

All the Great Things He Has Done

2 Kings 8:1-6

INTRO

In our day we are constantly bombarded with messages and news. We see billboards and TV ads. We hear radio jingles and scroll through endless snippets of news and offers in our Facebook, Twitter or Instagram feeds. So, when we hear something from a real person that we know, that a new store opened up or a new restaurant is in town, or that someone we know had a baby – we listen. The most powerful advertising is always word of mouth. And the biggest draw is something new.

Now when it comes to the church, what we do is not new or exciting in that sense, but tried and true. Too often the wonder of what God has done escapes us. It isn't on our tongues as the latest best thing to hear and share. We too easily lose the wonder of how great the Gospel is.

Today, I hope we can rekindle that wonder by shifting our eyes to a less familiar passage. I want to transport us back more than 2800 years to the Kingdom of Israel and the years 850 -800 BC. I trust what we find there will remind us of what God has done in other times, and ultimately give us a greater hope and confidence that our God is still at work today.

Let's turn to 2 Kings chapter 8.

PRAY, READ: 2 Kings 8:1-6

TITLE: "All the Great Things He Has Done"

- 1) Elisha's Mission
- 2) Elisha's Miracles
- 3) Elisha as a Model

I. Elisha's Mission

A. Background to Elisha

1. Elisha was called to follow after Elijah (1 Kings 19:19ff)
2. He started out as Elijah's servant he is referred to as the one "who poured water on hands of Elijah" (2 Kings 3:11).
3. Elijah confronted Ahab – the most evil king of the 10 tribes of Israel. Ahab (and Jezebel) had led the nation to follow Ba'al (a false god). Elijah is the one who had a public confrontation with the 400 prophets of Ba'al who could not call fire down from heaven to consume their sacrifice. But Elijah prayed and God sent fire – resulting in a purge and the people declaring "The LORD He is God"
4. This confrontation was not decisive, and the majority still followed the kings into evil – and Elijah continued his ministry of proclaiming condemnation and judgement to Israel for forsaking their covenant and breaking God's Law.

5. God revealed to Elijah that there was still a faithful remnant who followed the LORD (7,000 who did not bow the knee to Ba'al).

6. There were also bands of prophets who followed God despite the evil endorsed by Ahab and his heirs.

B. Elisha's Request

1. 2 Kings 2 recounts the story of Elijah's ascent into heaven on a chariot of fire, and Elisha's request to receive "a double portion" of Elijah's spirit (v. 9)

2. "Double portion" would be the firstborn's portion of the inheritance – Elisha is asking to be the prophetic successor to Elijah (not for twice as much Holy Spirit as Elijah).

3. Since Elisha sees Elijah's homegoing, then according to Elijah's earlier prophecy, he does receive the double blessing.

4. The rest of that story shows how the other prophets come to understand that Elijah truly had left them, and Elisha truly is his successor.

C. Elisha's Ministry

1. Elisha's ministry is less public than Elijah's – but he has a longer ministry (apx. 50 years) and performs more miracles.

2. Elisha's ministry does follow Elijah in condemning wickedness and pronouncing doom – but his emphasis is on God's love and favor – and tender care (as we will see).

3. Elisha's ministry includes an emphasis on Gentiles (Naaman of Syria, and Hazael king of Syria).

4. Many of Elisha's miracles are done for individuals or for the prophet community.

D. Elijah and Elisha in the wider scope of 1-2 Kings

1. God's prophetic ministry through Elijah and Elisha was a call for Israel to repent and come back to the LORD.

2. Judgment was promised, but hope was shown in that God revealed himself as greater than Ba'al and the false gods.

3. The Word of God – (in the land of Israel which was separate from the Temple in Judah) was central to Israel's life and vital to their survival.

4. Throughout Elisha's career, numerous kings rise and fall, and at Elisha's death the king (Joash) recognizes in Elisha the hope of Israel: "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" (13:14) (this is the same phrase as in 2:12 that the author has stressed; on this point see also the king's earlier desire to know Elisha's deeds – 8:4).

II. Elisha's Miracles

A. Listing

1. Parting the Jordan (2:13-14)

2. Healing of Jericho's cursed/bad water (2:19-22)

3. Bears ravage 42 youths (2:23-25)

- [this is a covenant curse Lev. 26:2]

4. Water in desert to defeat the Moabites 3:15-25

5. {A prophet's} widow's oil is multiplied (4:1-7)

- [he becomes a kinsman redeemer]

6. A son for Shunamite woman (4:8-17)

7. Dead son resurrected (4:18-37 / Heb. 11:35)
8. Death in the pot cured {for the prophets} (4:38-31)
9. Feeding of 100 {prophets} (4:42-44)
10. Healing of the Leper Namaan (5:1-19)
 - [his story is known/told by the maid in Syria]
11. Gehazi judged with leprosy (5:19-27)
12. Floating axe head {to help a prophet} (6:1-7)
13. Knowledge of king of Aram's plans (6:8-12)
14. Curing of blindness of his servant (6:11-17)
15. Blindness and capture of Aram's army (6:18-23)
16. Lifting of siege of Samaria (6:24-7:20)
17. Bones of Elisha resurrect a dead man (13:20-21)

B. One purpose: Showing that God is greater than Ba'al

1. The Ugaritic Ba'al had power over:
 - Fire
 - Rain
 - Oil and meal/flour
 - Child giving
 - Healing
 - Resurrection
 - Ascent (to heaven)
 - Defeating the River God
2. This false power is upstaged by Elijah/Elisha:
 - Fire – Elijah calls down fire (also the role of chariots of fire symbolizing God's presence)
 - Rain – Elijah stops rain and then brings it back
 - Oil and meal/flour – Elijah helps a widow have no lack of corn // Elisha helps a widow with an

endless supply of oil (until she has no more pots for it)

- Child giving – Elisha gives a child to the barren woman of Shunem
- Healing – Elisha heals Namaan
- Resurrection – Elijah revives the widow of Zarephath's son; Elisha revives the Shunamite woman's son
- Ascent to heaven – Elijah ascends in a chariot of fire in a whirlwind (like the Ba'al myth who rises on clouds)
- The River God – Ba'al destroys the river/river God – and both Elijah and Elisha smite the Jordan river and cross it on dry ground.

~Bruce Waltke, *An OT Theology* (Zondervan, 2007) p. 746-747

C. Nature of Elisha's miracles

1. These are mostly intimate events
2. Four of the miracles are done to help the prophets
3. Others establish his authority or rescue the nation/city
4. The miracles reveal God's love and grace (helping find a lost expensive axe, providing food for the hungry in famine, giving a long-desired son – and restoring him from death/illness). Even in the midst of a falling away from true worship – God remains active and available and loving/wooing his people back to Himself.
5. The dead man who raised to life from touching Elisha's bones is a symbolic picture that the ministry of the prophets (and the central place of the Word of the LORD)

can bring life to the dead – and surely spoke to Israel in the exile when this book was completed.

III. Elisha as a Model

A. Typology

1. The Bible often reveals divinely-intended patterns or types that point to a greater reality:
2. Types are events (such as the Exodus Passover), actions (Temple-worship, ceremonies), and people (Adam or David) that parallel a later biblical reality.
3. A type must have correspondence/similarity and also heightening/intensification in that the pointed to reality (antitype) is greater than the type or picture.
4. A type must also have some Scriptural warrant or basis.

B. Elisha as a Type of Joshua

1. 2 Kings portrays Elijah's leadership role as similar to Moses' and Elisha's as similar to Joshua's.
2. Elijah stands between God and the people, intercedes for them, punishes wrong doers and also directly sees God's glory on the Mountain – just like Moses. And also like Moses, he crosses water on dry ground and appoints a successor.
3. Elisha like Joshua takes up the position of Elijah, he also crosses water on dry ground – in the vicinity of Jericho even. And like Joshua, Elisha's name means "God Saves".
4. Joshua fought human enemies, but Elisha grapples with Ba'al worshipers and fights a spiritual battle for men's hearts.

C. Elisha as a Type of Christ

1. Elijah had to appear before the Messiah came – and according to Jesus he did – in the person of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:14; 17:12) – who dressed in the manner of Elijah.
2. Both Elijah and John the Baptist confronted an evil king and faced a blood-thirsty queen. Both are rejected by the authorities and then question their own calling. They both designate a "successor" who is to be greater than them.
3. Elisha and Jesus share similarities as well (their names mean God Saves), both receive the Spirit on the other side of the Jordan and are surrounded by more disciples than their predecessor.
4. They both are itinerant miracle workers and cleanse lepers, give sight to the blind, defy gravity with water, raise the dead, feed a multitude with loaves, minister to Gentiles, have a covetous disciple, and have a tomb that gives life after their death.
5. There are even more similarities we don't have time for, but Jesus far excels Elisha for sure – and we can see Elisha as definitely a type of Christ.
6. Elisha's works are hailed in Syria (by the captive maid and later by the future king of Syria) – and they are talked about by outcast lepers and inquired after by hardened kings.
7. In the telling of God's works through Elisha, a woman is restored to her lands and livelihood. In the telling of the stories about Jesus – there is hope and healing available to all.

CONCLUSION

PRAY -----

END-----

The stories of the works God performed through Elisha have the power to awaken us to the greatness of God. God spoke through Elisha to the people of that day who were enamored by Ba'al and tempted to turn away from the God of their fathers. We too are tempted to give up and join the world around us in ignoring the Bible. We need to see God at work among us. We need to inquire after the God of Elisha and his great works He has done. We need to awaken to the greatness of the works Jesus did – which far surpass what Elisha accomplished. We need to be reminded that our God is real, and his salvation is sure. He can give life where all we see is death. He can turn our hearts around.

When Elisha saw Elijah ascend to heaven, he picked up his master's mantle. He was aware of the promise that God would be with him. And so, he lifted his voice and said, "Where is the Lord the God of Elijah?" (2:14) and he tested his faith and found God ready at hand to part the Jordan and to do many other works through Elisha and his faith.

Today we need to ask, "Where is the Lord God of Elisha?" where is the God who acted in Elisha and in his Greater Lord – Jesus? The very power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us, according to Ephesians. Let us pray that God works to bring greater joy and renewed faith in our hearts today and throughout the weeks to come.