

THE LAST DAYS OF ELISHA THE PROPHET

TEXT: II KINGS 13:14-21

INTRODUCTION:

1. Elisha was the man called by God to succeed the prophet Elijah. The first time we hear of Elisha is in I Kings 19:16, where we see the LORD telling the prophet Elijah, "Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room (place)."
2. Then I Kings 19:19 says, "So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him."
3. And, to signify that there was no turning back, Elisha built a fire with the wood from his plough, and slew his oxen and made a feast (I Kings 19:20, 21).
4. By doing this, Elisha was proclaiming to all his friends and relatives that there was no turning back.
5. We often sing:

*I have decided to follow Jesus,
No turning back, no turning back.
The world behind me, the cross before me,
No turning back, no turning back.*

6. We often sing that song, but most people do not know the story behind it. The lyrics are based on the last words of a man in the Indian province of Assam, in northern India, who along with his family was saved in the middle of the 19th century through the efforts of a Welsh missionary.
7. Called to renounce his faith by the Hindu chief, the Indian Christian declared, "I have decided to follow Jesus." In response to threats to his family, he continued, "Though no one joins me, still I will follow."
8. His wife and two children were killed, and the man said, "The cross before me, the world behind me." These were his last words before he was executed. His courageous display of faith is reported to have led to the conversion of the Hindu chief and others in the village.
9. The Lord called Elisha, and there was no turning back. Our Lord said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).
10. Before he ascended up into heaven in a chariot of fire, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from

- thee." And Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" (II Kings 2:9).
11. We see in II Kings 2:13 that this request was granted -- Elisha "took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him."
 12. Second Kings 2:14 says, "And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah?"
 13. "The LORD God of Elijah" is here. "The LORD God of Elijah" is eternal, omnipresent, and unchanging.
 14. Malachi 3:6 says, "For I am the LORD, I change not."
 15. With God there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).
 16. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."
 17. Most of the miraculous events in the prophet Elisha's fascinating ministry are recorded in II Kings chapters 1-8. But this morning I want to focus on the last days of Elisha the prophet.

I. THE ANOINTING OF KING JEHU (9:1-13)

II. THE SICKNESS OF ELISHA THE PROPHET

III. THE LAST MIRACLE OF ELISHA THE PROPHET

I. THE ANOINTING OF KING JEHU (9:1-13)

1. Jehu was a soldier in King Ahab's army. During the reigns of King Ahaziah, and King Jehoram, Jehu had risen in importance, and during Jehoram's reign, Jehu became the captain of the host (cf. II Kings 9:5).
2. In II Kings 9:1, Elisha dispatched one of the sons of the prophets to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu.
3. We see in Elisha's action a good example of an older preacher endeavoring to promote the training of a younger assistant. Second Kings 9:4 emphasizes his youth -- "the young man, even the young man the prophet."
4. The apostle Paul told young Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (I Timothy 4:12).
5. Elisha sought to equip younger prophets for more important duties, knowing he eventually would finish his earthly ministry and go to heaven.
6. Elijah trained Elisha, and here we see Elisha training this unnamed prophet. This is a Biblical principle. The apostle Paul told Timothy,

- "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2).
7. This young prophet was not to tarry. He was to avoid all questions and any unnecessary conversation (9:1-3).
 8. The young prophet was to make it unmistakably clear that he was sent on this mission by God -- "Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel..." (9:3; cf. 9:6).
 9. The young prophet obeyed, and when he arrived at Ramoth-gilead, he went into Jehu's headquarters, took him "to an inner chamber (room)," and explained his mission (9:4, 5).
 10. In addition to anointing Jehu king of Israel, instructions were given for Jehu to exterminate the house of Ahab, and to remove all of the Baal-worship in Israel (9:6-10).
 11. Note that one of Jehu's companions referred to the young prophet as a "mad fellow" (9:11). Worldly people often consider Christians mad, but we must not let that discourage us.
 12. As a young soulwinner, D.L. Moody walked the streets of Chicago inviting children to Sunday School. He was called "Crazy Moody" by his unsaved neighbors.
 13. His friend R.A. Torrey said, "They used to call him in those early days 'Crazy Moody,' because day and night he was speaking to everybody he got a chance to speak to about being saved."
 14. So this young prophet delivered his message to Jehu (9:6-10).
 15. Merrill Unger said, "A rough instrument like Jehu was necessary for the bloody task assigned him, for Baalism was so unspeakably and viciously cruel that only a person of his relentless thoroughness could deal with it" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
 16. Jehu explained to his colleagues what had happened, and immediately ("they hastened" -- 9:13) they took off their outer garments and laid them on the floor as a carpet for their new king, signifying their loyal allegiance and support (9:11-13).
 17. After this happened, we hear nothing more about Elisha the prophet till we get to chapter 13, where we are told he was very sick (13:14).
 18. By this time, Joash had become the king of Israel (13:14).
 19. Jehu was a great soldier -- a man of action and ambition. He was bold, prudent, and calculating. But like all of the other kings of Israel, he was not a saved man.

20. "Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel...But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin" (II Kings 10:28, 31).
21. So Jehu died, and his son Jehoahaz reigned in his stead (10:35).
22. King Jehu reigned for 28 years.
23. His son King Jehoahaz reigned for 17 years.
24. And King Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, reigned for 16 years.
25. And it was during the reign of King Joash that Elisha got sick and died. By this time, Elisha was a very old man.

II. THE SICKNESS OF ELISHA THE PROPHET

1. Elisha was fallen sick, and King Joash went to visit him (II Kings 13:14). We often hear of preachers visiting dying kings, but it is very rare for a king to go and visit a dying preacher!
2. The king called Elisha "father," referring to his position as an old prophet.
3. Though the term is used in the Old Testament, we do not see it used in the New Testament in reference to preachers. New Testament preachers like Paul and Timothy and Titus are called "brothers."
4. King Joash's words are similar to those of Elisha himself when Elijah was taken up into heaven (cf. II Kings 2:12).
5. It is very significant that King Joash "came down unto him" (13:14). This indicates that the prophet Elisha was held in high esteem.
6. Today, most preachers trim their messages so as not to offend, but Bible preachers were bold. Consider John the Baptist. He rebuked Herod for committing adultery with his brother's wife. John said to Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matthew 14:4).
7. Nonetheless, Herod liked John the Baptist and enjoyed listening to him preach. Mark 6:20 says, "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."
8. Hugh Latimer was called to preach before King Henry VIII. He was tempted to trim his message but the Holy Spirit convinced him not to. So he preached boldly, and King Henry commended him for his sincerity and his boldness.
9. And it was the same with Elisha "the man of God" (13:19). When Jehoram was king of Israel, he entered into an alliance with Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, and with the king of Edom.

10. King Jehoshaphat was a believer, and so he asked King Jehoram, "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him?" (II Kings 3:11a).
11. And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, "Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah" (3:11b). (This statement signifies Elisha's role as Elijah's helper.)
12. But Elisha rebuked King Jehoram, and said to him, "What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother" (3:13; cf. 3:14, 15).
13. Elisha was stern, and he was bold and uncompromising. And yet, worldly, unsaved King Joash "wept over his face" (13:14), indicating that the prophet Elisha was held in high esteem by everyone in Israel.
14. King Joash's words at the sickbed of Elisha remind us again of the close friendship of Elijah and Elisha (13:14; cf. 2:12).
15. There are many similarities and some notable contrasts in the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Matthew Henry said, Elisha "was not sent for to heaven in a fiery chariot, as Elijah was, but went the common road out of the world, and was visited with the visitation of all men."
16. King Joash was a worldly, unsaved man but he still recognized that Elisha's death would be a great loss to the nation of Israel.
17. In many ways, the death of Elisha was the beginning of the end for Israel. Second Kings 10:32 says, "In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short."
18. Soon the Assyrian army would come and take them away into captivity. Their horsemen and chariots would not do them any good once the LORD removed His hand of protection.
19. Elisha the prophet was Israel's best defense against foreign aggressors; just as strong preachers are our nation's best protection in these perilous times.
20. Strong preachers and strong churches and praying Christians are far more potent than a strong military with nuclear weapons.
21. Let us not worry about ISIS. Rather, let us fear God! Our Lord said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).
22. Joash wept, but his tears were not tears of repentance. I have seen sinners weep on many occasions, and it saddens me when I notice that their tears do not lead to genuine repentance.

23. Moses said to the stiff-necked Israelites, "And ye returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you" (Deuteronomy 1:45).
24. A.W. Pink said, King Joash regarded the prophet Elisha "as the chief bulwark of the nation, and the prospect of his speedy removal filled him with consternation and sorrow. Thus there was a strange mingling of esteem and selfishness behind those tears; and is not that generally the case even in connection with the departure of a loved one?"
25. As King Joash wept over him, Elisha the prophet made his final prophecy (13:15-19).
26. Once again we are reminded that the battle is not ours, but God's! Man proposes but God disposes. The bow and arrow were in the king's hand, but it was "the arrow of the LORD's deliverance" (13:17).
27. In Matthew 9:29, our Lord said, "According to your faith be it unto you," and it is it was at that point Joash failed, for he was not a man of faith (II Kings 13:18, 19).
28. Our Lord said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9), and the idea is to keep knocking till your prayer is answered.
29. Faithless King Joash stopped smiting the ground, and so Elisha "was wroth with him" (13:19).
30. The king stopped short because he did not thoroughly believe the prophet's words. A.W. Pink said, "Most Christians expect little from God, ask little, and therefore receive little, and are content with little. They are content with little faith, little knowledge of the deep things of God, little growth and fruitfulness in the spiritual life, little joy, peace, and assurance. And the zealous servant of God is justified in being wroth at their lack of spiritual ambition" (*Gleanings From Elisha*).
31. The Bible says, "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2b). Let's not stop asking; let's not stop praying; let's not stop knocking, etc.

III. THE LAST MIRACLE OF ELISHA THE PROPHET

1. "And Elisha died, and they buried him" (13:20). Unlike Elijah who left this world in a chariot of fire with horses of fire, Elisha died in his bed and was buried in a sepulchre.
2. Every year, raiding bands of Moabites swept through the land of Israel. One day, while some Israelites were burying a corpse, they saw one of these bands and quickly cast the corpse into the sepulchre of Elisha (13:21).

3. As soon as the dead man's body "touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet" (13:21b).
4. You could say that Elisha's most amazing miracle happened after he was dead!
5. What a testimony to the sovereignty of God!
6. The LORD honored Elijah even after he departed from this world.
7. It was the LORD'S seal upon Elisha's ministry.

CONCLUSION:

1. There are many lessons here for us if we take the time to meditate on the Word of God. When that dead man "touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood on his feet" (13:21).
2. The world thinks of the Lord Jesus Christ as a dead man hanging on a cross. But there is life through the Lord Jesus Christ!
3. Our Lord said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live...Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also" (John 11:25; 14:19).
4. Some here today are dead in trespasses and sins. You can be quickened and regenerated right now by the Lord Jesus Christ.