

Lesson 29 - “He Took Up ... the Mantle of Elijah”

2 Kings

Purpose: To help understand how the authority (mantle) passes from one prophet to another, to encourage them to obey the words of the prophets, and to assure them that the power of God is greater than any other power.

My lessons take a different path than the Gospel Doctrine lesson manual. The lesson outline looks closer at the doctrinal topics included in the lesson purpose and scripture block. The lessons are designed to challenge mature, active Latter-Day Saints who have a solid Gospel foundation and are looking for insights into the scriptures that will broaden their faith and understanding.

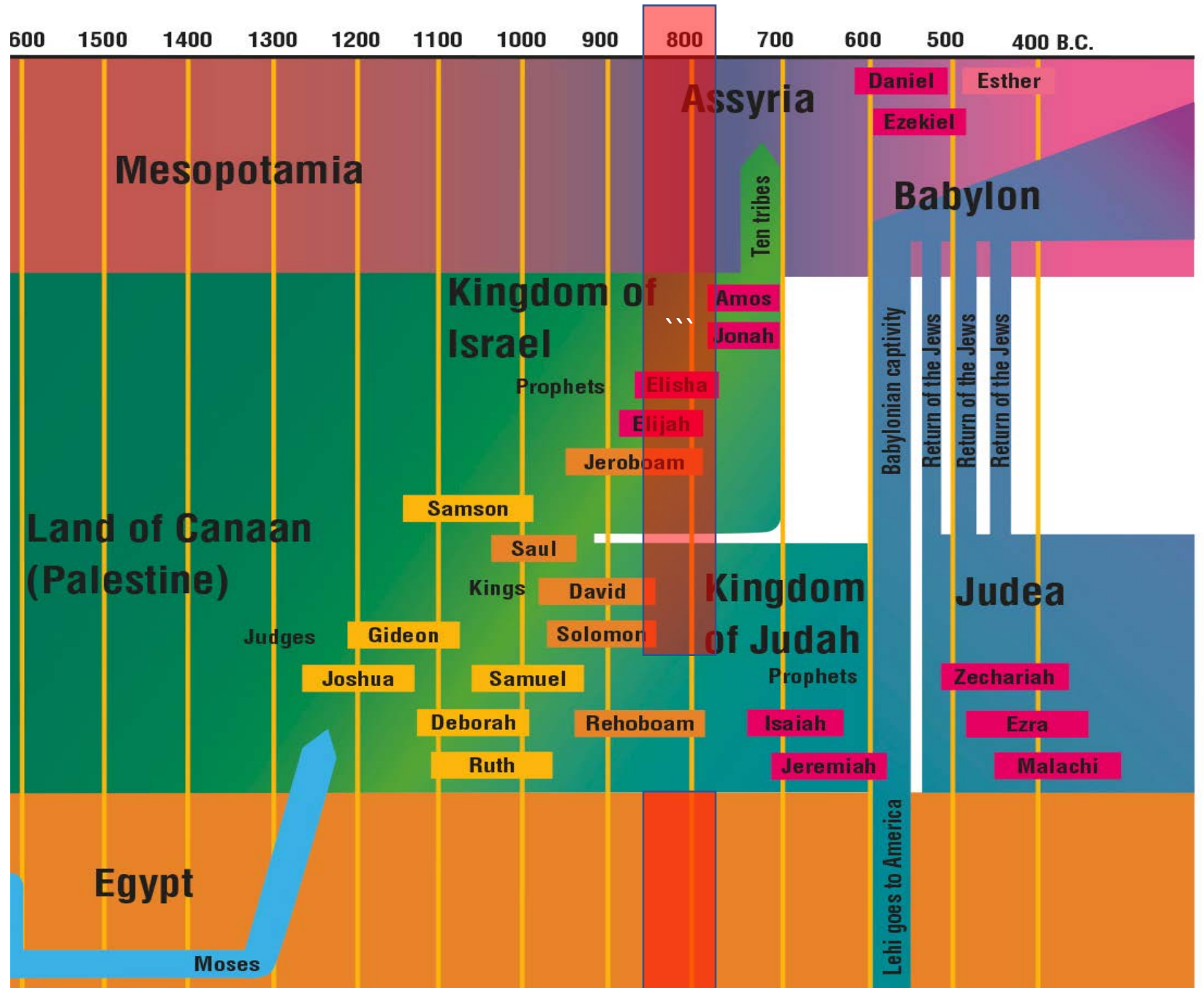
If you are interested in downloading the Powerpoint file, links to source material or reading posts about improving Gospel Doctrine class preparation, delivery and engagement, you can join my Facebook Group and have full access to the content posted there. The link is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188904648521022/>

Last Week's Lesson Challenge

Last week's challenge is to better understand Elijah's faith and priesthood power and consider what we should do in our lives to emulate Elijah in some small way.

Would anyone wish to share their thoughts during the past week on the challenge?

Elisha the Prophet



The Articles of Faith explain the basic doctrines and practices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Four of the Articles of Faith (5, 6, 7 and 9) address our belief in being led by and sustaining prophets.

5 We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

6 We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.

7 We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.

9 We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

Many religions have had prophets, ancient prophets. Christianity has the prophets of the Bible including Jesus Christ. Judaism has the prophets of the Old Testament. Islam has the prophets of the Qur'an. Buddhism has Buddha.

Some religious leaders today consider themselves "prophets" because they prophesy.

Before Jesus Christ ascended to heaven after the Resurrection, he established His church, led by a First Presidency and Apostles whom he had called, ordained and set apart by the laying on of His hands. In a short time, those Apostles were martyred and the church fell into apostasy. We don't know when the line of authority established by Jesus Christ in the original Twelve was broken, but it was and for 17 centuries there were no prophets and apostles who had been called, ordained and set apart by the laying on of hands by someone having authority of Jesus Christ.

The absence of prophets ended in 1829 when Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were initially ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist and, subsequently, the Melchizedek by Peter, James and John. Since that time, the authority to call, ordain and set apart prophets and apostles has been directly passed down by the laying on of hands, using the authority and under the direction, of Jesus Christ.

The Beautiful Story of Elijah's Ascension into Heaven

[2 Kings 2:8-15](#)

8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters (the Jordan River), and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

9 ¶ And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

12 ¶ And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

13 He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;

14 And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

15 And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

Was Elijah Really Taken into Heaven?

The term heaven has more than one meaning. Sometimes it is used to mean the sky; at other times it refers to the celestial glory. **Elijah was taken from this earth as a translated being, but not into celestial glory.** The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

“Many have supposed that the doctrine of translation was a doctrine whereby men were taken immediately into the presence of God, and into an eternal fullness, but this is a mistaken idea. Their place of habitation is that of the terrestrial order, and a place prepared for such characters He held in reserve to be ministering angels unto many planets, and who as yet have not entered into so great a fullness as those who are resurrected from the dead. ‘Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.’ (see Hebrews 11:35.)

“Now it was evident that there was a better resurrection, or else God would not have revealed it unto Paul. Wherein then, can it be said a better resurrection. This distinction is made between the doctrine of the actual resurrection and translation: translation obtains deliverance from the tortures and sufferings of the body, but their existence will prolong as to the labors and toils of the ministry, before they can enter into so great a rest and glory.” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 170–71.)

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-kings-malachi/chapter-5?lang=eng>

Elisha's story is told as a series of miracles he performs. The Bible Dictionary says the following about Elisha.

God of salvation or God shall save.

Attendant and disciple of Elijah, and afterwards his successor; but while Elijah was a child of the desert, Elisha lived in cities. He was of a gentle and affectionate disposition and without that fiery zeal by which his master had been distinguished. They seem to have been together some six or seven years.

After Elijah's translation, Elisha was the leading prophet of the northern kingdom and the trusted adviser of the kings of Israel. His miracles form the chief part of his recorded work. These were for the most part acts of kindness and mercy and included healing a bitter spring; dividing the waters of the Jordan; obtaining water for the people and livestock to drink; multiplying the widow's oil; raising a boy from the dead; curing Naaman of leprosy; healing a poisonous pottage; causing an iron axe to float; and striking the Syrians with blindness. **His ministry lasted more than 50 years, during the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Joash.**

<https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bd/elisha?lang=eng>



[2 Kings 2:19-25](#)

19 ¶ And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren.

20 And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him.

21 And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.

22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

23 ¶ And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.

24 And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

25 And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

The importance of the story of Elisha healing the well of Jericho is found in [Joshua 6:26](#) where, after the battle for Jericho, Joshua curses the rebuilding of the city

26 ¶ And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.

Elisha's miracle with the salt lifts that curse.

Should Elisha Be Blamed for the Death of These “Children”?

In answering this question consider that the word that in the King James Version is translated “little children” means young as compared to old, and can be translated not only as child, but as young man, meaning a servant or one fit to go out to battle.

In verse 24 the idea ends. This ending is indicated by a period after “and cursed them in the name of the Lord.” The verse then states that two she bears came out of the woods. The assumption that Elisha directed the bears may not be justified. Clarke suggested: “But is it not possible that these forty-two were a set of unlucky young men, who had been employed in the wood, destroying the whelps of these same she-bears, who now pursued them, and tore them to pieces, for the injury they had done? We have already heard of the ferocity of a bear robbed of her whelps; see at the end of [2 Samuel chap. 17]. The mention of she-bears gives some colour to the above conjecture; and, probably, at the time when these young fellows insulted the prophet, the bears might be tracing the footsteps of the murderers of their young, and thus came upon them in the midst of their insults, God's providence ordering these occurrences so as to make this natural effect appear as a Divine cause. If the conjecture be correct, the bears were prepared by their loss to execute the curse of the prophet, and God's justice guided them to the spot to punish the iniquity that had been just committed.” (Commentary, 2:486.)

2 Kings 4:1-7

1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.

3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.

4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out.

6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

While a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, Elder Ezra Taft Benson mentioned the story of Elisha, the woman, the debt and the oil as part of an illustration of the Saint's need to stay out of debt.

“The Lord desires his Saints to be free and independent in the critical days ahead. But no man is truly free who is in financial bondage. “Think what you do when you run in debt,” said Benjamin Franklin, “you give to another power over your liberty.” “... **pay thy debt and live ...**” said Elisha. (2 Kgs. 4:7.) And in the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord says, “... it is my will that you shall pay all your debts.” (D&C 104:78.)”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1973/10/prepare-ye?lang=eng>

[2 Kings 4:8-17](#)

8 ¶ And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great (*wealthy*) woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

9 And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.

10 Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

11 And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.

13 And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

14 And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

15 And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

16 And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

17 And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

The Shunammite Woman - The Shunammite was a wealthy Israelite woman who was married and childless when she began serving Elisha, providing him sustenance when he traveled through the city. She and her husband even had a special room built onto their house for Elisha to use during his travels.

A grateful Elisha asked her what he could do for her. Apparently humbly satisfied with her life and circumstances, she asked for nothing. Elisha's servant, however, pointed out to Elisha that the Shunammite woman was childless, so Elisha promised her a child that would be born within a year. She responded with cautious disbelief, but as promised, she bore a son. When her son was grown, he became ill and died. The Shunammite woman immediately went to get Elisha, who came to her home and restored her son to life. (See 2 Kings 4:8–37.)

A few years later, Elisha warned the Shunammite woman to take her family to another land to avoid a lengthy famine. The faithful family immediately obeyed, leaving their home and their land. Through their obedience to the prophet, not only was the family preserved but their home and their lands were restored to them when the famine was over. (See 2 Kings 8:1–6.)

[2 Kings 4:18-26](#)

18 ¶ And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

19 And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

20 And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

21 And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.

22 And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

24 Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee.

25 So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite:

26 Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

The continuing story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman illustrates the great faith she had in Jehovah's prophet.

The child, whom she had by a miracle, suddenly falls ill and dies as his mother holds him. She quietly takes him to the room where Elisha stayed, lays the child on the bed, closes the door and tells no one, including the child's father, that the child is dead.

She asks her husband to get one of the young men that worked for him and have him get horses for them to ride to Elisha upon. Her husband questions her and she only tells him that all shall be well.

She tells the young men to ride on with haste and to only slow down if she tells him to.

As she approaches, Elisha sees her and tells Gehazi to go and meet her and ask her what is wrong. Elisha hasn't been told that her child has died. She tells Gehazi, that it is well.

[2 Kings 4:27-37](#)

27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

30 And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord.

34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Elisha doesn't understand why is unaware of the child's death. The woman says "Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?" Taken as written, she appears to complain to Elisha that the child she was given by a miracle has now been wrongly taken her. However, her words can be interpreted to say "*Let not your words be a lie,*" or "*Let your words come true.*" a statement of hope in Elisha's prophetic calling.

Gehazi is sent on ahead with instructions. He can likely travel faster alone than Elisha and the woman. Gehazi does what Elisha's instructs him to do, but the child is still dead.

Elisha goes to the child and lays on top of the child and the child's body began to warm. The child is still dead and Elisha, after walking in the main part of the house, goes and lies upon the child a second time. This time the child sneezes seven times and opens his eyes. Elisha tells Gehazi to bring the Shunammite woman who bows before Elisha in thanks, picks up her alive again child and goes back into the house.

[2 Kings 6:1-7](#)

1 And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

2 Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

3 And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.

4 So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

5 But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.

6 And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.

7 Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

Why Did Elisha Perform This Miracle?

The scarcity of iron and its great value were not sufficient reason to perform such a miracle. “The prophet’s powers were exerted to help one who was honest enough to be the more concerned for his loss because the axe was not his own” (Dummelow, Commentary, p. 232).

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-kings-malachi/chapter-5?lang=eng>

The most well known Elisha miracle is the cleansing of Naaman, the Syrian captain. While a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley characterized the story of Elisha and Naaman in this manner.

“Do not let pride stand in your way. If that is a problem, there is a story from the Old Testament I should like to give you:

Naaman was captain of the host of the king of Syria, a great man, “a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.” And Naaman’s wife had a little maid, a daughter of Israel, who said to her mistress: “Would God my lord [Naaman] were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.”

When Naaman heard this he prepared rich gifts and a letter to the king of Israel. But the king, learning of the reason for Naaman’s coming, was frightened, for he had not the power to cleanse the leper. Then Elisha the prophet sent word to the king that he would deal with the captain.

“So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.”

But Elisha did not even so much as go out to greet the captain. He sent a messenger to Naaman saying, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.”

Naaman was insulted that he should be told to wash in Jordan when there were cleaner streams in his own land, and “he turned and went away in a rage.”

But his servants pleaded with him to do as Elisha had suggested. The proud captain finally relented, and the scripture records, “Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” (See 2 Kgs. 5:1–14.)

And so I repeat, do not let pride stand in your way. The way of the gospel is a simple way. Some of the requirements may appear to you as elementary and unnecessary. Do not spurn them. Humble yourselves and walk in obedience. I promise that the results that follow will be marvelous to behold and satisfying to experience.”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1976/10/everything-to-gain-nothing-to-lose?lang=eng>

2 Kings 13:14-21

14 ¶ Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

15 And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

16 And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

17 And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them.

18 And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.

19 And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.

20 ¶ And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

21 And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

In 2 Kings 13 we learn of the last days of Elisha's mortal life. Jehoash, king of Israel, sought the prophet before his death, perhaps feeling that Elisha alone held the key to Israel's future safety. Elisha responded by inviting Jehoash to open a window and shoot an arrow toward the east. The arrow symbolized the Lord's deliverance of Israel from the Syrians. Elisha also told the king to shoot some arrows into the ground, which he did. "The shooting of the arrows to the earth was intended to symbolize the overthrow of the Syrians" (Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary, 3:1:377). The king shot only three arrows. For this Elisha chastised him, saying that had Jehoash shot five or six times he would "have smitten the Syrians to destruction" (2 Kings 13:19). <https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-kings-malachi/chapter-5?lang=eng>

We also learn that after Elisha dies and is buried, men are burying another man whose body is cast into Elisha's sepulchre in haste to avoid a band of men coming upon them. The dead man touched the bones of Elisha and was resurrected.

In late 2017, President Thomas S. Monson, President of the Church and Prophet, died and his First Presidency was dissolved. In 2015 Elders L. Tom Perry and Richard G. Scott and President Boyd K. Packer died. L. Tom Perry, who at the time was third in the Apostle line of seniority, died in May 2015. In July 2015, President Boyd K. Packer died, who was serving as President of the Quorum of the Twelve because he was second in Apostle line of authority behind President Monson. The deaths of Elder Perry and President Packer would move Elder Russell M. Nelson from fourth in line to second in line. Russell M. Nelson became the President of the Quorum of the Twelve.

With President Monson's death in January 2018, his First Presidency was dissolved and his First and Second Counselors -- Henry B. Eyring and Dieter F. Uchtdorf, respectively --, returned to the positions of Apostle seniority in the Twelve. As the living senior Apostle, President Russell M. Nelson was called, ordained and set apart as President of the Church and Prophet by the other living Apostles.



In the April 2018 General Conference and after a Solemn Assembly was held to sustain the new President of the Church and his Counselors, Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said the following about the choosing of a new Prophet.

The selection of a prophet is made by the Lord Himself. *There is no campaigning, no debates, no posturing for position, no dissension, distrust, confusion, or commotion. I too confirm that the power of heaven was with us in the upper room of the temple as we prayerfully encircled President Nelson and felt the undeniable approval of the Lord upon him.*

*President Nelson's selection to serve as God's prophet was made long ago. The Lord's words to Jeremiah also apply to President Nelson: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." **Only three years ago, Elder Nelson, at age 90, was fourth in seniority, with two of the three senior Apostles being younger in age than he was. The Lord, who controls life and death, selects His prophet. President Nelson, at age 93, is in amazing health.** We hope he will be with us for another decade or two, but for now we are trying to persuade him to stay off the ski slopes.*

While we sustain the prophet as the Lord's anointed, let it be clear that we worship only God, our Heavenly Father, and His divine Son. It is through the merits, the mercy, and the grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ, that we can one day enter again into Their presence.

This Week's Lesson Challenge

The story of Elisha is one of miracles. It is also an ancient scriptural example of the “mantle” of Jehovah’s prophet being passed on from one to another.

When a man is called to be an Apostle, he is also being called to possibly be the President of the Church and Prophet. Jesus Christ determines who will be Prophet by the length of time that an Apostles lives and serves. The living Apostles hold the authority of Jesus Christ to call, ordain and sustain the senior Apostle to be President of the Church and Prophet.

This week consider that Russell M. Nelson is President and Prophet because he was chosen by Jesus Christ. Does this change your view of his role in promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and leading the Church on Earth?