

## October 15 – 2 Kings 3-8:6

### Elisha and the Prophetic Word

#### Large Group Teaching Review

This large section of 2 Kings focuses on the ministry of Elisha the prophet. Just before Elijah's departure, Elisha had asked him for a double portion of his spirit, and the many miracles<sup>[1]</sup> he performs in this section show that his request has been answered. Elisha's ministry testifies to God's faithfulness and commitment to his people even when they continue to drift from him.

God accomplishes his purposes for both judgment and salvation among wayward Israel through the miracles and prophetic word of Elisha the prophet.

#### Gospel Glimpses

**GOD'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE.** The various miracles recounted in these chapters (2 Kings 3–8) reflect God's gracious care for his people and his responsiveness to their expressions of faith. God's mercy extends particularly to the marginalized, the outsider, the forgotten—the widow from among the company of the prophets (4:1–7), for instance, or the four lepers outside the city gate of Samaria (7:3–15). Even the recovery of a borrowed axe head among the sons of the prophets is not too unimportant for God to notice (6:1–7). Of particular significance is God's mercy to non-Israelites, who stand outside of covenant relationship with him—large sections of these chapters are devoted to God's care for the Syrian army commander Naaman (5:1–19), and also for the Shunammite woman (4:18–37; 8:1–6). God's gracious care for all the peoples of the earth finds its fullest expression in the work of Christ, through whom Gentiles who come to faith in Christ are fully embraced as the people of God and inherit all of his promises (2 Cor. 1:20–22; Gal. 3:7).

#### Small Groups

##### Opening Announcements

1. Get-to-know-you question: What's your go-to song when you're in a good mood?
2. Winter Retreat digital applications     LIVE

##### Study Questions

##### Miracles of Elisha (ch. 4)

Second Kings 4 records various miracles performed by Elisha, including a miraculous supply of oil for the widow of one of the prophets (4:1–7), the conception and later the resuscitation of a Shunammite's son (4:8–37), and provision of food for the company of prophets (4:38–44). In what ways do the details of these miracles mirror the earlier miracles of Elijah, in line with the prophetic succession depicted in 2:9? What future miracles do they prefigure?

How do the specific miracles Elisha performs demonstrate God's care for his people and his responsiveness to them?

### **Naaman Is Cured of Leprosy (ch. 5)**

How does Naaman's response to his healing fulfill Solomon's petitions in 1 Kings 8:41–43 for Gentiles to know the true God through the nation of Israel? Consider especially Naaman's declaration and confession in 2 Kings 5:15–18.

### **Conflict with Syria (chs. 6–7)**

In 6:8–23, God protects Elisha from an army of Syrian horses and chariots. What do the details of this story reveal about God's gracious character and his protection of his people? What contemporary application might Elisha's statement in verse 16 ("Those who are with us are more than those who are with them") have for Christians experiencing persecution today?

In 6:24–7:20, the Syrians' siege of Samaria under Ben-hadad results in a terrible famine. How is the truthfulness of Elisha's word proven through the events of this story (see especially vv. 17–20)? What conclusion about "the word of the Lord" do you think the reader is intended to draw from this story?

### **The Shunammite Woman (8:1–6)**

Why do you think God included this story of the Shunammite woman within the larger narrative of 1 and 2 Kings? What does this story reveal about God's care for outsiders?

## Theological Soundings

**ANGELS.** Twice in military conflict with Syria, God's people are rescued by horses and chariots of fire (6:17; 7:6 [implied]). Earlier, when Elijah was taken to heaven, he was separated from Elisha by these same chariots and horses of fire, whom Elisha called "the chariots of Israel and its horsemen" (2:12). This seems to refer to God's divine (angelic) army—elsewhere in the Old Testament, angels are depicted using similar horse/chariot imagery (e.g., Zech. 1:7–17), and fire is often associated with God's presence throughout Scripture. Although angels are not typically visible to human eyes (Elisha has to pray for his servant to see them; 2 Kings 6:17), they nonetheless interact with this world and work toward God's purposes (e.g., Heb. 1:14; 13:2).

## Application

1. God cares for those that are outside of the nation of Israel. Read Luke 4:25-27. Jesus use the healing of Naaman and the miraculous provision for the widow Zarephath (1 Kings 17) to show this is care goes beyond the nation of Israel to all who would believe. What does this mean for you today? How does this encourage you? How does this challenge you?
2. In 2 Kings 7 we see God make an impossible promise (that the Syrians will be defeated in a day), and He keeps His promise. What are some promises from God's Word that are hard for you to believe? How does this passage help you trust the Lord more?

## Prayer

Read Eph 1 as a list of promises from God about our identity in Christ. Thank God for the truth of these promises, and ask the Lord to help each student live in light of them.