

let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.”

ELISHA

The Great Things That

of the Old Testament. A study of his ministry will build up our faith (Romans 10:17) and help us all to see that God can use us to do great things.

I. The Significance of a Life (I Kings 19:13-18)

One of the great prophets and miracle-workers of the Bible was Elisha. His ministry after the translation of his master Elijah covered over fifty years, and was marked by mighty evidences of the power of faith in God. Let us let our faith grow as we study what Elisha did.

Lesson #1:
Prepared to Be a Prophet

Scripture:
I Kings 19:13-21;
II Kings 2:1-15

Key Verse:
II Kings 2:9
“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee,

Hath Done

At a time of deep depression in the life of the great prophet Elijah, God re-commissioned him to new tasks in service to Him. Often, when we feel like “resigning,” we should really “re-sign” instead! It was a “*still small voice*” that came to the prophet (I Kings 19:12) and said, “*What doest thou here, Elijah?*” (v. 13). Elijah replied with words that implied that life (actually God) had not treated him very fairly. He was a long way away from the place he was supposed to be because he just couldn’t take it any longer! It was hard to stand alone for God (v. 14), and God wasn’t rewarding his faithfulness anyway. He might as well quit, and run away! God’s reply to Elijah is amazing. Basically, He ignores the prophet’s complaints and gives him several commands:

“Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.”
(I Kings 19:15-16)

Elisha, the son of Shaphat, was to be made the next great prophet to Israel, in Elijah’s “room” (place). Elijah had about 10 more years in the ministry, and these years were not uneventful (Look over I Kings 21 and II Kings 1). However, the main importance of this time before he went to Heaven was Elijah’s preparing of Elisha for a life of ministry as a prophet.

Who was this Elisha? His name is similar to Elijah’s (whose name means “*Jehovah is God*”), but we don’t know what it means. He was from a town called Abelmelolah, which is located in the Jordan River valley. From I Kings 19:19-20 we get the idea that Elisha was the son of a wealthy farmer, and that his personality was much different from Elijah’s. However, the mighty power of God came to rest on Elisha, and he was used of God to perform many of the great miracles

Elijah felt that the battle was lost. Even after an amazing victory over Baalism (I Kings 18), the prophet thought evil had the upper hand (19:14). But God assured him that through his ministry, the Baalites would be punished (v. 17) and that many in Israel were secretly loyal to the Lord (v. 18). Notice carefully how God was going to “*slay*” the Baalites. Elijah was to anoint Hazael king of Damascus, Jehu king of Israel, and Elisha “*prophet in thy room*” (vs. 15-16). These three men were then to be responsible for the destruction of Baalism in Israel. That seems simple enough. But when you study the chapters of the Bible that follow, you discover that Elijah did *not* make Hazael or Jehu into kings. He appointed Elisha a prophet, but was not personally involved in the crowning of either king. II Kings 8 tells us that it was *Elisha* who told Hazael, “*Thou shalt be king over Syria*” (v. 13), and II Kings 9 says that *Elisha* sent a prophet-in-training to anoint Jehu king of Israel. Elisha, and not Elijah, had a role in making these men kings. This means that the Lord was telling Elijah in I Kings 19 to anoint Elisha so that through Elisha Elijah would be anointing Hazael and Jehu. Elisha’s life and ministry was to be an extension of Elijah’s ministry. Our lives are truly entwined together. God has called and gifted every Christian for a ministry (Romans 12:1-8), but this ministry will always be connected with the work of others in the past, present, and future! It is important for each of us to find and fulfill his ministry so that the direct plan of God can be fulfilled, and also that the work of others can be completed as intended by the Lord.

II. It Takes All Kinds (I Kings 19:19-21)

Look at the scene of Elijah’s call of Elisha to be the next primary prophet to Israel. He simply “*passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.*” Ever since the prophet Samuel’s mother began bringing him “*a little coat*” every year as he grew up at the Temple (I Samuel 2:18-19), the “*mantle*” (in Hebrew

the same as a coat) represented the prophet's calling. Elisha knew what the casting of the mantle upon him meant, and "*ran after Elijah,*" and asked permission to say good-bye to his parents before going off with the prophet. Elijah's response was, "*Go back again: for what have I done to thee?*" In other words, Elijah was saying that he was not forcing the young man to follow him and

Notes:

would not stop him from going home first. If kissing his father and mother farewell would dissuade him from the prophetic call, so be it. Such a reluctant follower would not be worthy to be a prophet (Luke 9:57-62). Elisha returned home, prepared a farewell feast, and then "*went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.*" Elijah and Elisha were almost opposites in their temperaments. Elijah was more of a "loner"; Elisha was more of a "people person." Elijah was somewhat rough and abrupt in his manner; Elisha was more smooth and tactful. Elijah stood against the elite; Elisha knew and befriended the upper class of his day, although he was not afraid to rebuke them. Elijah was a man of action (as we see in the way he called Elisha to follow him); Elisha seemed more thoughtful of others (as he demonstrated in his return home and the feast he prepared). It takes all kinds of people to get God's work done. The Lord doesn't want you to be like anyone else; He wants you to be *you*, serving and obeying Him, and filled with His Spirit.

**III. The Secret to Power
(II Kings 2:1-15)**

After about ten years of ministering to Elijah (helping him anyway he could), Elisha was about ready to replace him as the main prophet of Israel. A prophet was somebody who spoke for God. His message was not necessarily (or even usually) a foretelling of the future, as we often think of prophecy. It was a forth-telling of God's Word. God would soon take Elijah to Heaven, and Elisha would have to be prepared to take his place. Surely the experience of being with the great prophet on virtually a daily basis had taught him hundreds of lessons about being a man of God, but these lessons were not enough to prepare him to be a prophet. Elisha knew what more was needed.

- A. A trip to famous places (vs. 1-6).
Elijah was "*sent*" on a journey to four places famous in Israel's history: Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and the River Jordan. At two of these places there was a school for young prophets (called "*sons of the prophets*"): Bethel and Jericho. Elisha was with Elijah throughout this journey, and the trip was good for both of them. Sometimes it is good to visit sacred places, places where great spiritual events took place in the past: revivals, biblical events, missionary ventures, the establishing of great institutions. Trips to Israel, to sites important in American church history, or even to places where big events in one's own spiritual life took place can be very good for us if we will spend time in these places meditating upon what God did there. This trip was especially important to Elisha because it gave him the opportunity to demonstrate his determination to have the spiritual

power on his life that Elijah had. "*As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee,*" Elisha told his master again and again (vs. 2, 4, 6). When a servant of God learns of God's promises to empower His people to be witnesses for Him (Acts 1:8), he must be determined to claim these promises and have God's power in his own life. Spiritual power does not come cheaply. We must seek it diligently, and resolve to surrender our all in order to have it. Study carefully Luke 11:1-13. See that persistence ("*importunity*") is in a sense the secret to power from on high. Friend, we cannot do God's work without God's power. In order to win souls to Christ or to serve God in any way, a Christian must be filled with the Holy Spirit!

- B. A double portion (vs. 7-15).
The double portion was the share of the first-born son in his father's inheritance. When Elijah said, "*Ask what I shall do for thee,*" Elisha said, "*Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.*" He wanted the portion of his spiritual power that was due to his spiritual first-born. The sons of the prophets had learned from the great man, but Elisha had been his personal servant. Many servants of God learned to serve God by being servants to servants of God (Joshua, Paul, and Timothy, for examples). He wanted the favorite's portion. Was he asking for double the power that Elijah had? Perhaps so. Some have counted the recorded miracles of Elisha and found them to be twice as many as those recorded in Elijah's ministry. Probably Elisha had a much longer ministry than Elijah did. Anyway, Elisha boldly asked for power from God to be His prophet. Notice that this request was granted because of Elisha's persistence (vs. 10-11). "*If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee,*" promised Elijah. The idea was that Elisha persist to the end in sticking with Elijah, just as he had determined to do all the way through their recent journey. If Elisha left him before Elijah was "*taken,*" the power of God would not come upon him. Look at verse 11 very carefully. Elijah went up, not in a chariot, but in a whirlwind just as verse 1 said he would. The chariot came to part "*them both asunder.*" The only thing that got Elisha away from Elijah was a fiery chariot driven by angels! Elisha's persistence was rewarded, as you can see in verses 12 through 15. "*The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha,*" the young prophets said, and it was definitely so. Have you had an anointing from on high for your service to Christ? Begin seeking it now. Prepare to do God's work, through instruction by God's servant and empowerment by

God’s Spirit.