

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE OF ELISHA**

Today, we begin a new series of studies on the Life of Elisha.

Elisha was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC (2 Kgs 5:8).

His life and ministry covered a period of some 65 years. He spent about 15 years being mentored by Elijah and the last 50 years as pastor-prophet.

His name in Hebrew means God is salvation ( ). It characterizes his 50 years of ministry to the Northern Kingdom of Israel during four kings as recorded in 2 Kgs.1-13.

We will examine the lesson text by the following mathematical three-point outline.

Three anointings	(2 Kgs 19:15-17)	Two kings and one <b>prophet</b>
Seven thousand knees	(2 Kgs 19:18)	Baal worship <b>problem</b>
Twelve pairs of oxen	(2 Kgs 19:19-21)	<b>Plowing</b> , celebration, ministry

<b>This lesson will study five aspects of the introduction to the study of the Life of Elisha.</b>
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### **1. Elisha had a unique calling to the prophetic ministry recorded in our lesson text.**

We saw that he was a son of a prominent farmer in the Jordan Valley probably in the tribal territory of Issachar or western Manasseh.

Elijah was given a command to anoint two kings and one prophet. Actually, Elijah only anointed the prophet, Elisha, who anointed the two kings later.

Elijah was told to anoint Elisha – “as prophet in your place.” (2 Kgs 19:16b)

We are not told why the Lord set aside Elijah for Elisha. But we assume it had to do with his **spiritual depression** and faith cycle failure at the cave of Horeb (2 Kgs 19:9-18) regarding the angelic conflict with the prophets of Baal and Jezebel.

- God to Elijah - “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (2 Kgs 19:9, 13).
- Elijah to God - “And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” (2 Kgs 19:10, 14).
- God to Elijah - “Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.” (2 Kgs 19:18)
- God to Elijah – “Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.” (2 Kgs 19:16b)

### **2. The anointing of Elisha as prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel was rare.**

The only other recorded prophetic anointing that I am familiar with was Christ. The Hebrew word for anoint is mashach ( ).

It recorded in Isa.61:1a – “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because He has anointed Me.”

Jesus declared He was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Lk 4:17-21, 24. Jesus took the title, the **anointed one** or Messiah (mashiach) ( ) or Christ (Christos).

Then Jesus goes on to talk about the national apostate period of Elijah and Elisha (Lk 4:22-29).

**3. The call of Elisha teaches that The Lord calls willing hearts for ministry. Elisha was a successful businessman.**

His call by Elijah was unique. It occurred while Elisha was plowing – “And Elijah passed over to him and threw his mantle on him.” (1 Kgs 19:19b) At the end of ministry, Elijah left this mantle with Elisha (2 Kgs 2:13).

Yet when he was called, he left everything to become a prophet to Israel.

This was true of the 12 disciples of Jesus – “Peter began to say to Him, ‘Behold, we have left everything and followed You.’” (Mark 10:28; Matt.4:18-22)

The importance of an undivided heart or willing heart is seen in Jesus’ requirements in the public call to discipleship (Lk 9:57-62).

It is interesting that Elisha asked a similar request of Elijah as the third follower in Luke 9:61-62 and it was given – “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow you.” (1 Kgs 19:20a)

**4. Elisha spent the next 15 years under Elijah’s mentor training to become the next pastor-prophet to the nation of Israel.**

“Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour the water on the hands of Elijah.” (2 Kgs 3:11b)

Elisha was taught about the servant’s heart in his training. It is a necessary part of spiritual training of leadership – “And sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, ‘If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.’” (Mk 9:35)

Feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000 were also part of this training (Mk 6:33-44 and 8:1-10) – “For they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.” (Mk 6:52; **8:17-21**)

Elijah’s mentor training was to prepare Elisha for the next 50 years of intense ministry.

**5. Before Elijah left this earth, Elisha asked him for a “double portion of his prophetic spirit.” (2 Kgs 2:9-10).**

The double portion comes from Deut.21:15-17. Elisha called Elijah his **spiritual father** (1 Tim.1:2, 18; 1 Cor.4:15). “And he said, ‘You asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.’” (2 Kgs 2:10)

“And Elisha saw it and cried out, ‘**My father, my father,** the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!’ And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his clothes and tore them in two pieces. He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him.” (2 Kgs 2:12-13)