

June 7

2 Kings 2, 4, 6, 8

Hey, I'm Dave Irwin. Thanks for joining me for the Project 4:4 Daily Accelerator for June 7. Today we're covering 2 Kings 2, 4, 6, and 8.

Our reading today takes place during the reign of Joram, King of Israel, but the focus is fully on the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Elijah is ending his service to the LORD and Elisha is beginning a new chapter in his service.

I would like to highlight three things for us today. The first two fall into the "that's interesting" category and may help us connect the dots of scripture on a deeper level. The third falls more in the "I can use that in my life today" category and may give us more strength in our faith journey.

First, we have to note Elijah's unique departure from this earth. That day, Elijah joined a very exclusive club. Though we consider death to be the universal equalizer because everyone will eventually die, the Bible records that two individuals were allowed to pass by this final experience of life. Neither Enoch nor Elijah died before being taken out of this world. God does not tell us exactly why these men shared this rare experience. We know that both men had extraordinary faith and commitment to God, but so did many others (Abraham, Moses, Paul) who all experienced death, so that does not seem like a satisfactory answer. It may be that God is not done with Enoch and Elijah and so He is preserving their mortal bodies until the right time has come. Some have noted that the book of Revelation speaks of two witnesses from heaven who preach to the world during the tribulation. They speculate that Enoch and Elijah may be these two witnesses. Whatever the case, Enoch and Elijah remind us that God is more powerful than even the most universal experience of mankind. God is in control of everything and is not controlled by anything. He bends everything to His will.

Second, we should note a surprising similarity between the miracles of Elisha and Jesus. Elisha performed a miracle of oil in a jar; Jesus' miracle had wine in jars. Elisha raised a dead boy to life; Jesus raised several people back to life, culminating in his resurrection. Elisha fed 100 men with 20 loaves of bread with leftovers; Jesus fed thousands with less food and even more left over. Elisha healed Naaman of leprosy; Jesus healed people of leprosy as well as countless other illnesses and disabilities. "That's interesting," you say, "but what's the point?" First, this would have established a degree of credibility for Jesus with the people. They had no doubt about Elisha's position as a prophet of God. Seeing Jesus perform similar miracles on a larger scale would have helped people recognize His position and authority from God. Second, we must note the manner in which Elisha and Jesus performed their miracles. In each instance, Elisha was calling out to a power outside of himself. In contrast, Jesus was accessing a power within Himself to accomplish miracles (sometimes even without his consent). This shows that while Elisha's and Jesus' ministries shared similarities, Jesus was in another league. He did not have power from God. He was exercising His own divine power. He was not merely a prophet of God. Jesus was God, Himself, living among man as one of us.

The final thing I want to highlight for us today goes back to Elijah and Elisha. Elisha was given the role of apprentice to Elijah. His job was to follow Elijah, serve him as needed, and learn from him in order to assume his role when the time came. The time for Elijah to depart finally came and they set out on a journey directed by God. While it's not clear if Elijah and Elisha ever talked about what was about to happen, based on his reaction to the prophets who told him that Elijah would soon be gone, Elisha was well aware of what was coming. The part I want us to focus on at this point is Elijah's repeated challenge for Elisha to stay behind. Three times Elijah tells Elisha that God is sending him to a particular place and that he should stay behind. Elisha refuses each time. We are not told why this exchange happened or why it was repeated three times. It may have been a way for Elijah to release Elisha from his responsibility if Elisha wanted out. It may have simply been a cultural dynamic; an indirect way for Elijah to tell Elisha that he wanted him to be there. Whatever the case, Elisha would not back out of the responsibility he had been given. He was faithful to the work he had been called to and that positioned him to experience God's power in greater ways. If Elisha had stayed behind, he would not have witnessed God's presence in taking Elijah to heaven and it is arguable that he would not have inherited Elijah's role as God's prophet. Elisha was faithful to what God had given him and that positioned him to receive more from God.

I think most of us want to be part of big things. We want to see God do big things in our lives and through us. If that's not happening in your life, you may want to stop and consider how faithful you have been with what God has already put before you. If we aren't faithful with what He has already given us, He will never give us more.

May God grow us all into people of extraordinary faith like Elijah and Elisha. Thanks for joining me today.