

Elisha a Model Leader

There is a striking difference between Elijah and Elisha, both from the Northern Kingdom, Israel. Elijah's name means, *Jehovah my God* and suggests God's sovereignty; Elisha's name means *Jehovah my Saviour* and suggests grace. Elisha presents to us as a model leader within the Church of God

Elijah & Elisha

Elisha had double the power of Elijah (2 Kings 2:8, 9, 15), and consequently performed twice as many miracles. Elijah was the prophet of fire. Elisha's was merciful and helpful. Note these general contrasting characteristics:

Elijah	Elisha
Of the wilderness	A prince of the court
Solitary	Sociable
Itinerant	A settled home
Rough appearance	Bald headed
Prophetic	Miracles
Denunciation	Teaching and winning
Rebuked kings	Companion of leaders
Vengeance	Mercy
Aloofness	Understanding
Fiery, energetic	Gentle, sympathetic
Translated to Heaven	Normal death

Which is the correct profile to follow in our ministry to others? God uses people of all temperaments to perform tasks suited to them. Which achieved more for God? Each did things the other could not do. No servant of the Lord has the right to be jealous of the ministry of another. Each must give an account of his own stewardship. One will be more effective than another in ministry that suits his temperament and gifts.

An Introduction

The Life and Times of Elisha

ELISHA—GOD IS SAVIOUR. *The son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah, of the tribe of Issachar, the companion and successor of Elijah (1 Kings 19:15-19; 2 Kings 2-13).*



Elijah and the Shunemite Woman by Jacob Symonsz 1620

Elisha's Times and Situation

Elisha was a prophet to the northern Kingdom. After Solomon, the nation Israel divided into two kingdoms, Judah in the south with Jerusalem as its capital and Rehoboam as king and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin as its people; and Israel in the north with Samaria as its capital and Jeroboam as its king and the other ten tribes as its people (First Kings 12.)

Judah was often a sinful and wicked nation; but there were periods when revival swept the Land and the people's hearts turned to the Lord. These coincided with the appearance of dynamic and godly prophets who stood behind her kings to strengthen their faith and resolve; prophets such as Isaiah, Zechariah and Micah and her kings such as Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah; 5 good, 3 unstable and 12 bad. In time, because of their rejection of God, He caused the dynasty to end and the bulk of Judah's people were removed to Babylon for 70 years of captivity in BC597 after 500 years or more existence. A remnant only returned to Israel.



Israel suffered sorely under her usurper kings, nine feuding dynasties in all. All the kings like Ahab and his infamous queen Jezebel, and consequently the people, rejected the Lord as God and turned to serving false and foreign Gods. God sent His prophets to Israel, just as He did to Judah, godly men like Ahijah, Elijah and Elisha; but to no avail. Because of their stubborn rejection of their God, despite His entreaties and severe discipline, God eventually allowed the nation to be taken in

captivity to Assyria in BC722 after 253 years of existence. There is no record that any ever returned.

Here is an object lesson for Australia. It is a fearful thing for a nation to know God and then reject Him. He did not spare them. He will not spare us, except we repent as a people and keep short accounts with God.

Elisha's Diplomatic and Foreign Affairs.

Elisha was a prophet to the king and nation of Jewish Israel in the north, with companion Jewish nation Judah in the south. The Philistines still occupied what is today the Gaza strip, but were a minor player. There were three major powers:

Syria to the immediate north with Benhadad II, then Hazael, and next Benhadad III as kings.

Assyria further north and to the west of Syria with Shalmaneser II or III as king.

Egypt to the south which during this period was concerned with its own problems, and did not interfere with other nations.

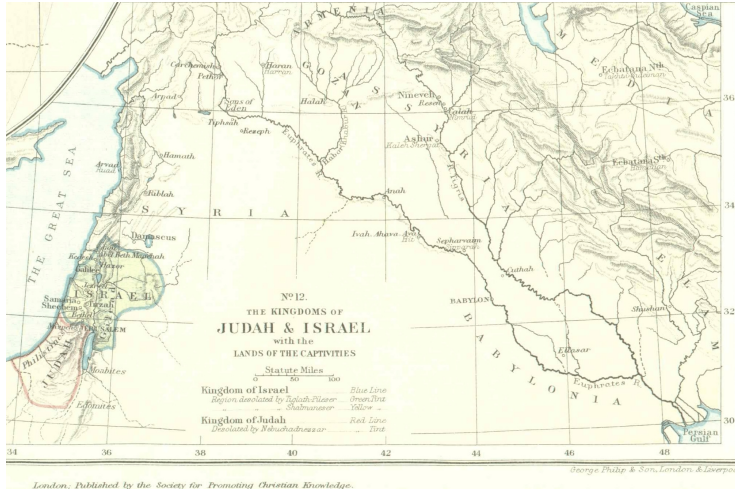
Hittite nation located in southern Syria near the source of the Jordan River. A minor player at this time.

In Judah, Jehoshaphat had handed over power to his son Jehoram, and then he to Ahaziah, Athaliah, Jehoash and then at the close of Elisha's life to Amaziah. Prophets to these kings and the people of Judah were Jehu, Eliszer and Joel who wrote the Bible book.

In Israel, Elisha was the leader of the prophets. There was a school or band of prophets also called the sons of the prophets, and amongst them was Jonah also of the Bible book. The word of the God of Israel was not wanting at this time. There were four kings who 'served' during Elisha's ministry Ahaziah who handed over to Jehu a blood thirsty dictator, then Jehoahaz and last Joash.

Elisha's Profile:

A man of indomitable faith (1 Kings 19:20&21); swift action (2 Kings 2:12-18); spiritual power (2 Kings 2:19-22); dauntless courage (2 Kings 3); deep sympathy (2 Kings 4:1-7); God (2 Kings 4:8-37); willing to help (2 Kings 4:38-41); remarkable foresight (2 Kings 6:24-33; 7); unerring counsel (2 Kings 8:1-6); tears and sorrow (2 Kings 8:7-15); clear understanding (2



Kings 5:1-19); force and might (2 Kings 6:1-7); A man who knew secrets (2 Kings 6:8-23). He was a man who merited blessing (2 Kings 4:42-44).

The Miracles of Elijah and Elisha.

Consider this list of miracles: (Not in chronological order)

Elijah

Calling a drought
Ravens supply food
Meal & oil multiplied
Raising a Zidonite's son
Fire from heaven at Carmel
Breaking a drought
Fed by an angel
Fire from heaven. 50 men
Fire from heaven. 50 more men
Dividing Jordan's waters
Translation to heaven

Elisha

Floating Axehead
Feeding 100 men
Widow's supply of oil
Raising Shumanite's son
Blinding the Syrians
Healing Jericho's waters
Poisoned pot restored
Cure for Naaman's leprosy
Vesting Gehazi with leprosy
Dividing Jordan's waters
Posthumously, dead raised

There is similarity and there is difference in emphasis.

Miracles are recorded during three periods in Bible history: 1. During and following the days of Moses. 2. During and following the times of the Divided Kingdom, which includes, Elijah and Elisha Hezekiah and others. 3. During and following the time of Jesus. There will also be miracles in the days of told in Revelation. The miracles at this time of declension in the life of the former Hebrew nations attested God's power to deliver and save. Despite this the Hebrew people largely rejected their God and His love, and consequently were removed from their pace of blessing, but not from the eternal purposes of God. There is a lesson here for us.

There is a similarity in the characteristics of the miracles in these periods, which suggest that the earth is under stress from other heavenly bodies. This does not negate the miraculous. God does what he wants, when, where and how He wants. His timing is split second. He foretells His actions, and then controls them. There are also other miracles that do not fit this profile, and God is sovereign in all these things.

You will find:

Fire falling from heaven
Earthquake and noises associate with tectonic plate motion
Tsunami like behaviour of seas
Waters turning red like blood
Rivers flowing backwards
Abnormal animal, bird and insect behaviour
Massive hail, thunderstorms, fireballs from the sky
Iron floating on water - disturbed magnet equilibrium
Cloud, sun & moon obscured for hours or days
Long days, shadows moving backwards
Scorching heat, men and plants affected



Elisha's Spring, by which Jericho was once supplied with water, still exists and wells forth copiously from the earth. It flows into a pond or reservoir. The temperature is eighty degrees Fahrenheit. Near it stand two mills in a state of dilapidation. The fountain is shaded by a large fig tree. Enough water flows from this spring to irrigate the whole plain of Judea. This is supposed to be Elisha's Spring, referred to in II Kings, chapter ii,

19-22--the waters which Elisha healed. The land around the spring now belongs to the Sultan of Turkey. His agents had the land sown in wheat in this neighbourhood, which was ripe when we passed through it in April. (Source: Earthly Footsteps of the Man of Galilee, p. 152. Circa 1890.)

Bible Narratives and Study Methods, or, How to Get the Most Out of Your Study.

There are two ways to present the study of narratives such as these. One is to 'spiritualise' them, that is, to see them as speaking of the relationship between Christ and the believer in the Christian life. The can be real blessing in this kind of study, especially in those narratives that lend themselves to it, such as the multiplying of the meal and oil. However it is all application and often depends on the skill of the leader, rather than true exegetical principles.

The other method is to put the narrative into its historical setting and seek to discover why God moved in this way. What lessons we can learn about the nature and purposes of God in the event. We then apply these lessons to our life. Remember that we stand on this side of the Cross. Our viewpoint is the age of grace, not law; but forgiveness, cleansing, justification and sanctification on an international personal basis rather than Israel's national election and purpose.

We will place our main emphasis on this second method.

There are some elements in these narratives that modern readers may find hard to understand. This is mainly due to our being subconsciously imbued with the concepts of atheistic humanism so rife in today's world, rather than being solidly schooled in God's word. People who love God and believe and trust His word will quickly identify these trends, but it is important to understand just who God is and why He does what He does, and how this understanding can enrich your Christian life and your place in His mission in this day of grace.

If you find something that is hard to accept, that is OK. Simply put it aside for now. Commit the matter to the Lord. Go on in the series and enjoy everything that blesses your heart. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you into a personal understanding of His ways and His word. That in part, is why the Holy Spirit was sent. And, He is good at it. He will in time show you from His word all that which will allow things fall into place. When the Holy Spirit does that, He ministers to you personally, and there is no stress.

We must keep in mind that God is absolutely holy. He is faithful and true. He will do nothing that is unjust. He is the creator and originator of all and knows the end from the beginning. We live our few days in our bit of time and can see as far as our horizon. He inhabits eternity and His knowledge is unlimited. These things being so, we might well expect that there are some things which will make us stop and think, and then think again.

List of Main Characters. Who's Who in Elisha's World

Not all the characters we meet are identified. God has many, many anonymous servants

Ahab	King of Israel, ungodly, self serving, weak, husband to Jezebel. BC918-897
Ahaziah	(Jehovah is keeper/helper) a very evil King of Israel 2 years, son of Ahab, who perpetuated the evil of Jezebel. More to do with Elijah. BC897-896.
Aram	Land of the Aramean, north-east of Israel, part of and also known as Syria.
Asa	BC955-914. One of Judah's best kings. Encouraged by the prophets Oded and Azariah, he cleansed the idolatry and his father and grandfather from Judah and God prospered him wonderfully. In later years the prophet Hanani condemned an alliance he made with Basha King of Israel against Syria and he refused to listen, jailing Hanani. At the end of his life he was diseased in his feet and sought not the Lord, but magicians. A sad end to a good king.
Athaliah	(Also the name of two Bible men) Daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, she married Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat and brought the evils of her parents and undid the godly work of Jehoshaphat. She caused Judah to follow Baal Worship. With the death of her husband and son, she through murder and deceit sought to eliminate David's royal line, seized the throne, ruled for six years and met a tragic death as the rightful heir Joash, was restored to the throne. 2 Kings 8.26; 11; 2 Chronicles 22; 23.13-21;4.7.
Baal-zebub	A god of Philistines in Ekron, costal city, west of Jerusalem. The name means 'God of the flies', significance 'fly catcher or hatcher'.
Baker	From Baal-Shalisha(h), an uncertain location.

Begging lepers	Four, brought news of deliverance to the nation under siege 2 Kings 7.
Benhadad I	King of Syria BC 950-920
Benhadad II	King of Syria BC 920-880
Benhadad III	King of Syria BC 850-840
Chenaaniah	Father of deceived prophet Zedekiah.
Elijah	Prophet of God to Israel. His name means 'The Lord is my God', rugged, stern, implacable, aloof, but also a man of blue moods. He was a prophet to Israel in the days of Ahab and Jezebel
Gehazi	Personal servant to Elisha. He was avaricious, untruthful and unfaithful, and Elisha made him become a leper.
Hazael	An official under Benhadad of Syria and who murdered him becoming the new King of Syria BC 880-850. Known for cruelty.
Jehoahaz	BC856-839 was a sinful man. Syria's King Hazael and then king Benhadad III reduced his military capacity to almost nil. He sought the Lord about this and was helped, but continued in the sinful ways of his ancestors.
Jehoram	See Joram.
Jehoshaphat	King of Judah, godly son of Asa BC914-889, contemporary to Ahab of Israel. Jehoshaphat was one of Judah's good and most Godly kings. He instituted godly reform and God blessed him to the point that surrounding nations feared and appeased him. He married his son to Ahab's daughter and the alliance was poison 2 Chron.18.1. After three condemned joint projects with Israel, he finally trusted God and won a campaign by singing, not fighting 2 Chron. 20. However he failed to remove the sites of Baal worship from the land 2 Chron. 20.33.

Jehu (King) Captain of the Army, Ahab's hit man. BC884-856 God told Elijah to anoint him king, Elijah avoided it, and then Elisha 2k 9.1-13, who sent a disciple to do what he was loath to do. He murdered Jeroboam, Ahaziah, Forty two of Ahaziah's people, Jezebel, Seventy sons of Ahab, Ahab's followers in Jezreel and in Samaria, and various prophets, servants and priests of Baal. He claimed Divine sanction for these murders. While he was King Elisha is missing !!! Condemned Amos 1.11; 2.1 and Hosea 1.4 he is shown as humiliated by Assyrian king Shalmaneser II on an obelisk, now in the British museum. He rooted Baal worship out of Israel, but left the golden calf idols.

Jehu (Prophet) Son of a prophet Hanani, He delivered God's message to Basha, king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. He wrote a book. Name means 'Jehovah is He'.

Joash (Joash=Jehovah, quick to help) Son of Ahab. BC839-825. A mix. Although also sinful like Jehoahaz, he visited Elisha on his deathbed and God gave him a limited victory over his enemies the Syrians and he regained territories formerly lost to this enemy. He rebuilt the fortunes of Judah.

Joram Jehoram Another son of Ahab, brother of Ahaziah. He followed Baal, but not of the Philistine variety. Defeated Benhadad II of Syria. Killed by Jehu who took his throne. BC896-884.

Micaiah (Who is like Jehovah) True prophet to Israel at the time of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, son of Imlah. Like Elijah he was willing to stand alone and was competent in dealing as a prophet with kings, and teasing them with irony. He stood alone against 400 prophets of Baal.

Naaman Trusted captain of the Syrian army, a leper healed by Elisha through washing in the Jordan.

Shalmaneser II King of Assyria BC911-876 (Or 860-825 by Assyrian dates.)

Shunemite woman Well off, able to give hospitality to Elisha, but childless. Shunem was a small town of Issachar in Israel, Elisha's home territory.

Slave girl personal assistant to Naaman's wife, a Hebrew who trusted God and witnesses this to her mistress, causing Naaman to seek healing.

Sons of the Prophets Students of a school run by prophets, medicine & religion is typical of the time.

Widow woman Widow of a prophet, in poor circumstance

Zedekiah Deceived prophet, son of Chenaanah.