

The God of Elijah

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon explores the revelation of God's power and presence in the lives of Elijah and Elisha, highlighting the God of life, death, earth, and heaven.

Topics: "Trust in God's Provision", "God's Power"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the significance of seeking the God of Elijah and Elisha, highlighting Elisha's desire for God's supernatural power rather than mourning his mentor's absence. He illustrates how God provided for Elijah in times of crisis and how Elisha's ministry was marked by even greater miracles, showcasing God's ability to meet human needs in various circumstances. The sermon calls believers to recognize God's omnipotence and grace, encouraging them to trust in His provision and presence in their lives. Simpson urges the congregation to cry out for the God of Elijah and Elisha, who is ever-present and ready to act in their lives.

Transcript

"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" (2 Kings 2:14.)

Always have I been glad that Elisha did not say, "Where is Elijah?" He had lost his friend and spiritual father, and if ever a sense of bereavement could have been justified, it would have been in the case of Elisha. But his only thought was of the Master and not of the servant. Back of all Elijah's marvelous life and work, he saw only the infinite resources of that God that could be as much to him as He had been to his master. The deep cry of his soul was not for mere human sympathy, but for the manifestation of God's supernatural power and presence. The deep need of Elisha's life was the same deep need that every earnest soul feels today -- the revelation of God, the realization of the supernatural.

Elisha was thinking of all that God had been to Elijah and was longing that He might be the same to him. Oh, that our hearts might have the same longing to know the God of Elijah, the God of Elisha!

THE GOD OF ELIJAH

How much Jehovah had been to the servant whom He had just translated into His glorious presence! Suddenly called from the solitude of Gilead, this strange, lonely man, whose life and character had been molded amid the majesty of nature alone with his God, was immediately projected into the very midst of an age of unparalleled wickedness and a scene of godless culture and luxury. The beautiful capital of the

kingdom of Israel was under the dominion of the wicked and worthless Ahab, whose conduct and scepter were wholly under the control of that infamous woman whose name has ever since stood as the symbol of every kind of evil -- Jezebel, the Sidonian idolatress.

Single-handed, the prophet of Gilead was called upon to fight the combined forces of a wicked court, a mercenary and idolatrous priesthood, and a whole people turned from the way of godliness and sunk either in sin or heartless apathy. The situation would have been a desperate one but for the resources of God. With a faith that never faltered but once, the mighty prophet met the emergency and claimed the fulness of his divine equipment. At his word the heavens were sealed and the harvest withered, and at the same word the treasures of rain were opened and the earth gave forth her fruit. The ravens of the wilderness ministered unto him, and the widow's little store of meal and oil was multiplied until the months of famine had gone.

At last all Israel was gathered at his command for a mighty convocation on Mount Carmel, and there he stood alone to vindicate the name of Jehovah against the wicked Jezebel, the angry Ahab, the eight hundred prophets of Baal and the myriads of Israel. The altar was prepared; the trenches were dug and filled with water; the vain attempts of the heathen prophets were repeated again and again and only met with ignominious failure. Then the final, momentous test was uttered and the power of Omnipotence summoned to send the heavenly fire. Quick as the lightning flash it fell, devouring the sacrifices, licking up the floods that filled the trenches, and blazing before the wondering gaze of the assembled myriads until their intense emotion could hold back no longer, and thundering from that mighty court the shout went up, echoing from Carmel's rocky vales, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

Swiftly the victory was followed to its awful finish. The prophets of Baal were slain before the reaction had time to come. Then, bending in agonized prayer before his God, the prophet claimed, as the climax of the whole wondrous scene, the opening heavens and the descending rain. Girding his loins like some great leader, in mighty triumph he ran before the chariot of Ahab to the entrance of the palace gates, while the torrents fell and the nation rejoiced that at length the judgment was passed and the heart of the people turned back again.

But even greater than this was the revelation of Jehovah's power in the life of Elijah. To him it was permitted, before any other messenger of Jehovah, to burst open the very gates of death itself and summon back the departed spirits from the unseen world. When his work was done, a yet higher triumph awaited him; for he himself was raised even beyond the touch of death and was carried to the heavenly world with horses and chariots of fire.

The Lord God of Elijah is the God of life and death, the God of earth and heaven, the God of nations and princes and kings, the God of nature and grace, the God of judgment and retribution, the God who is a consuming fire, mightier than all the forces of nature, of man, of earth, of hell. This mighty God, whose working Elisha had witnessed in the life of his master and whose presence he claimed as he went forth, proved His infinite resources in a life yet more wonderful than even Elijah's had been.

THE GOD OF ELISHA

Elisha's was a larger life than even Elijah's. While the prophet of fire was a more startling figure and, perhaps, reached at times a higher flight than his successor, yet Elisha's sphere took a broader sweep and reached a plane nearer to humanity at large and more helpful to the ordinary man and woman.

We would suggest to our readers to take a single week and every day read a chapter for seven successive days, commencing with the second chapter of Second Kings, reading to the seventh, and then concluding on the seventh day with the thirteenth chapter, which gives the last scenes in his closing life. Such a review will bring God nearer to our conceptions, awaken in us the intense desire for such a life and walk with Him. and often prompt the cry and prayer, Where is the Lord God of Elisha? Let us glance at some of these representative scenes.

Looking back to the last days of Elijah and the transition of his ministry to his successor, we are struck, as the very first illustration of God's resources, with the wonderful way in which Jehovah shows His ability to choose His agents and supply the worker that He most needs at every emergency and crisis in the history of His kingdom. Elijah had just failed and fled from Jezebel in the supreme moment of his triumph. Too elated, perhaps, the reaction had come before he was prepared to withstand it, and so that humiliating chapter is written in the story of his life, "He arose, and went for his life."

But how tenderly God dealt with him! He let him run until he was thoroughly tired out, let him rest under the juniper tree, and awoke him again and again and again, ministering to his hunger and weariness, until the tired prophet was rested and refreshed. And then God sent him to Horeb that He might give him His last commissions. One of these commissions was a release from the work of which, for a moment, he allowed himself to grow tired, and with it the appointment of those that were to succeed him. "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus," was the Lord's message, "and when you come, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shall you anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat shall you anoint to be prophet in your room." How swiftly he was excused. How soon his successor was elected! How easy it is for God to go through the court of a sinful kingdom or to the farm and field where some humble Elisha is following the oxen and the plough, and call for the instrument He needs just at the moment He requires him. Oh, how humbling it is to our self-importance and pride! God does not need any voice, and it is just an honor and a privilege that He lets us serve Him. Let us be very careful how we get tired too soon or ask to be relieved. God may take us at our word, and He has plenty of others to fill our place.

Second, we have another illustration in 1 Kings 22: 34 of how easy it is for God to pick out an instrument, even an unconscious instrument, for His work and plan. Long before He had decreed and announced the punishment of Ahab for his crimes, and His longsuffering had waited and spared the wicked king again and again. At last the judgment came, but the means were most solemn in their simplicity. Ahab was just returning from the battlefield where he had escaped the assaults of the foe and was securely riding in his chariot away from harm and danger, but "a certain man drew a bow at a venture," and the arrow sped from the string, the sender neither knowing nor caring whither. At that very moment by a slight movement the joints of Ahab's coat of mail were opened at the very spot which that arrow struck. It entered and pierced him to the heart, and he cried, "Carry me out of the host; for I am wounded." As the sun sank in the west, his life ebbed away and the judgment long threatened was at last fulfilled. How easy it is for God to strike His foes. How little we need to worry and trouble ourselves about our enemies! "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, . . . for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord."

A blatant infidel, it is said, was once returning with a party of friends from the market place of a village in England, where he had just defied God, if there was a God, to strike him dead. And as no harm had come to him his godless companions were profanely exulting and glorying in their shame. They were riding along a country road when suddenly their leader fell from his horse in convulsions and as they gathered around him they found he was gasping for breath and in a few moments was dead. No apparent cause

could be assigned. Therefore a post-mortem examination was held, and it was found that a little insect, a sand fly, almost the smallest creature that God has created, had been sent by Him as the executioner of the judgment he brought upon himself. This little creature had penetrated his windpipe and choked him to death. God would not condescend to strike him for his impudent infidelity with His own direct hand, but sent that most insignificant creature in the world to show at once His omnipotence and His contempt. This is the God of Elisha. This is our God. Let us trust Him. Let us fear Him. Let us commit the keeping of our souls unto Him as unto a faithful Creator.

Third, the God of Elisha is the God that can remove the most formidable difficulties from our pathway. The moment Elisha had received the promised power of the Spirit of God, he was met, not by bands of welcoming angels, but by the swelling tide of the angry Jordan that refused to allow him to pass over to the field of his future ministry, where the critical young students of Bethel were watching to see what kind of a prophet he was. But with a single cry, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" he smote the waters and called upon the same almighty resources, and the floods divided and the angry torrent became an escort to open the way to the other side; and as he marched across in triumph, the critical students, awed and humbled, bowed at his feet and humbly said, "The spirit of Elijah does rest on Elisha."

Beloved, the very first thing that you and I will meet when we take some new hold of God for power and blessing will probably be a swollen Jordan, an overwhelming obstacle. What are you going to do about it? There is nothing you can do but remember what God can do and turn at once from your strength and weakness, from your doubts and difficulties, and take Him for your all-sufficiency, and your cry will be, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before the God of Elisha (or Zerubbabel) you shall become a plain." (Zech. 4: 7.)

Fourth, the God of Elisha is able to control the forces of nature. In 2 Kings 2: 20 and 4: 42, there are two fine examples of the power of God through His servant Elisha in the natural world. The first was the healing of barren soil by the sprinkling of some salt onto the spring of waters. And the second was the multiplying of the bread by which the wants of a hundred men were satisfied from twenty little buns, even as in later ages on the Galilean shore the five thousand were fed by the Master's miracle.

And we still have a God who can help us on the farm, in the kitchen, who can fertilize our field, protect our crops, send our harvest, give us our daily bread, multiply the little which the housewife has until it becomes an ample store for her little family circle. So God is walking today with many an humble saint in the lowly place of toil and trial.

Fifth, the God of Elisha is a God of emergencies. The third chapter of Second Kings tells us the story of the water famine in the valley of Eden and the wonderful deliverance which came through Elisha. "This says the Lord," was the prophet's answer to the unbelief of Jehoram and the fears of Jehoshaphat, "You shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that you may drink, both you, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: He will deliver the Moabites also into your hand." The God of Elisha can send water when there is neither wind nor rain nor any outward sign. He can give us help when all human help fails. He can give us help when, like Jehoshaphat, we are even in a place where we should not be; and it is but a light thing for Him to do the greatest thing for those who trust Him. His resources are so super-abounding that we never can exhaust them, and what He does for us is but a loving provocation for us to ask Him to do yet more.

Sixth, the God of Elisha is the God of grace as well as of temporal blessing. The fourth chapter of Second Kings gives the incident of the widow's oil and the wonderful deliverance it wrought for her as she poured it into the empty vessels, and it multiplied and grew until it became a fortune, enough to pay her debt and keep her all her days. The oil, we know, was the symbol of the Holy Ghost, and the deep lesson is, that if we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our houses, He will become the source of every needed supply and the guarantee of every possible blessing.

All we need is to use what we have and to take the trials and needs that come to us as empty vessels into which He will pour His fullness and transform every difficulty into an occasion of blessing and praise.

Seventh, the God of Elisha is the God of health and healing. There is no finer example of God's provision for our physical diseases than the story of Naaman and his healing in the waters of Jordan. It was not Elisha that healed him, for he refused even to touch him. It was simply the power of God coming to the suffering one the moment he trusted and obeyed, and his washing in the Jordan was but the consummated act of faith that met God exactly on His Word and persevered in the attitude of faith until the blessing fully came. The same God still waits to heal all that come to Him in the same patient, persistent and overcoming faith.

Eighth, the God of Elisha is the God of the supernatural. The incident of the sixth chapter of Second Kings is a fine illustration of the principle of the supernatural. Going down with his college boys to build the log college on the banks of the Jordan, one of the students lost his axe-head in the water, and the prophet met the emergency by commanding the iron to swim, thus showing that the power of God is superior even to the laws of nature. This is just what the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ proves and makes practicable for us also. We still have the God who can rise above even His own laws when the interests of His children require it, and who is "Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all."

Where is the Lord God of Elijah and Elisha? He is wherever His people's need requires the manifestations of His presence and His power. In the darkest times and the most sinful age He is still what He was in the age of Jezebel and Ahab. He is the God not of a few exclusive people and transcendent circumstances; but He is the God who, as in the case of Elisha, will meet us in the palace, on Mount Carmel, or in the battle, at the plough, or with the widow in her little cottage, anywhere and everywhere that need can claim and faith can trust Him.

Elisha was a man of the people and his life teaches us that our Christ is the Christ of the common people still, and His promise and His grace are for every situation and every suffering child. He is where faith can trust Him, prayer can wait for Him, and patience can hold fast until He comes. This God is our God, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Lord, help us to understand You better and to trust You more.

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