

Day 67 – May 2

As we examine the life and ministry of Elisha the prophet, we see story after story comparing him with Elijah, and even some foreshadowing of Jesus. The story of Elijah seemed to follow a timeline, but this story is a string of miracle stories convincing us of his status as a “man of God”.

We begin with another widow and son and flowing oil story, just like Elijah’s when he went to Zarephath. Only this time, it’s not just bread for the family, but an overflowing amount of oil that produces enough to pay their debts and then some. This is followed by an opposite woman, a wealthy woman with a husband, but this woman has no child. Elisha promises her one and indeed she is blessed with a son. However, he soon dies and is raised to life by Elisha, again paralleling Elijah’s ministry. The famine finishes the parallels between Elisha and his mentor.

But then we come into a group of different miracles than we’ve seen before. Curing poison in the pot, feeding 100 people with 20 loaves of bread, healing Naaman the Syrian, and even a floating axe head... these miracles are unique and interesting because of it.

But we cannot read the feeding of the 100 without thinking of Jesus’ feeding 5000 with 5 loaves. This gospel story is shared to prove Jesus is greater even than Elisha. And the healing of Naaman has its own lessons about pride and humility.

But as we examine Jesus’ reference to these stories, we come to Elijah and the widow of Zarephath and Elisha healing Naaman the Syrian. Jesus references both of these to make the point, in His own hometown nonetheless, that God is not reserved for the Jews but even here in Israel’s history is working among the foreign population, sending His prophets to those outside His people to reveal His power there. This seems to be a deeply appropriate lesson for us today as well. I think Jesus would share these stories and so many others through history with us to say that God is at work among populations we discount or consider devoid of God’s blessing or acceptance. And Elijah and Elisha, according to Jesus Himself, proves just that.

Might we be God’s servants sent to “foreign” populations with the power of the Holy Spirit? Or might we be those foreign populations that God is working in? Hard questions, but important ones, at least according to Jesus.