

LIVING GODS WILL

Prophet of God

ELISHA



Elisha Raises Shunammite Son by Benjamin West

Born: Abel-Meholah, Palestine

Died: Samaria, Palestine

Elisha was a **prophet** of **God** from **892 – 832 BC**.

Elisha replaced **Elijah** as prophet of Israel in **851 BC**.

Elisha performed twice as many **miracles** as **Elijah**.

Elisha saw **Elijah** taken to **Heaven** in a whirlwind.

Elisha, whose name means "**God is salvation**," was the successor of **Elijah** in the office of the prophet in Israel (**1 Kings 19:16, 19–21; 2 Kings 5:8**).

He was called to follow Elijah in **1 Kings 19:19**, and he spent the next several years as the prophet's protégé, until Elijah was taken into heaven.

At that time, **Elisha** began his ministry, which lasted about **60 years**, spanning the reigns of kings Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz and Joash.

The initial call of **Elisha** is instructive. After a mighty display of **God's** power against the prophets of **Baal** and a return of the rain after a long drought, **Queen Jezebel** sought Elijah's life. Afraid, the prophet fled.

He was refreshed by an angel and prepared for a forty-day journey to Mount Horeb. There, Elijah confessed that he believed himself to be the only faithful prophet remaining. **God** told Elijah to go back home, anoint Hazael king of Aram, Jehu king of Israel, and **Elisha** to succeed him as prophet.

God said, "**Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu**" (**1 Kings 19:17**). He also reassured Elijah that there were **7,000** remaining who had not bowed to Baal.

Elijah obeyed **God's** word and found **Elisha**, who was plowing with a pair of oxen at the time. Elijah put his cloak around **Elisha**—a sign that Elijah's responsibilities would fall on **Elisha**, and **Elisha** left his oxen and ran after the prophet.

Elisha asked only to say goodbye to his family and then would return to Elijah. **Elisha** went back, slaughtered his oxen and burnt his equipment, gave the meat to the people, then followed Elijah as his servant. **Elisha** responded to the call immediately.

He completely removed himself from his former life—essentially hosting a celebration and leaving himself no option to return to his oxen. Not only did **Elisha** leave his former life, he became a servant in his new life (**1 Kings 19:21**).

Elisha seemed to love Elijah like he would a father. He refused to leave Elijah before Elijah was taken into heaven, despite Elijah's telling Elisha to remain behind. Elijah permitted **Elisha** to stay with him, and he asked what he could do for his protégé before he left.

Elisha requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit. This was not a greedy request but rather one indicating that **Elisha** wanted to be considered as Elijah's son.

Elijah told **Elisha** that, if he saw Elijah when he was taken, then the double portion would be **Elisha's**. **Elisha** did, indeed, see the chariot of fire and horses of fire that separated the men, and he saw Elijah taken to heaven in a whirlwind.

Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak and walked to the Jordan River. **Elisha** struck the water with the cloak, and it divided, just as it had done for Elijah. The other prophets who witnessed this recognized that Elijah's spirit now rested on **Elisha**. As **God** had decreed, **Elisha** would now be His prophet to the people (**2 Kings 2:1-18**).

As **God** had told Elijah on the mountain, it was during **Elisha's** ministry that organized Baal worship was eradicated (**2 Kings 10:28**). In his ministry **Elisha** traveled widely and served as an adviser to kings, a companion of the common people, and a friend of both Israelites and foreigners.

There are many well-known accounts of **Elisha's** service as prophet. He healed the waters of Jericho (**2 Kings 2:19-21**) and was jeered by youths upon whom he called a curse resulting in their death by mauling bears (**2 Kings 2:23-25**). He multiplied a widow's oil (**2 Kings 4:1-7**). He prophesied a son for a wealthy Shunammite family who hosted him and later **resurrected that same son** (**2 Kings 4:8-37**).

Elisha also removed poison from a pot of stew (**2 Kings 4:38-41**) and multiplied twenty barley loaves to feed one hundred men (**2 Kings 4:42-44**). He cured Naaman of leprosy (**2 Kings 5**) and made a borrowed ax head float (**2 Kings 6:1-7**).

The miracles **Elisha** performed are, for the most part, acts of helpfulness and blessing. Others strongly resemble some of the miracles of **Christ**, such as the multiplying of food (**Matthew 16:9-10**) and the healing of lepers (**Luke 17:11-19**).

Elisha offered counsel to the king of Israel. One incident tells of **Elisha** warning the king about the king of Aram's movements. When the king of Aram found out it was **Elisha** foiling his plans, he sought to capture the prophet.

When **Elisha's** servant, Gehazi, saw the Arameans that had come against them, he was afraid. But **Elisha** told him not to be afraid because **"those who are with us are more than those who are with them."** **And Elisha prayed, 'Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.'** **Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha"** (**2 Kings 6:16-17**).

One cannot help but recall how **Elisha** had seen similar chariots of fire when Elijah was taken to heaven. **Elisha** then prayed for the Arameans to be struck with blindness. **Elisha** led them to Samaria, the capital of Israel, before asking the **Lord** to open their eyes.

The king of Israel wondered if he should kill the captives, but **Elisha** counseled him to prepare food for them instead. When they were finished with the feast, the Aramians returned to their master, and Aram ceased raiding Israel. **Elisha** also prophesied other events of national and international importance regarding Israel and Syria.

King Jehoash, or Joash, was reigning at the time of **Elisha's** death. The king visited **Elisha** while the prophet was ill and wept over him. **Elisha** instructed Jehoash to get a bow and arrows and shoot them out the window. When Jehoash did so, **Elisha** told him this was **God's** arrow of victory over Aram.

Elisha then told the king to strike the ground with the arrows, but Jehoash stopped after only three times. **Elisha** was angered. Had Jehoash struck the ground five or six times, he would have completely destroyed Aram but would now only defeat them three times (**2 Kings 13:14–19**).

Of **Elisha's** death, **2 Kings 13:20** simply says, "**Elisha died and was buried.**" But the passage goes on to talk about Moabite raiders who came to Israel every spring: "**Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet**" (**2 Kings 13:21**). It seems that **God** chose to demonstrate His power through the prophet even after his death.

Jesus spoke of **Elisha** in **Luke 4:27**. The people had rejected **Jesus** in Nazareth and He told them that "**no prophet is accepted in his hometown**" (**Luke 4:24**). **Jesus** said there were many lepers in Israel in **Elisha's** time, yet only **Naaman**, a Syrian, was cured.

A study of the life of **Elisha** will reveal the prophet's humility (**2 Kings 2:9; 3:11**), his obvious love for the people of Israel (**2 Kings 8:11–12**), and his faithfulness in a lifelong ministry. **Elisha** was obedient to **God's** call, following Elijah eagerly and faithfully. **Elisha** clearly believed **God** and trusted Him. **Elisha** sought after **God**, and through him **God** worked powerfully.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

2 Kings 4:32–36 When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. **33** He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord. **34** And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm. **35** He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. **36** And he called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite woman." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Pick up your son."

2 Kings 4:42–44 Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, "Give it to the people, that they may eat." **43** But his servant said, "What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?" He said again, "Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the Lord: 'They shall eat and have some left over.'" **44** So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the Lord.

2 Kings 5:1 Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper.

2 Kings 5:10 And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean."

2 Kings 5:14 So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.



**Elisha and the Son of the Shunammite Woman
by Jan Sluyters**