

Moments for YOU

Volume 49, Number 3

Theme: Elijah & Elisha



ELIJAH & ELISHA

These two prophets, whose ministries are recorded in a few short passages in 1 & 2 Kings, stand out among the characters of the Bible. Though neither of them wrote a book, the accounts of their lives and service for the Lord tell us much about God's holiness, justice, love, power, provision, and protection.

The setting of their ministry was roughly the ninth century B.C., and dealt primarily with the "northern kingdom" of Israel at a time when idolatry had overrun the worship of the true God. Ahab, who was king when Elijah first appears, is said to have done "more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him" (1 Kings 16:33). Add to that the wicked influence of his wife, Jezebel, whose name has become synonymous with evil, and we can begin to get a picture of the moral conditions in the days when the Lord stirred up Elijah to announce a drought as punishment for this national rebellion against Jehovah.

Elisha, who served with Elijah for much of his ministry and then succeeded him as the foremost prophet in Israel, became possessor of Elijah's mantle—the outward sign of his office—and of his spirit—the inward power to act for God. Elisha was also honored with the same title he had ascribed to Elijah—"the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" (2 Kings 2:12; 13:14), signifying that the strength of the nation was not in its military might or political leaders, but rather channeled through these spiritual men from God Himself.

In the articles that follow, we will trace a little of the actions of these spiritual powerhouses, and hopefully learn lessons that we can apply to our lives today. After all, "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are" (James 5:17), and though he experienced the same thoughts, feelings, and despair that we often do, yet he also knew the power of prayer and the potential of faith.

We recommend that you read the portion given at the head of each article and, if possible, read the entire portion covering their ministries beginning in 1 Kings 17 and continuing through 2 Kings 13. —T. Don Johnson

THE BROOK THAT DRIED UP

1 Kings 17:1-7

The prophet has been alone with God in the secret place of prayer. Then for a brief moment he speaks for God in the presence of the apostate king. The future, however, holds a far greater service for Elijah. The day will come when he will defeat the assembled hosts of Baal and turn the nation of Israel to the living God. But the time is not yet ripe for Carmel: the prophet is not ready to speak, and the nation is not ready to hear. Elijah must be trained in secret before he can speak for God, and Israel must first suffer the years of famine before they will listen to the Word of God.

The first step that leads to Carmel in the west, must be taken in another direction. "Get thee hence and turn thee eastward," is the word of the Lord. In God's due time He will bring His servant to the very spot where He is going to use him, but He will bring him there in the right condition to be

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used. To become a vessel fit for the Master's use, he must dwell for a time in solitary places and travel by rough ways, therein to learn his own weakness and the mighty power of God.

Every servant of God has his Cherith before he reaches his Carmel. Joseph must pass by way of the pit and the prison to reach the throne. Moses must have his Cherith at the backside of the desert before he becomes the leader of God's people. And was not the Lord Himself alone in the wilderness forty days and tempted of Satan before He came forth in public ministry? The testing circumstances that were used to reveal the *perfections* of Christ are needed in our case to bring to light our *imperfections*, that all may be judged in the presence of God, and we may thus become vessels fitted for His use.

This indeed was the first lesson that Elijah had to learn at Cherith—the lesson of the empty vessel. In order to be preserved from making something of himself before men, he must learn his own nothingness before God. Elijah must spend three and a half years in hidden seclusion with God before he spends one day in prominence before men. Is Elijah to exercise faith in the living God before Israel? Then he must first learn to live by faith from day to day in secret before God. The brook and the ravens are provided by God to meet His servant's needs.

But the brook Cherith had a yet harder and deeper lesson for the prophet—the lesson of the brook that dried up. The very brook that the Lord had provided, of which He had bid the prophet to drink, runs dry. What can it mean? How painful this experience, to be in the place of God's appointment, to be acting in obedience to His express com-

The place of God's appointment is the place of God's provision. Are you where God wants you to be? Then you can claim God's promise that He will meet your need.

—William Varner

mands, and yet suddenly to face the complete failure of the provision that God has made for the daily need. Had not Elijah boldly said before the king that he stood before the living God? Now he is confronted with the drying brook to test the reality of his faith. If God lives, what matter if the brook dries? The prophet must learn to trust in God rather than in the gifts that He gives. The deep lesson of the brook that dried up is that the Giver is greater than His gifts.

If God allows the brook to dry up, it is because He has some better, brighter portion for His beloved servant. Nor is it otherwise with the people of God today. We all like to have some earthly resource to draw upon. Yet how often, in the ways of a Father that knows we have need of these things, we have to face the brook that dries up. It crosses our path in different forms: perhaps by bereavement, or by the breakdown of health, or by the sudden failure of some source of supply, we find ourselves beside the brook that dried up. It is well if we can by faith in the living God accept all from Him in such moments. We shall then find the trial itself to be the means God is using to unfold to us the vast resources of His heart of love, and lead our souls into deeper, richer blessing than we have ever known.

—Condensed from *Elijah: A Prophet of the Lord* by Hamilton Smith. Published by Bible Truth Publishers, used by permission.

THE WIDOW'S SON

“Elijah ... prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months” (James 5:17; 1 Kings 17:8-24).

The first part of the answer to his prayer led him to Samaria and Ahab. The next to Cherith, where he had to learn that Jehovah Himself was enough for His people, and that He had all power in His hand. The journey to Zarephath and his long sojourn there was one more step in the way God was fitting him for His service. The upper room where he dwelt became hallowed by prayer, as had the rocky cliffs at Cherith before. As Elijah heard the tales of sorrow and starvation, of parched fields that could yield no pasture for herds and flocks, of little children crying for the food their parents knew not where to find, how easy it would have been for him to question whether or not he had made a sad mistake.

Elijah had to continually look away from outward things and rest in the word, “I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.” In so doing, he could wait quietly on and on all those long months, which grew into years. Still he heard no word from Jehovah to send him back to his own country and people, but he prayed. This was his resource. In prayer he drew near to all the divine calm of the presence of God, and found that in waiting there his spirit was strengthened. He was daily taught how to meet the everyday life that otherwise might have chafed and fretted him. He was yielded to God. If only we knew more of that, how much more peacefully we should face the little worries or the great emergencies that come in our path. *It is never lost time to wait on God.*

We may be sure, too, that the widow who sheltered Elijah, and was herself miraculously provided for in consequence, was also being taught many lessons. What living interest must have filled her mind and that of her son as they listened to all Elijah would tell them! What would be Bible lessons to us now, would be told them by one near enough to the glorious reign of Solomon and the loving rule of David to have heard from old men what their fathers had seen of these kings. Then all the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert were doubtless told them, and at last they began to see a little of the loving-kindness of Jehovah. The daily supply of meal in the barrel and of oil in the cruse showed them the power and mercy of God; but they had to learn something else.

The son of the widow began to fail in health and the mother knew that his life was in danger. The day at last came when death entered that quiet home. The only child of his widowed mother lay before her in the cold quiet of death. Wild words fall from her lips: “What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?”

Yet the grace of God was to be more fully shown out in this very thing than in keeping the widow and her son alive in famine. All the abounding mercy to her in sending the prophet to her house and providing for them had not brought her to a knowledge of what she was before God. Too often it is the same with us. In some way or other death generally has to come before us—very near to us—before we are awakened to a true sense of our sinfulness and of our sin. We may learn it, as we surely ought, when we see the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary,

there on that cross of shame, dying, dead—and for me, for you! Have you ever thought for one short five minutes what that death meant for you?

Elijah did not express his sympathy with the poor mother by telling her so—he knew she was in no state to be comforted thus, and his own grief was too great also. As if to completely identify himself with the lifeless child, the prophet now “stretched himself upon the child three times.” We are also told that he prayed: “O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come into him again.”

It was a wonderful request. His was the boldness of faith that at this moment could trust enough to ask even for life for the dead. Only one could thus pray who knew what it was habitually “to stand before God,” as the prophet surely did. The God of Elijah was to be proved to be the conqueror of death, and the woman was to have her faith in His love and in His power so strengthened, that never again would she trust in false gods. In the presence of death she had discovered that she was guilty. This was needful, though not then could it be told her what the cross of Calvary tells us now: “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). We learn there—at Calvary—that death was the thing our sins deserved. If we are believers in Him, the death of Christ also gives us the assurance that the same wondrous sacrifice has put our sins away.

“And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.” What a supreme moment that must have been for Elijah! Not only was the son restored to his heart-broken mother, but to the one who had prayed there

was the blessedness of knowing that Jehovah had done this. We are only told one thing that the mother said. There may have been much delight and surprise and gratitude that was left unrecorded, but we are told that she said to Elijah, “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.”

It is impossible for us to conceive the revolution of thought and feeling wrought in the soul of the widow by her son being raised out of death. She now knew that Jehovah was the living God—able to speak the dead into life, having life at His command. She knew that His word was truth, that it alone was truth. Thus this death in her home, which had been a fiery trial to both Elijah and herself, became the doorway into a deeper blessedness than they had ever realized before. They saw something more of the love that later on would not even spare His own Son, but would give Him up for the life of the world (Romans 8:32).

For those who still have the heavy burden of their sins between themselves and God, I would add these precious words—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7) Take these words and fix your heart and mind upon them until you see something of what they mean. Then go to God and ask Him to enable you to put your whole trust in Christ. Cast yourself entirely upon His pardoning love, and you will soon be rejoicing in the fact that you are saved with an everlasting salvation, though you still have everything else to learn. Then go on “looking off unto Jesus” for all the rest of your life here. If you do that He will undertake for you in everything.

—Condensed from *Elijah the Prophet of Israel* by L.T. Published by G. Morrish.

THE OIL MULTIPLIED

2 Kings 4:1-7

“According to your faith be it unto you” (Matthew 9:29), was the Lord’s word to the two blind men. Wondrous and blessed indeed that in any way our faith, or patience, or expectation should be allowed to measure the active and bounteous power of our Lord! But so it was with the centurion also: “As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee” (Matthew 8:13).

This is the voice of the miracle wrought through the hand of Elisha. For as long as the poor widow produced her vessels, the pot produced its oil. The vessels were the measure of the oil. In other words, divine power waited on faith—faith measured the active resources of God on this occasion. This was like the Lord standing with Abraham, for as long as Abraham stood interceding, the Lord stood promising (Genesis 18:17-33).

But there is another thing. “What hast thou in the house?” said the prophet to the woman—as Jesus afterward said to His disciples, “How many loaves have ye?”—or, as He had said to Moses, “What is that in thy hand?” For it is suitable that whatever we have should be put to use. It may be quite unequal to the necessity, but whatever it is, it should be occupied. It may be but a shepherd’s staff, and Israel has to be redeemed; it may be but a pot of oil, and the creditor, who has a right to sell children and all, has to be paid; it may be but five barley loaves, and five thousand hungry ones have to be fed. But still, let what there is be occupied and brought forth. Then let faith count on the power of God and His word of promise, and not only shall the creditor be paid, but life sustained for many more days; not only shall the multitude be fed,

but fragments gathered; not only shall Israel be redeemed out of Egypt, but the same shepherd’s rod, now God’s rod, shall feed and keep the flock to the end of the desert.

—Condensed from *Short Meditations on Elisha* by J.G. Bellett. Published by Bible Truth Publishers, used by permission.

Elisha requested a double portion of his master’s spirit, and it was significant that he performed twice as many miracles as Elijah did.

—Ivor Powell

THE IRON DID SWIM

2 Kings 6:1-7

We find illustrated here, I am sure, the constant danger besetting every true child of God of losing his touch with God, and of sinking into the mire of worldliness and sin as a consequence. Let’s look at it from that point of view.

There are a number of commendable things here:

1) These sons of the prophets were anxious to expand—they were evidently having blessing on their testimony.

2) They prayed about the situation—a very healthy sign.

3) Every man wanted to go and cut wood—there were no shirkers among them.

4) They wanted Elisha to go with them—they realized their need of his presence and his help.

All these were lovely features, but now the Spirit of God points out the ever-present danger facing every Christian. We are never safe unless we keep near to Christ: “But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.”

That's how we often lose our touch with the Lord, because we use borrowed tools. We fail to be in God's presence in personal study and meditation of His Word. It is so easy to borrow from others rather than to labor in prayer and study for ourselves. When an axe is dull you chop and get nowhere. Whenever there is a lack of communion with God, there is likewise a display of energy and a lack of fruit. We need more agonizing before God and less organizing with men; more prayer and less preaching; more walking than talking; more holding up our hands in prayer before the Lord than having the audience hold up their hands before men. This fellow chopped and chopped away with his dull, borrowed axe, and pretty soon he really got results! Not by loosening the tree, but by loosening and losing the axe head.

Now, it is all right to borrow truth from others; in fact, we must do so. God has given ministers and ministry to His saints, that they in turn may become ministers to others, but we should not employ what we borrow just as we have borrowed it. I have always found that when I borrow thoughts from others they are like dull tools in my hands. So you and I must keep our noses on the grindstone, poring over God's Word in earnest study and meditation, by the help of God's Spirit, expending time, sweat, and tears, so that we may be able to do exploits for God.

When you seek to serve the Lord in your own fleshly energy, you are apt to lose your head, as this man lost his axe head. At least he had sense enough to stop hacking away with the handle, which cannot be said for many a worldly Christian! Such often go on with a show of

devotedness, but they are chopping with the handle only. They have lost the power; they are going through the motions. This man did not go diving after the axe head or go poking around on the bottom of the muddy river, either. He did the right thing; he cried to the man of God. There is power with God, and there is forgiveness with Him.

Elisha cut down a stick and cast it in. He did not pick up a dead stick, but used a living stick that had died, a beautiful picture of Christ the living Saviour who died for us on Calvary. That is the remedy for a fruitless, useless life. Bring Christ in—all the wonder of His life and marvelous death, and all the power of His risen glory. He cast the stick in, and the iron swam. That which naturally floats—the stick—sank; that which naturally sinks—the iron—floated. What a matchless story! He—the blessed Son of God—who naturally would rise above all things and reign on God's throne, voluntarily sank down under all the weight of our sin so that I—a poor guilty sinner—who naturally sinks to the depths of sin and shame, might rise to be forever above with Him. Oh, praise His Name; He lifted me!

—Condensed from *Elijah & Elisha* by August Van Ryn. Published by Christian Missions Press.

References for "Name That Prophet" puzzle on page 24:

2 Kings 4:1-7; 1 Kings 17:8-16; 1 Kings 18:21-39; 2 Kings 4:8-37; 2 Kings 2:23-25; 1 Kings 18:41-46; 2 Kings 5:9-14; 2 Kings 2:4-8; 2 Kings 2:14-18; 1 Kings 17:2-6; 2 Kings 6:4-7; 1 Kings 17:17-24; James 5:17; 2 Kings 4:42-44; 2 Kings 1:2-12; 2 Kings 2:19-22

NAME THAT PROPHET

For each of the following clues, decide whether the correct answer is Elijah or Elisha and then circle the letter in that column. Once you have circled a letter for every clue, unscramble the circled letters to reveal a descriptive name for each prophet. If you need more help, turn to page 23 for the Scripture references where you can look up the answers.

CLUE	ELIJAH	ELISHA
Because a woman obeyed my voice, her one jar of oil filled all of the empty vessels that she gathered.	A	O
Because a woman obeyed my voice, her jar of flour and jar of oil did not run out for several years.	S	T
The Lord answered my prayers with fire and consumed the burnt offering.	B	I
In answer to my prayers, the Lord brought the son of a great woman from Shunem back to life.	D	F
On a certain day, young people who mocked me were attacked by bears.	O	N
After many years of drought, the Lord brought rain after my prayers.	I	T
When Naaman obeyed my directions, he was miraculously healed of his leprosy.	M	O
I parted the Jordan river on my way from Jericho.	E	I
I parted the Jordan river on my way to Jericho.	O	M
I was given food by ravens.	I	S
When I threw a stick into the Jordan river, an iron axe head floated back to the person who lost it.	N	D
In answer to my prayers, the Lord brought a widow's son back to life.	H	E
In answer to my prayers, there was a drought for three-and-a-half years.	T	B
At my word, twenty barley loaves and some ears of corn multiplied to feed one hundred men.	F	G
Two companies of soldiers were killed by fire from heaven when they came to seize me.	T	H
I cured the waters of Jericho by putting salt in the spring.	G	A

“Elijah the _____” (1 Kings 17:1)

“Elisha the _____” (2 Kings 5:8)