

SEQUOYAH HILLS
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“Living God & A Living Legacy”

Rev. Ben Garris

2 Kings 13:14-25

November 26, 2023

Today we are ending this series on the life, ministry, and mission of Elisha. We have been looking at missions through the life of this prophet, and today, we will read over a rather peculiar account surrounding Elisha's death and subsequent events that happen after his death. Let us now turn to **2 Kings 13: 14-25.**

Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die, King Joash of Israel went down to him and wept before him, crying, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” Elisha said to him, “Take a bow and arrows,” so he took a bow and arrows. Then he said to the king of Israel, “Draw the bow,” and he drew it. Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. Then he said, “Open the window eastward,” and he opened it. Elisha said, “Shoot,” and he shot. Then he said, “The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram! For you shall fight the Arameans in Aphek until you have made an end of them.” He continued, “Take the arrows,” and he took them. He said to the king of Israel, “Strike the ground with them”; he struck three times and stopped. Then the man of God was angry with him and said, “You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Aram until you had made an end of it, but now you will strike down Aram only three times.”

So Elisha died, and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the land in the spring of the year. As a man was being buried, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the grave of Elisha; as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he came to life and stood on his feet.

Now King Hazael of Aram oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. But the Lord was gracious to them and had compassion on them; he turned toward them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and would not destroy them, nor has he banished them from his presence until now.

When King Hazael of Aram died, his son Ben-hadad succeeded him. Then Jehoash son of Jehoahaz took again from Ben-hadad son of Hazael the towns that he had taken from his father Jehoahaz in war. Three times Joash defeated him and recovered the towns of Israel.

[Take off “Ben Garris” name tag] Shalom friends, thank you all for coming. My name is Joash, and as you know we've gathered here today to celebrate the life and legacy of our very dear friend,

Elisha. Life is precious, although not everyone uses their life in the same way. I don't need to tell you that Elisha chose to live his life differently than most, but before I tell you about his impact on me, I want to give the opportunity for others to come share a few words about Elisha's impact on them. Would anyone like to come forward at this time?

[Jay comes forward as Naaman] Hey everyone, some of you may remember me, but you may not recognize me now. My name is Naaman, and I was the Aramean commander fighting against Israel's King, and therefore against Elisha and his god. You may not recognize me because for most of my life, I had a painful skin condition. Perhaps it was the pain of my condition and the length of time that I had suffered from it, that when I heard that there could be someone who could heal me, I knew I had to pay him a visit, even if he was a Prophet in Israel. I'll be honest, I didn't even get to meet Elisha face to face, he didn't even come out to greet me, and technically I only got his instructions from one of his servants. Still, some people have an impact on your life in such a way that you're never the same afterwards, and as you can see by my standing before you today, I am not the same. My skin has never been healthier, but more importantly, I am a believer in Adonai. Raise your hand if you have ever been part of healing another's medical condition? It is amazing how healing another's medical condition can also lead one to find spiritual healing as well. It was Elisha's faith in the one Living God that healed me. Elisha wholeheartedly trusted Adonai, and it's not the physical healing that converted me, it was Elisha's sold-out devotion and trust that his Living God would grant healing to me; that is what changed my heart to follow Adonai. Elisha, thank you for healing me, my skin and most importantly, my heart. **[Returns to seat]**

Thank you, Naaman for that testimony. How wonderful indeed that Elisha made such an impact on your life, and you didn't even interact with him directly. May your testimony cause us to think about the impact we are having on the lives of others, how we may serve them and lead them to spiritual healing, even those we may not even directly see or speak to. Would anyone else like to share some words about Elisha?

[Mark comes forward as the resurrected man in the grave] Shalom everybody, you don't know me, but my name is Guy, Guy Walkin, son of Adam Walkin. I grew up in Jericho listening to the stories of Elisha and the wonders he did in the name of Adonai. My mom told me how Elisha healed the bitter waters that had been causing her to miscarry, and once Adonai cleaned our city's water, she successfully gave birth to me. I owe my life to Elisha's purifying our city's water source. Raise your hand if you have ever been involved in making sure other people have clean water? It's amazing how in tune to Adonai you can become when your basic living needs are met. Nonetheless, in my city there are many things that can take a person's life: sickness, wild animals, an open wound getting infected. I recall Elisha dying from his illness, and I too got sick some time after. I went to sleep and didn't wake up. That is, I didn't wake up until I found myself one day alive again and standing on Elisha's bones. I guess I should say I owe my life to Elisha twice. It's beyond my understanding, but I know this, Adonai is God of the Living! **[Returns to seat]**.

Thank you, Guy Walkin, for sharing your testimony. May the Spirit of the Living God fall fresh upon us all, that our dead spirit may come alive. Let us each have a look at ourselves and ask, if

someone else touched our bones one day, would they receive life because of our intimacy with the Living God?

Well as I mentioned in the beginning, my name is Joash, son of Ahaziah, and I was King over Israel for quite some time. I tried to be faithful, and I was for a time. Yet, in Elisha's last days, when the hand of Adonai had proclaimed I would defeat Aram, I faltered in my mission, and I doubted the trustworthiness of the Living God. Elisha never doubted. He never faltered. See, I could have, indeed **should** have, made an end of Aram once and for all. No longer would Israel question if they would live or die, I could have secured Israel's future but instead, I would only defeat Aram 3 more times. Take it from me, don't let your doubt, your worry, your half-hearted spirit, or any other excuse prevent you from finishing what God has call you to do. Keep going. When the hand of the Living God has told you what to do, keep going! Everyone will remember the living legacy of Elisha, but as for me, they'll only remember how I stopped when I should have kept leaning fully on the Living God. Shalom Shalom.

[Put on "Ben Garris" name tag] Well, SHPC, if I may reclaim my identity as Pastor Ben at this time, I wonder what these perspectives have inspired in you? Have you thought about your own life of service as you reflected on the life, ministry, and service of the prophet Elisha? Elisha leaves behind a living legacy that proclaims witness to the God of Israel, who is the God of the Bible, that this God is in fact THE LIVING GOD. Elisha was so in tune with the Living God that others received life in some miraculous ways.

We are reminded as we hear Jesus' own words concerning the resurrection, that to God, Elisha is alive now, for God is not a God of the dead, but of the living! In ways we do not yet understand, Elisha is living now fully in the unveiled presence of God, and he has given to us a living legacy that still testifies and calls each of us to have a relationship with the very same God. Do you have that relationship with the Living God? If so, what is the state of that relationship? Is your trust so aligned with the God of Life, that others would see your faith, and forsake all other gods like Naaman did and turn to the Heavenly Father? If the Living God is "out of sight, out of mind" then what might you do to change that in your life? How could you pray more often? Talk to God because he is the Living God.

Other Jewish writers said of Elisha, "**He performed twice as many signs as Elijah and marvels with every utterance of his mouth. Never in his lifetime did he tremble before any ruler, nor could anyone intimidate him at all.**" Wouldn't you like someone to say that about your legacy?

Theologian and Pastor, Charles Spurgeon said, "**Dear friends, let us seek so to live that even ungodly men may miss us when we are gone.**" (Spurgeon) Are you living in such a way that even the ungodly, those who don't know God, will miss you when your time is up?

I can think of a few people who have left a living legacy of their own although they are gone from this world. Martin Luther King Jr., Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, C. S. Lewis, Joan of Arc, just to name a few who have had an impact on the greater church, and I bet

you can name some names too. People who were family members perhaps have left a living legacy in you.

As this has been a series about service through the eyes of Elisha, I pray that each of us have pondered how we might better serve our neighbors. I place a challenge before you: find ONE ministry partner you can serve alongside consistently. Volunteer at KARM by dishing out food or helping to stock a store. Attend a medical mission trip and heal another's physical condition so that they too may find spiritual healing. Work on a building project with Operation Backyard or Habitat for Humanity. Deliver bags of food with FISH. Create an evangelism team that lovingly shares the good news about Jesus to those right here in our neighborhood because people need the Living God!

Whatever the Lord is calling you to do, do it with all your heart, keep going, don't stop, trust the Living God that you may leave a living legacy too.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.