

# 1 & 2 Kings

Elijah & Elisha

- In the midst of this history of king after king leading the people away from God, **we find two prophets who demonstrate God's grace and covenant faithfulness despite the people's sin.**
- The **narrative space** and the **narrative placement** of these two prophets **highlight their** importance to the narrative as a whole.
- The account of these two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, in 1 Kings 17 - 2 Kings 13, is the center of the book of Kings, comprising roughly **40% of the narrative.**
- One of the primary ways that the two prophets remind the people **who God is** and **what it means to live before him** is through the **presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.**

- This emphasis on the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Elisha helps us to understand his purpose in Kings and the whole of the biblical canon, and **gives us more insight into the things concerning Jesus in all the Scriptures** (Luke 24:27).

- In the context of Kings, as so many in Israel have rejected God and his covenant, Elisha serves not only as a prophet calling the people to covenant faithfulness, but as the **Spirit-empowered man of God** who **walks with God, represents God, and demonstrates the way to covenant faithfulness.**

- As the Spirit-empowered man of God **leading the people to covenant faithfulness**, however, Elisha serves as more than an example of living before God under the Old Covenant; he also **serves as a preview of what it will mean to walk with God in the New Covenant in Jesus Christ**, which is ultimately how God's people will know him and what it means to live for him.

- In 2 Kings 2 **we have a pause** from considering kings **to focus exclusively on Elijah and Elisha**, Elijah near the end of his prophetic ministry, Elisha near the beginning of his.
- In our passage today (2 Kings 2:1-14) we read of Elisha taking his place as Elijah's successor, after God calls Elijah home.

## ELIJAH AND MOSES ANALOGY

- The analogy of Elijah to Moses has already been made in Kings in 18-19, and here it is taken even further.
- Moses is the great prophet like no other prophet in the OT (Deut 34:10) but Elijah comes to be considered his equal, a **prophet like unto Moses**.
- Like **Moses**, who dies in Moab and **is mysteriously buried by God** in an unknown grave (Deut 34:5-6), so **Elijah disappears** east of the Jordan **by God's hand**, without a trace.

## ELIJAH AND MOSES ANALOGY

- Moses does not live to see the conquest under Joshua, and neither does Elijah live to see the full purging of Baal worship in the land.
- Just like **Moses appointed Joshua** as his successor, so does **Elijah appoint Elisha**.
- In both instances the **transference of leadership occurs at a crucial moment in Israel's history**, when military and religious forces combine to affect a conquest of pagan worship, when God enacts a holy war through his ministry

## ELISHA AND JOSHUA ANALOGY

- Joshua means “Jesus Saves” – Elisha means “God saves”
- Elijah takes his cloak, something we already know from 1 Kings 19 is a symbol of the Holy Spirit’s anointing and power, rolls it up, and strikes the waters, so they could cross on dry ground.
- In Joshua’s day, the **greatest threat** to Israel is **assimilation** to pagan worship.
- **Elisha will continue the battle Elijah has begun.** The sons of the prophets represent the remnant of believers in the land that listen to God and his prophets and are blessed, and the dynasty of Ahab is now the Canaanites, who don’t listen and receive judgment.



## ELISHA AND JOSHUA ANALOGY

- Elisha will have a big part in **eradicating the house of Ahab** by the hand of Jehu (2 Kings 9-10), just as **Joshua did in eradicating the Canaanites**.
- The book of Joshua focuses on the success of the conquest, but even in Joshua there are many statements about the battle not being complete and the Canaanites remaining in the land. Eventually, Israel settles with them, and eventually takes up their worship practices.
- In the same way, Elisha has many successes: Aram is defeated, the Omrides (Ahab's dynasty) are overthrown, Baal worship is wiped out in Israel (2 Kings 10:28), but the influence of Canaanite worship continues, Asherah remains (2 Kings 13:6), and Baal eventually comes back (Hosea 2:8), leading to the Exile.

## ELISHA AND JOSHUA ANALOGY

- We are meant to see that God has **called a people out to himself**, sent them prophets to guide and lead them, **desires his people to walk in his ways** and **provides for them to do that**, and will **protect those he calls**, but that **ultimately the people fail** to walk before him.
- However, **God doesn't give up**, he sends Elijah, he sends Elisha, and **eventually he sends the one they both point to**, who succeeds where we fail.

## **ELISHA AND JESUS ANALOGY**

- It's only after they cross over that Elijah refers to what they both knew all along – he's about to go somewhere, and it's happening now, so **he tells Elisha to ask for whatever he wants.**
- **Elisha asks for a double portion of his spirit**
  - This refers to the customs of inheritance, with the firstborn receiving double honor above his siblings
  - Elisha is simply asking to be designated by Elijah as his true and legitimate successor.

## ELISHA AND JESUS ANALOGY

- When Elisha strikes the waters with Elijah's mantle **it was evidence that his request had been fulfilled**, he had received the Spirit, the prophetic commission.
- When John baptizes Jesus, instead of the river opening, the heavens opened – God's Spirit descends and comes upon Jesus – and God's voice declares that he is the firstborn, **he has the double portion of the Spirit** (Matt 3:16-17).
- What does the name Jesus mean? "God saves" *Matt 1:21 - "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."*
- Elisha means "God saves"

## ELISHA AND JESUS ANALOGY

- At the Jordan River, John the Baptist would anoint his successor, **the Holy Spirit would descend upon him in fullness**, like a dove.
- Making this analogy even more explicit is the connection Jesus draws between Elijah and John the Baptist, describing him as the “**Elijah who was to come**” (Matt 11:14; cf. Matt 17:12), the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy that claimed Elijah would come again before the Day of the Lord (Mal 4:5-6).
- The angel Gabriel also tells John’s father Zechariah that John would minister “**in the spirit and power of Elijah**” (Luke 1:17), thereby fulfilling Malachi’s prophecy.

## ELISHA AND JESUS ANALOGY

- Luke 4:16-21 – The point of Jesus' sermon is that **he is the Spirit-empowered prophet who will save his people and bring them back to God.**
- We know this because when the people who had known Jesus from his childhood reject him and his message (Mark 6:1-6; Luke 4:22), **Jesus compares his ministry to Elijah and Elisha**, explicitly calling only Elisha a prophet after he has referred to himself as a prophet (Luke 4:24-27) – **the only direct reference to Elisha in the NT.**

## **ELISHA AND JESUS ANALOGY**

- Like Elisha, Jesus **gathers faithful followers** (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:12-16; cf. 2 Kgs 2:15), **feeding them miraculously** (Mark 6:35-44; 8:1-10; cf. 2 Kgs 4:38-44).
- Like Elisha, Jesus was an **itinerant miracle worker bringing life, blessing, and judgment through the power of the Holy Spirit to a people who had forgotten God.**

## ELISHA AND JESUS ANALOGY

- Both Elisha and Jesus:
  - **cleanse lepers** (2 Kings 5; Mark 1:40-45)
  - **heal the sick** (2 Kings 4:34-35; Mark 8:22-25)
  - **defy gravity** (2 Kings 6:6; Matt 14:22-33)
  - **reverse death** by raising sons and restoring them to their mothers (2 Kings 4:1-7; Luke 7:11-17)
  - **help widows** in desperate circumstances
  - are **kinsman redeemers** to save from slavery (2 Kings 4:1-7; Luke 4:19)
  - **feed the hungry** (2 Kings 4:1-7; Mark 8:1-12)
  - **minister to the Gentiles** (2 Kings 5:1-16)
  - **prepare** (2 Kings 6:20-23) **and sit at table with sinners** (Luke 5:29)
  - **lead captives** (2 Kings 6:18-20; Eph 4:7-8)
  - **have a covetous disciple** (Gehazi and Judas)
  - **end their lives in a life-giving-tomb from which people flee** (2 Kings 13:20-21; Mark 16:1-8)



## **ELISHA AND JESUS ANALOGY**

- Elisha's miracles **testify to the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in his life in a way that is unique in Scripture until the coming of Jesus Christ**, when God testifies to the ministry of his own Son through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit upon him, seen in Jesus' miracles (Heb 2:3-4).
- Jesus is the Second Elisha just as Elisha was the Second Joshua, the one who lives up to the name "God saves" (Matt 1:21).
- Whereas Joshua and Elisha's missions were never completed, **Jesus succeeds in his conquest.**
- In a very meaningful way, **Elisha's life and ministry in the Holy Spirit served as a preview of what life with God could look like under the New Covenant**, and **Jesus makes the preview a reality for all who turn from their sin and turn toward God.**

## ELISHA AND JESUS ANALOGY

- **Jesus is the great and final prophet, the Spirit-filled Man, and the captain of the Lord's armies (Rev 19:11-16).**
- And now we fight, differently than ancient Israel of course – **our weapons are spiritual** – the Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17), words, principles, truth – demolishing every pretense that sets itself against God (2 Cor 10:4-5), wearing our armor, **knowing that Jesus leads us every step of the way (Matt 28:18-20).**
- We are sons and daughters **filled with the Spirit, living by the Spirit, speaking God's Word by the Spirit**, doing even greater things than our Master, as we anticipate the fullness of the conquest, the **coming of the Kingdom of God.**