

"The Life and Miracles of Elisha"

Part 1

Introduction: As we begin our study of Elisha it is important to note that the Holy Spirit has seen best to show as the central and dominant theme of his life the miracles by him and connected to him. Elisha performed more miracles than any other Old Testament prophet and was also granted more answers to his prayers than any other. What we have recorded about Elisha is mostly a record of supernatural acts and events connected to him. This then causes a question to arise in my mind, "Why did he perform so many miracles?"

These miracles were needed in his day because of the spiritual condition of the Nation of Israel. Israel was deep into idolatry at the time of Elijah's and Elisha's ministry. Notice the words of Elijah.

1 Kings 19:14

¹⁴ And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

There were remnants of people who were true followers of God but at the same time there were great multitudes who were given over to idolatry, namely the worship of Baal. Therefore, God chose to use the miracles of Elisha and Elijah to wake the Nation to His existence and sovereignty.

Miracles were not needed in the times when God's Word was seen as sufficient and was seen as Authoritative. Let me just give you something to consider. Think about the days of Saul, David and Solomon. Can you think of many miracles that were performed during the days of these men? There were no prophets sent forth to perform multitudes of miracles and the reason was the Word of God was held in high esteem. But during the days of Elijah and Elisha it was far different. God had been all but forgotten. God had warned Israel about this very thing under the leadership of Moses.

Deuteronomy 8:6-11

⁶ Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

⁷ For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

⁸ A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

⁹ *A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.*

¹⁰ *When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.*

¹¹ *Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:*

The ministry of Elijah and Elisha took place in days that were very much like those found in the beginning of the book of Exodus. In those pages we find the people of Israel in the land of Egypt and God had been almost forgotten. The people of Israel had sunk deep into the culture and the practices of the Egyptians. God then stepped in and through the miracles performed by Moses brought His people back to reality and back to the knowledge of Himself which they had lost. God also used the miracles to affirm that Moses was truly sent by Him to lead the Nation out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan. Had it not been for the miracles Israel would never have submitted to the leadership of Moses. If we stop and think about it there were many times when the people of Israel were ready to turn away from Moses and go back to Egypt even after they had witnessed his miracles.

It is also interesting to note that when Israel entered the land of Canaan God made Himself known to the inhabitants of Canaan through 4 major miracles.

1. **The crossing of the Jordan River - Joshua 3**
2. **The conquest of Jericho - Joshua 6**
3. **The destruction of the enemy with great hails stones - Joshua 10**
4. **The sun stood still - Joshua 10**

These 4 miracles can be seen as:

1. **In the water.**
2. **In the earth.**
3. **In the air.**
4. **In the heavens.**

By these 4 miracles God was sending a message to the Canaanites who did not know Him, and the message was that He was the God of Israel and He alone reigned over all of creation.

When Jesus came His miracles were for the purpose of making His deity known to all. When He came the Gentiles were deep into idolatry and Judaism had become lifeless and had taken the Word of God and set it aside for nothing more than "religion" and tradition. Therefore, Jesus backed up His claim, "**He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father**" by performing many miracles. Let me show you the miracle Jesus performed in Matthew and show you what He said in connection to the miracle.

Matthew 9:2-8

² *And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*

³ *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.*

⁴ *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?*

⁵ *For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?*

⁶ *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

⁷ *And he arose, and departed to his house.*

⁸ *But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.*

This miracle was done to prove He had power to forgive sin which was a clear revelation that He was God.

I use all of this to help us to see that the miracles of Elijah and Elisha were great in number because there was a great need. Israel had fallen into idolatry and God desired to awaken them and call them back to Himself.

Elijah and Elisha

If we were to compare Elijah and Elisha, we would see there are many similarities and many differences also. There are contrasts in the miracles which the two performed. The first miracle of Elijah was that there would be no dew nor rain for a space of three and one-half years. The first miracle of Elisha was the healing of the springs of waters to produce an abundance of water. But there is more contrast to see in the character of their miracles. The miracles of Elijah were mostly associated with death and destruction. The miracles of Elisha were mostly associated with healing and restoration. We could say that Elijah was the prophet of judgment and Elisha was the prophet of grace. The miracles of Elijah were

a were works against evil while the miracles of Elisha were the works that showed a readiness by God to respond to the cry of a broken and contrite heart. The two prophets show forth the two sides of the character of God. Elijah's ministry showed God is the Hater and the Punisher of sin. Elisha's ministry on the other hand shows us that God is willing to show love toward those who will repent. In Elijah we see vengeance and in Elisha we see mercy.

There is also something else in the contrasts that we need to see. The miracles of Elijah were mostly dealing with the public, while the miracles of Elisha were more in private. One dealt with the masses and the other with the individuals. Elijah's ministry was one of judgment upon the masses who were involved in idolatry and Elisha's ministry was more personal as he dealt with God's people and prophets.

There is within this truth a wonderful lesson for our lives. While we live in a season of apostasy and universal wickedness and God brings His rod down upon the nations in judgment we are reminded that He will never forget His own. Nor will He ever forsake us who are His own. The conditions of this world will most likely continue to become worse as the years pass by, but God will always be true to His promises which He has made to His people. We can therefore claim promises like we find in Psalm 46.

Psalm 46:1-1-7

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

² *Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;*

³ *Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.*

⁴ *There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.*

⁵ *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.*

⁶ *The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.*

⁷ **The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.**

There is yet another lesson from these two ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Elijah's day was very much like the day in which we live today. Israel had turned from God to the idolatry. They had lost sight of God and His Word. Today we see the very same conditions. Our nation has turned from God and is now a nation given over to idolatry. The masses today

have rejected God and His Word. They have done all they can to remove the Ten Commandments from everyone's view. They have done all they can to have God removed from the public-school system. Humanism and rationalism have all but replaced the Word of God in our society. Today we see the wrath of God, as listed in Romans 1, which is being poured out upon those who have rejected Him. Churches that were once solid and which stood for the Truth have now accepted immorality as an accepted way of life.

In all of this we hear people within the churches claiming that we MUST be very close to the END OF THE AGE. Preachers point to the condition of our society and claim these are the signs that show the end is near. But we need to be very careful because that is what many thought when Napoleon was devastating Europe, but they were wrong. Let us keep in mind that Elisha followed Elijah. In other words, Elijah's miracles brought judgment upon the idolatry and apostasy of his day but then God showed grace through Elisha. It may be that God will choose to witness to the masses that are not saved as He allows them to see His grace and His faithfulness extended to His people while this world continues to sink deeper and deeper into sin.

Notice the words of one Bible teacher:

"We must be on guard against missing the consolation which this portion of Scripture may contain for us. The darkest night is followed by the morning's light. Even if the present order of society is doomed to destruction, we know not what favors from God await this earth in generations to come. Of necessity there will be a time when this world and all its works will be burned up, and that event may be very near. On the other hand, that event may be thousands of years away. If such be the case, then black as is the present outlook and blacker it may yet become, yet the clouds of divine judgment will again disperse, and the sun of Righteousness arise once more with healing in his wings. More than once the times of Elijah have been substantially duplicated even during this Christian era, yet each time they were followed by an Elisha of mercy. Thus, it may be again, yea will be unless God is now on the point of bring down the curtain upon human history."

Let us now get to the content of our study.

I. The Call of Elisha

Notice 1 Kings 19:19-21

There is much in these verses for us to learn from the call of Elisha. When Elisha was called to be the successor of Elijah he was in the field plowing with 12 yoke of oxen. He was not sitting still waiting upon God to call him. He had his hand on the plow. This reminds me of a lesson I heard someone teach at one time.

Use all you have, where you are, and do all you can.

Someone has once said, *"God seeth not as man seeth, neither does He choose men because they are fit, but He fits them because he hath chosen them."*

We see this very pattern throughout the Scriptures.

- ✓ **James and John were called while mending their nets.**

Matthew 4:21

²¹ And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

- ✓ **Matthew was called while collecting taxes.**

Matthew 9:9

⁹ And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

- ✓ **Gideon was called while threshing wheat.**

Judges 6:11-12

¹¹ And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.

¹² And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

- ✓ **David was called while keeping the sheep.**

1 Samuel 16:10-12

¹⁰ Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

¹¹ And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

¹² And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.

Let me bring this into our lives for a moment.

- a. Labor at what God has given you to do and be ready for God to cast a burden on your heart.

I am reminded of what Paul wrote to the Colossians.

Colossians 3:22-24

²² *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God;*

²³ **And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;**

²⁴ *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

Elisha was at work doing what he knew to do, and it was then that Elijah cast his mantle upon him.

There are times when we are hard at work and the Holy Spirit comes along and casts a burden upon our hearts. It is then we must be willing to do what he lays upon our heart to do.

Nehemiah 1:1-4

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,

² *That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.*

³ *And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.*

⁴ *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,*

God may burden your heart to visit a sick neighbor, or to share the Gospel with a friend, or to visit with someone who is hurting within the church. Whatever it is we must go when God calls. The window of opportunity will not always be open.

Conclusion: We live in a time when God desires to show His grace to those who are not saved and you and I must be ready and willing to go when He calls.