



Elisha

*“Taking up the mantle :
A transition of power”*

WEEK SIX – MIRACLES, EVEN IN DEATH

Reading: 2 Kings 6:1-7

Most of us will remember learning at school about Isaac Newton. This man, from Lincolnshire, was outstanding in the fields of mathematics, physics, astronomy, and theology. But it is the dropping of the apple from the tree which led him to develop the theory of gravity, for which he is so well known. And that, of course, is the link to our study today.

The sons of the prophets spoke to Elisha about how the place in which they were living had become too small for them all. They asked if each of them could take a beam and go to the Jordan and build a larger place.

- Why was the man so upset about the axe head with which he was cutting, fell into the water?
- Elisha was the man for the moment. Asking where it had gone into the river, he cut a stick and threw it in the water. Then the axe head rose to the surface and floated. The man must have been shocked to the core, so Elisha tells him: *“Grab it.” (NLT)*. The man reached out and grabbed it.
- I would imagine he was lost for words. How could a heavy axe head defy the laws of gravity, and float? There is only one answer: the power of God.

Remember what Jesus said: *“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” ~ Matthew 19:26.*

- Do we believe that, or do we have some ‘logical’ doubts?

Reading: 2 Kings 6:8-23

The king of Syria (probably Ben-Hadad II, about 860-841 B.C.), was extremely upset. Whenever he consulted with his officers about where to place his troops in battle against the king of Israel, that king would know and avoid the area. He thought one of his officers was a traitor; being the only logical explanation as to why this happened on a number of occasions. In more modern parlance, they all said, “not me gov!”. The solution seemed simple: go and seize Elisha.

- How did Elisha's servant respond to the sight of troops, horses, and chariots everywhere?
- What was Elisha's response?
- When God opened his servant's eyes, what did he see?
- Do we try and see situations from God's point of view? Or do we panic and become fearful?
- What can we learn from the end of this particular account?

Reading: 2 Kings 7

Read through this chapter, on your own this coming week, and ask yourself what this might teach us?

Reading: 2 Kings 8

In chapter 4, we learned how God used Elisha to raise the Shunammite woman's son from the dead. She had put aside a room in her house for the sole use of Elisha when he was passing through. He now had an important message for her as to how she must find somewhere to live because there was going to be a seven-year famine.

I think there are some important lessons here.

- Continuing with our care for people. It is so easy to forget. Pray and see if there are people you should get in touch with again.
- Having a reliable reputation. Read verses 4-6 again. Because Elisha had done the miracles in God's name, and his servant was happy to confirm it, the king restored all that she previously had. "*How then shall we live*", is a verse to which I have often referred. It means we must ALWAYS be honourable and faithful to God, who sees all things. Pray and see if you need to make things right with anyone.

Reading: 2 Kings 13:14-21

We are told that Elisha became sick with the illness from which he would die. There follows a strange incident whereby Elisha tells the king to put his hand on the bow to fire some arrows, and Elisha put his hands over those of the king. The lack of enthusiasm from the king led to Elisha telling him he had missed a great opportunity.

- We sometimes miss out on the best God has for us because our faith is half-hearted. How do we develop our faith?

Joash, the king, clearly had a great respect for Elisha, mainly because, as one commentator says: "*The dying prophet was the last vestige of hope for apostate*

Israel.” The king knew how much the kingdom of Israel had relied on Elisha for giving them the word of the Lord.

- It is important that we read God’s word and learn to rely on him for all we need.

Elisha was still powerful, even in death! Verses 20-21 describe what happened when the grave diggers saw raiders coming and hurriedly dropped the body they were supposed to be burying into Elisha’s grave. Can you picture the scene? See the headline?

We seriously underestimate what God is able, and willing, to do.

Elisha was an ordinary man but with the power of God he lived an extraordinary life.

- Elisha had the temerity to ask for the ‘double portion’. He took up the mantle of Elijah and proved that God was with him in the say way.
- Let’s open our lives to the power of God and see what he can do through us.

Prayer

Father God help us to put our trust in you. May we live out those words in Matthew’s Gospel, “ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE”, if we believe your word.

