cure him of his leprosy" (2 Kings 5:3). The girl spoke of the prophet Elisha.

Naaman reported her words to the king of Syria. The king said to his general, "Go. I will send a letter to the king of Israel."

When the letter came to the king of Israel, he was very upset. He tore his robe and asked, "Am I God? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

Someone in the king's court reported the king's words to Elisha. The prophet sent this message back to the king of Israel: "Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel" (2 Kings 5:8).

So Naaman rode out in his chariot to find Elisha's house. Elisha's servant Gehazi heard the horses and the wheels of a chariot outside the house. He opened the door and looked out. A very important army officer got down from the chariot and came to Elisha's door. It was Naaman, commander-in-chief of the Syrian army.

Naaman was coming to ask Elisha, the man of God, to heal him of his leprosy. He held in his hand the letter from the king of Syria.

Gehazi received the letter and took it to Elisha. But Elisha did not get up and go to the door. Instead, Elisha said to Gehazi, "Tell him, 'Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan . . . and you will be cleansed'" (2 Kings 5:10).

When Naaman saw that the prophet did not come to the door, but sent his servant with this message, he turned away in anger.

"I thought he would surely come out to me," he said to his servants, "and call on the name of the Lord his God . . . and cure me of my leprosy.

"Are not the . . . rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he ordered his driver to leave Elisha's place and return home.

When Naaman's servants saw their master leave without Elisha's blessing, and without him being healed of his leprosy, they were sad.

They spoke quietly: "Master, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?"

Naaman thought about their words, then he ordered the chariot driver to turn back toward the Jordan River.

When they reached the Jordan, Naaman went down into the water and dipped himself seven times as the man of God had said.

When he came up out of the water the seventh time, his skin was clean, like a young boy's (2 Kings 5:14). His servants saw it and were amazed.

When Naaman saw that he was healed, he hurried back to the prophet's house. Naaman said to Elisha, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant" (2 Kings 5:15).

Elisha answered, "As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing." When Elisha would not accept his gifts he said, "please let me have as much earth as two mules can carry . . ."

At that time men thought they could only worship a nation's god on the soil of that nation, so Naaman took some of Israel's earth to Aram. He admired the power of Elisha's God. But he had to be loyal to the King, so he thought he would worship Baal and Israel's God as well (2 Kings 5:18).

Naaman prayed that God would forgive him when he went into the temple of Rimmon, the name they used for Baal.

TALK ABOUT

1. Has God ever told you to do something one way and you thought you knew a better way?
2. In the Bible, the sickness of leprosy is a picture of sin. To be healed Naaman had to have faith and obey. What did he have to have faith in?
3. Would it be easier to be saved if God asked us to do "some great thing"?
4. What did Jesus teach us when He washed the disciples' feet (John 13:5-17)?
5. How do Jesus' followers wash the feet of others today?
6. Naaman thought he could worship Elisha's God as well as Aram's idol-god, Rimmon. Could he worship both? Why not?

Read: 2 Kings 5:15-27

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, GEHAZI?

Gehazi heard his master refuse Naaman's gifts. He could not believe what he was hearing! His master, a poor prophet, refused the gifts of silver and gold, and the beautiful garments that Naaman offered to give him.

He said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman by not taking his gifts. I will run after him and get something from him" (2 Kings 5:20).

When Elisha was not looking, Gehazi ran after Naaman's chariot.

Naaman saw Gehazi running to catch up, so he stopped his chariot and got down,

"Is everything all right?" he asked.

"Yes. Yes," Gehazi answered. "My master sent me to say, 'two young men . . . prophets, have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing,'"

Naaman answered, "By all means, take two talents . . ." He tied up two talents or bars of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing (2 Kings 5:23). Because they were heavy, Naaman gave them to two of his servants to carry.

GEHAZI CREPT INTO THE HOUSE

Gehazi let the men carry the bags until they got to the last hill. Elisha's house was at the top of the hill. Gehazi did not want his master to see the two strangers carrying bags to the house, so he took the bags himself.

He told the men, "Put those clothes over my shoulder." Then he said good-bye to them and climbed up the hill to the house. That last hill to the prophet's house was a long, hard climb. The two bags seemed to get heavier with every step Gehazi took. And the garments hanging around his neck made his shoulders ache.

Gehazi crept into the house through the back door. He hoped his master would not hear him or come out and see the things he was carrying.

He quickly hid the bags and threw the garments on top of them. Then he went in to greet his master.

Elisha heard Gehazi come into the house. His servant had been gone for hours!

"Where have you been, Gehazi?" Elisha asked.

Gehazi answered, "Your servant didn't go anywhere." But Elisha knew what he had done "Did not my spirit go with you? . . ." Elisha asked Gehazi. "Is this the time to take money, or accept clothes . . .?"

All the time Gehazi had worked for Elisha, he had been well cared for. He always had a bed and enough food to eat. He did not want for any good thing. His master was always kind to him. Not that they had much money or many things, but they had the peace of God and His blessing. God always provided what they needed.

God's word says, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). And Elisha was God's eyes and ears in Israel.

Foolish Gehazi! He could not enjoy the 'gifts' he had taken from Naaman. He had to hide them! Gehazi lived to be sorry for what he had done. We all suffer for our sins. The Bible says, "God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows . . ." (Galatians 6:7).

At once, the leprosy that was on Naaman came onto Gehazi and he went out from his master a leper. From that day on for the rest of his life, Gehazi had to cry out, "Unclean, unclean," so no one would come near him.

Men and women give up everything to chase idols of money and fame! They sell their souls to the gods of sex and power. But Paul wrote, "Godliness with contentment is great gain . . . if we have food and raiment we will be content . . ." (1 Timothy 6:8). People who long to be rich soon begin to do all kinds of wrong things to get money, things that hurt them and make them evil-minded and finally send them to Hell . . . "For the love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin" (1 Timothy 6:6-10, The Living Bible).

TALK ABOUT

1. What did Gehazi think when he heard his master refuse Naaman's gifts?
2. How did Gehazi think to benefit himself?
3. Can we hide what we do from God? Why not (Hebrews 4:13)?

Read: 2 Kings 6:8-33

ELISHA'S PRAYER

The king of Israel and the king of Aram were at war. Aram was to the north-east of Israel, with Damascus as its capital. Syria now covers most of that part of the Middle East. Samaria was the capital of Israel,

The fighting between Israel and Aram went on for a long time. Again and again, Elisha warned Israel's king about the Arameans. "Don't go there," Elisha would tell the king, "the enemy is setting up camp in that place" (2 Kings 6:8-10).

After this happened several times, the king of Aram got very angry. He called his officers. "Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?" he demanded. One of his officers knew what was happening. He told the angry king, "Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom" (2 Kings 6:12).

The King told the officer, "Go, find out where he is, so I can . . . capture him." The King sent men to get Elisha. "He is in Dothan" they reported. So the King sent chariots and soldiers to seize the city and take Elisha.

Next morning, Elisha's servant went out of the house and saw the chariots and soldiers coming into the town. He returned to Elisha and reported what he had seen.

"Don't be afraid," Elisha answered "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (2 Kings 6:16).

GOD'S CHARIOTS OF FIRE

Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes . . ." Then the Lord (Jehovah) opened the servant's eyes . . . and he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire around Elisha. (God's angels are called "Seraphim" and in Hebrew that means "fiery," Ps 104:4).

The enemy kept coming, so Elisha prayed again, "Lord, strike these people with blindness." The Lord answered Elisha's prayer. The soldiers halted and could not go on.

Then Elisha told them, "This is not the city. Follow me and I will lead you to the man you are looking for." Elisha led the blind men out of the city gates and down the road to Samaria. When they reached Samaria, Elisha prayed again, "Lord, open the eyes of these men . . ." And the Lord answered.

"Shall I kill them?" the king of Israel asked Elisha when he saw the Aramean soldiers. "Don't kill them," Elisha answered. "Set food and water before them . . . that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master."

When the king of Aram heard this, he knew the God of Israel had protected His prophet. He did not go after Elisha again. Instead he went home to Damascus and left Israel in peace (2 Kings 6:23).

BEN-HADAD OF SYRIA ATTACKED ISRAEL

Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, attacked Israel again in Joram's reign and laid siege to Samaria. This was a long siege and there was no food left in the city. Even an unclean donkey's head was sold for food.

The king saw and heard of these horrors of famine. One day, as he walked on the wall, a woman called to him. When he heard the woman's story, Joram was angry at Elisha and angry at Elisha's God.

The king "tore his robes." He felt so helpless. He could not help the woman or the citizens of the city, so King Joram swore he would have the prophet's head . . . "today" (2 Kings 6:31).

Elisha was sitting in his house when he got this news. He knew a soldier would come, and that the king would be close behind him.

"Shut the door and hold it shut against him," Elisha ordered. And they did. The king was furious. "This disaster is from the Lord," he shouted at Elisha . . ." Elisha answered, "Hear the word of the Lord . . ." The siege was not Elisha's doing, it was God's judgment coming on Israel because of their sins.

When Israel needed God's help most, they went their own way and worshipped idols (1 Samuel 12:8-11). This was why God let their enemies have victory over them.

Men of faith have God's help. Those who stand on God's promises have victory (1 Corinthians 15:57). Those who reject Him have no victory in their lives.

TALK ABOUT

1. Who knew everything that happened in the Aramean camp (2 Kings 6:8-10)?
2. Who did the King of Aram blame?
3. How did God protect Elisha and his servant (2 Kings 6:17)?
4. When soldiers came to catch Elisha, what happened (2 Kings 6:18)?
5. Why were the people of Samaria hungry?
6. What vow did King Joram make (2 Kings 6:31)?

Read: 2 Kings 7:1-20

GOD'S MESSAGE TO KING JORAM

Elisha spoke God's word to King Joram. He told the King, "About this time tomorrow . . . flour and barley will sell at the gate of Samaria."

The King did not believe Elisha. And the officer, who had come to take off Elisha's head, scorned Elisha's words. He replied, "Even if the Lord opened the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?"

Elisha told the officer, "You will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat any of it." God's word would come to pass!

FOUR LEPERS SAT OUTSIDE THE CITY GATE

Four lepers sat outside the gates of the city. They were unclean because of their disease. They had few choices in life and they talked about their choices. "If we go into the city," they said to each other, "there is famine. If we stay here we will die. So let's go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender . . ." (2 Kings 7:3-4).

When they reached the enemy camp, it was empty. Not a man moved there, and the horses and donkeys stood without any hand holding them. Clothes and weapons lay on the ground. The lepers went into one of the tents. They saw food and ate it, they drank from the flasks . . . it was too good to be true. As they stuffed bread into their mouths, one of them said, "We are not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves" (2 Kings 7:9).

God had sent a great noise. To the Arameans it sounded like chariots and horses. They believed the king of Israel had hired the Egyptians and what they heard was the Egyptian army coming against them. In their fright, they ran toward the Jordan river. Their camp lay just as they had left it.

"Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace," the lepers said to each other.

Even the King got out of bed to hear their story.

"It's a trick," he said. "The Arameans know we are starving. They are hiding. When we come out of the city, they will rush in upon us."

One of the king's officers had an idea. "Have some men take five of the horses that are left in the city . . . and their chariots . . . and send them to find out what happened" (2 Kings 7:13).

So the king sent two chariots out to the enemy camp. They soon came back to report the good news. Not an enemy soldier in sight . . . and all the way to the Jordan River "the road was strewn with clothing and equipment . . ." The Arameans had thrown away their clothes and weapons as they ran.

That day, the word of the Lord, spoken by Elisha, came true. Food was sold in the city gate. The people were frantic to get to the barley and flour. Hundreds rushed to the city gate and the army officer who scoffed at Elisha's word was trampled to death in the crush of people.

God said, "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you" (Habakkuk 1:5; Acts 13:31).

TALK ABOUT

1. What did Elisha tell the king of Israel to do with the Aramean prisoners of war?
2. What did the woman tell the king of Samaria?
3. What was the king wearing under his robes? Why (2 Kings 6:30)?
4. What was the word of the Lord spoken to the officer (2 Kings 7:3)?
5. How can a Christian have peace, even in the midst of war?
6. Can we have peace in our hearts without first making our peace with God?
7. What happens to scoffers?

Copyright © 2010 by Fred Morris, Manna Publications (USA)

All rights reserved

www.mannapublications.org

Copyright © 2023 edited by Manna Publications (UK)

www.manna-publications.org.uk