



STORY

Elijah and Elisha - 2 Kings 2-4

TEACHER PRAYER

Lord Jesus, please be with me and bless me with the same spirit that You gave to Your servants Elijah and Elisha. Fill me with love and selfless devotion so that I might dedicate myself to you and to your service. Guide me now as I bring the truths of your Word to Your little lambs. Open their hearts to not only hear and learn, but to put into practice the truths they here come to know. I ask these things in the Name of my Savior Jesus. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Gilgal - A city located near the place where Israel first crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. Here the monument of 12 stones (taken from the middle of the Jordan) was erected (Joshua 4:20). The name means "rolling," perhaps a reference to the rolling green hills in which it is located.

Bethel - A city about 12 miles north of Jerusalem and west of Jericho. The name means "house of God," and was so named because it is located at or near where Jacob had his vision when fleeing Esau. Abraham stopped here when the city was known as Luz. Excavations show that the city was burned both in the 14th century BC (around the time of the conquest under Joshua), and the 13th century (the conquest by the house of Joseph in Judges 1:22). Though Bethel had been a city of the tribe of Benjamin, it later became part of the ten northern tribes of Israel.

Mantle - A cloak or outer covering. Elijah and Elisha used this garment cloak much like Moses used his staff.

Mount Carmel - Headlands averaging 1,500 feet in altitude where the Lord through Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal. Elisha also spent time in this area.

Baal - The chief male god of the Phoenicians, adopted by many tribes in Palestine. The Canaanites regarded Baal as the god of storms.

Moab - The country to the east of the Dead Sea founded by and named for Moab, the son of Lot's oldest daughter. The Moabites, along with the Edomites, refused to allow Israel to pass through on the way to the Promised Land. It was the Moabites who hired Balaam to curse Israel. The most famous Moabitess was Ruth.

Indignation - anger aroused by something unjust.

Shunem - A city three miles north of Jezreel and seven miles south and east of what later became Nazareth. The city of Nain (where Jesus raised the widow's son) was later built near the location of Shunem. The maiden Abishag, who cared for David in his old age, came from Shunem.

Baal Shalisha - A little known city of Ephraim slightly west of Gilgal and just south of Jericho.

OUTER AIM

Elijah is taken bodily into heaven and Elisha serves in his place.

INNER AIM

The same Lord who worked so powerfully through Elijah and Elisha has also promised to be with each one of us today.

BACKGROUND (*Rupprecht Volume 1, pages 361-366*)

Elijah's time of service comes to an end

Elijah has served his Lord long and well, and now his time of earthly service is over. By God's hand he had survived famine, the priests of Baal, the wrath of Ahab and Jezebel, foreign armies, and much more. This lesson begins as God prepares Elijah to be taken to heaven.

Chapter 2

Apparently God had last-minute business for Elijah to attend to in Bethel and Jericho before his time of service on earth was completed. We are not told what that service might have been, although in each place it seemed to involve "the sons of the prophets." These were apparently future prophets in training. It had apparently been revealed to all of them that Elijah was to be taken to heaven on that day.

Though Elijah used his cloak in much the same way Moses used his staff, neither item possessed power in itself. All power and ability rests with God alone.

When Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, he was not asking for a ministry twice as great as Elijah's. In keeping with Israel's inheritance laws he was asking for the rights of a firstborn son (Deuteronomy 21:17) - in effect asking to be named Elijah's successor. This request was God's, not Elijah's to give, so he left the answer to God himself.

It is a misconception that Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. The chariot served to separate Elisha from Elijah, who was then carried to heaven in a whirlwind.

When Elisha referred to Elijah as "the chariot of Israel and its horsemen" he was acknowledging the fact that God had worked through Elijah (not through the armies of Israel) to preserve the nation. The same would later be said about Elisha (2 Kings 13:14). As far as we know, only Enoch (see Genesis 5:22-24) and Elijah were taken bodily into heaven without first having to pass through death.

The signs that Elisha was able to perform after Elijah was taken gave evidence that he was the rightful successor to Elijah's ministry. The "youths" who mocked Elisha were not innocent children but disrespectful rogues. Their taunt to "Go up!" could have been a ridicule in reference to Elijah's assumption into heaven - thus a mocking of a sacred act of God.

Chapter 3

Though Jehoram, the new King of Israel, no longer tolerated the public worship of Baal, as had his father Ahab, he still tolerated the "sins of Jeroboam." To keep the nation of Israel divided from Judah, Jeroboam had built two golden calves and set them up as alternate gods for Israel to worship (in Bethel and Dan rather than in Jerusalem). He also ordained priests outside of the tribe of Levi and enacted his own religious festivals to rival those in Judah prescribed by God. (See 1 Kings 12:25-33)

The people of Moab paid tribute to Israel only as long as they feared Israel. They failed to acknowledge that Israel was God's chosen people.

The armies of Israel and Judah probably took the arid southern route into Moab (around the south end of the Dead Sea) more to avoid the fortified cities located in the north than in an attempt to surprise.

Edom at this time was a vassal state of Israel. The "King of Edom" mentioned here was appointed by the King of Judah. Edom did not have its own king until after its revolt against Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son. (See 2 Kings 8:16 and 20)

When Elisha told Jehoram, "Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother," he was referring to Ahab and Jezebel, and to the fact that they had accepted both the prophets of Baal and non-Levites as their own. (1 Kings 22:6ff.)

God provided water for the armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom; but note that obedience on their part was required if they were to benefit. The water probably came in the form of flash floods coming down from the mountains in Edom. This water would have simply seeped back down into the earth had not the ditches and trenches been dug by the combined armies.

When Mesha, the King of Moab, saw the destruction of his land, he tried to make a desperate effort to form an alliance with Edom. That effort failed. Mesha then offered his own son as a burnt offering to the idol Chemosh. The result was "great indignation against Israel." While the exact meaning of this phrase is not known, the result was that Moab was spared from complete destruction, and Moabite raiders continued to plague Israel and Judah in the years to come.

Chapter 4

As swift and sure as was Elisha's wrath against the rebellious and disrespectful youths, so he here demonstrated a love and compassion for those who suffered, especially for those who were among the faithful in Israel.

Elisha spent a good deal of time travelling from Judah, through Samaria, and into Galilee. Shunem lay in his path of travel where a hospitable family provided room and board for him. (See application below.)

As did Elijah before him, Elisha spent a good deal of his time and effort prophesying against (and ministering to) the apostate northern tribes of Israel. Note the many parallels between Elisha's ministry and the events of Jesus' day: the cursing of the rebellious youth - the cursing of the fig tree; the jars filled with oil - the changing of water to wine; the birth of a son in old age - the birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth and Zacharias; the raising of the woman's son - the raising of the Widow of Nain (Nain, ironically, was the city built on or near the ruins of the city of Shunem, where Elisha raised this child from the dead); and finally the feeding of the 100 - the feeding of the 5,000.

The mother of the dead child seemed to display a rare faith here, determining not to abandon hope and mourn for her son until she had spoken to Elisha. She seems to demonstrate a confidence in the God of Elisha.

Though Elisha acted only according to the command and by the power of the Lord, note the relative difficulty he had in raising this child compared to the simple words of the Lord Jesus.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, at times I can be frightened about the road that lies ahead. Help me to remember that You will be with me wherever I go, just as You were with Elijah, Elisha and the other prophets and apostles. I know that I will change throughout my life, but I am glad that You will remain the same. In Your name I pray. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The Bible account presented today is too long to read in class. It is also too complex to attempt to present all parts in a single Sunday School lesson, especially for the younger students. Assign the reading of this entire lesson to the students the week before it is presented, and then choose from among its many parts what you will emphasize in your presentation. In doing this, remember the Inner Aim..

APPLICATION

- . Emphasize to the children (in keeping with the inner aim) that the same Lord who worked so powerfully through Elijah and Elisha has also promised to be with each one of us today. He is just as powerful today as He was then, and cares just as much for each of His children today as He did then.
- . Bring the attention of the students to the dedication which Elijah and Elisha show for the work of the Lord. Such dedication is still required today. Encourage the boys to consider serving as pastors or teachers, and the girls to consider the teaching ministry, emphasizing that there is great honor and blessing in the public ministry. Elisha knew the hardships that Elijah had faced, yet he desired to continue in that work. We may not witness miracles today as seen in the days of Elijah and Elisha, but we might be privileged enough to play a part in calling a sinner from death to Life.
- . Though society today cares less and less, God does not look kindly upon any rebellion against any authority He has ordained. All are to show honor and respect to all those in authority over us. The incident with the bears and the insolent youths can be used to emphasize just how serious rebellion and lack of respect is in God's sight.
- . Jehoram followed in many of the evil ways of his father Ahab. Each generation must be taught to reexamine and relearn the truths of God's Word for themselves. Only then can we avoid perpetuating any sins into which our fathers might have fallen.
- . As God required the army of Israel to carry out a simple command in order for His blessing to be enjoyed, so He often today calls for obedience on our part so that we might enjoy the blessings He wants to give us. (Church attendance yields strengthening, prayer yields answers to prayer, a medical checkup yields an early diagnosis, honoring parents and superiors leads to a rich and peaceful life, etc.)
- . The King of Israel had turned away from the Lord to idols and yet he expected the Lord to answer him at his beck and call. We cannot cast the Lord away from our lives and expect Him to watch over us as His children.
- . The woman who cared for Elisha's needs was blessed in that service. The same promise holds true for laymen and laywomen today. (Matthew 10:41 NKJV) "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Malachi 3:6 - For I am the LORD: I do not change.

Matthew 28:20 - Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Hebrews 13:8 - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Middle

Matthew 18:20 - For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

Romans 8:31 - What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Upper

Joshua 1:9 - Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

Lamentations 3:22-23 - Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

Revelation 1:8 - "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

HYMN CHOICES

O God of Jacob, by Whose Hand - TLH #434

Abide with Me! Fast Falls the Eventide - TLH #552:1-4

We Praise Thee, O God, Our Redeemer, Creator - TLH #568