

ELIJAH AND ELISHA
2 Kings 2–3

Memory Verse: *And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2 ESV).*

Background Helps:

In this week's readings we find the story of Elijah passing the "mantle" of prophetic ministry on to his successor, Elisha (2 Kings 2). Be sure to read also the earlier related passage in 1 Kings 19:15-21, where Elisha is first designated by the LORD as Elijah's successor. Also read the commentary on both these passages in *Faith in the Face of Apostasy*, pages 59-63, 81-92.¹

We find that Elijah and Elisha were in a master-servant, trainer-trainee relationship: see 1 Kings 19:16, 19, 21; 2 Kings 2:1-15; 3:11. There were many similarities in their two ministries:

- They had similar names: Elijah means "Yahweh is God"; Elisha means "God is salvation."
- Both spoke the word of God ("Thus says the LORD . . .").
- Both performed miracles, even similar miracles (cf. 1 Kings 17:8-16 with 2 Kings 4:1-7 and 1 Kings 17:17-24 with 2 Kings 4:18-37), authenticating their prophetic ministries.
- Both ministered significantly to a Gentile (cf. 1 Kings 17:8-24 with 2 Kings 5:1-4, and see Luke 4:24-27).
- Both are repeatedly called "a man of God."
- Both were men of prayer.

But there were differences in their ministries also; they were not clones:

- Elijah's miracles were mainly miracles of judgment, tempered by mercy; Elisha's miracles were mainly miracles of mercy, qualified by judgment.
- Elisha seems to have done about twice as many miracles as Elijah in about half the time.
- Elijah seems to have been more a loner, while Elisha associated more with a school of prophets ("the sons of the prophets").

Lesson Helps:

A possible lesson aim: My students will learn how Elijah passed on the "mantle" of ministry to Elisha, so that they will pass their own ministries to the next generation.

HOOK: Wear a mantle (cape, cloak, or shawl) to class and begin your lesson by taking the mantle off your shoulders and placing on the shoulders of another class member. Explain the symbolic meaning of this act, relating it to the story of Elijah and Elisha in 1 Kings 19:19 and 2 Kings 2:13-14. (Or, you can use the image of passing the baton.)

BOOK: (1) *Briefly* review the ministry of Elijah. (2) Tell the story of how Elijah's ministry was transferred to Elisha in 1 Kings 19:15-21 and 2 Kings 2. Among other things, emphasize that

¹ Raymond B. Dillard, *Faith in the Face of Apostasy* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 1999).

Elisha was God's choice as Elijah's successor (1 Kings 19:16). Notice the faithfulness of Elisha to his mentor Elijah in 2 Kings 2:1-15. Explain the meaning of the "double portion of Elijah's spirit" in 2 Kings 2:9. (Among all the prophets of the time, Elisha was asking to be treated like the firstborn son [Deut. 21:17], the primary successor of Elijah's ministry. God granted his request.) Notice that Elisha's ultimate focus was not on Elijah, his teacher, but on the "God of Elijah" (2 Kings 2:14). (3) Cover the beginning of Elisha's ministry in 2 Kings 2:19-25, involving both a miracle of mercy and a miracle of judgment. (If time permits in adult classes, you could also briefly touch on Elisha's ministry in 2 Kings 3.)


LOOK: Brainstorm: What are various Christian ministries both inside and outside the church (e.g., Exeter Chapel)? (Fill the whiteboard!) In which of these ministries should the "mantle" be passed to the next generation? (Theoretically, all!)

TOOK: In which of these ministries are you involved? If you are not serving, how could you get involved? (By being "drafted" or by volunteering.) How can you (1) learn a ministry from someone else and/or (2) teach a ministry to someone else? Hint:

- First, you do the ministry.
- Then, you do the ministry and they are with you watching.
- Then, they do the ministry and you are with them watching and encouraging.
- Then, they do the ministry and you are in the background, encouraging.
- Then, they do the ministry, etc.

Be sure to include the memory verse: 2 Timothy 2:2.

Home Assignment:

 Read 2 Kings 4; Hebrews 11:35a.

 Memorize Acts 26:8 ESV.