

2 KINGS 2–7

Introduction

The following “Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament” study covers 2 Kings 2–7.

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

LDS Study Focus

LDS study material will focus on:

A prophet’s main mission is to teach and testify of the Savior Jesus Christ. Our record of the prophet Elisha, however, doesn’t include much of his teaching or testifying. What the record does include is the miracles Elisha performed, including raising a child from the dead (see [2 Kings 4:18–37](#)), feeding a multitude with a small quantity of food (see [2 Kings 4:42–44](#)), and healing a leper (see [2 Kings 5:1–14](#)). So while we don’t have Elisha’s words bearing witness of Christ, we do have, throughout Elisha’s ministry, powerful manifestations of the Lord’s life-giving, nourishing, and healing power. Such manifestations are more plentiful in our lives than we sometimes realize. To see them, we need to seek the miracle Elisha sought when he prayed on behalf of his fearful young servant, “Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see” ([2 Kings 6:17](#)).

Biblical Focus

Are you familiar with the phrase “passing the mantle?” When Elijah threw his coat/mantle over Elisha, he called Elisha to be his apprentice and eventually to take over his ministry. Elisha responded by going all in. He sacrificed and burned his farming equipment (cows and plows), so there was no turning back. It appeared that he had no doubts about accepting God’s calling. When God took Elijah to heaven, Elisha’s apprenticeship was complete, and his ministerial work began as he picked up Elijah’s mantle that fell from the sky.

Elisha is at the front lines of the spiritual warfare that continued to rage. Like Elijah, the life of Elisha will leave us longing for a greater prophet that will put an end to rebellion, mercifully transform hearts, and bring a lasting reconciliation between God and humanity.

2 KINGS 2

Elijah's prophetic work was done. The Lord was ready to take him to heaven. He miraculously parted the Jordan River and crossed over the dry land with Elisha. Elijah asked his aide what he could do for him before his departure. Elisha requested a twofold share of Elijah's Spirit.

Elisha wanted to be considered the "eldest son" and receive the greater part of the inheritance. This was a wonderful request, showing how highly Elisha valued God's Holy Spirit, even though he knew what difficulties it would cost him. Note the condition of Elisha seeing Elijah's departure that had to be fulfilled for God to grant Elisha's request. Only God could grant that request, but Elijah could give his successor a sign that God would do so. Note also the symbolism of Elisha receiving Elijah's cloak along with the Holy Spirit. He was carrying on the Lord's work as it was directly passed on to him.

God inaugurated Elisha's leadership with three miracles. First, Elisha parted the Jordan River with Elijah's mantle in full view of the prophets of Jericho. Next, he permanently purified the well water at Jericho with a bowl of salt. And he called down a curse in the Lord's name on 42 youths from Bethel who mocked him. The Lord honored his request, and the youths were mauled by two bears.

Elisha's treatment of the youths with the bears is disturbing. He was in the town of Bethel, which means "*house of God*." Seven generations ago, King Jeroboam set up Bethel as an alternative site for worship, complete with a golden calf. The *house of God* became the *house of idols*. The youth, or young adults, inherited the attitude of scorn for God and his prophets. They mocked Elisha, and in this instance, their sin and unbelief resulted in punishment. That punishment sent a message: *Rejection of God and his prophets results in pain and suffering.*" Chad Bird summarized well:

This small story is part of the bigger story of the ongoing war between God and his worship, and false gods and their worship. Elisha represented the one, these mocking young men the other. In other words, this is a small battle in the ongoing war between light and darkness, orthodoxy and idolatry, God and gods. It has as much to do with Elisha's bald head as the Exodus has to do with gathering straw for Pharaoh. Both are minor details in the major drama.

This memorable story, far from being a moralistic tale about honoring elders or preachers, is a brief glimpse into the age-old war that began in a garden and ended at an empty tomb. Bears may play a significant role here, but the real animal in this overarching story is a serpent. His slithering and slandering tongue was inside the mouths of these mockers. The god whom they served, Baal, was just a mask for Satan. And their fate was a preview of the serpent's eventual fate. Except it wouldn't be a bear that mauled this serpent, but a lamb—the Lamb of God—who would take him down. That Lamb's victory is for Elisha, and for all of us, who live in his resurrection kingdom that will have no end.

Conversation Starters:

- **How can we “pass the mantle” to the following generation of leaders?**
- **Jesus was also mocked. How did he respond? What was the message of Jesus’ response?**
- **How are God’s people mocked today? What message do you want to send as you respond to mockery?**

2 KINGS 3-4

Shared faith and encouragement are essential for believers. The Shunammite woman recognized this as she prepared a home away from home for Elisha. Because of her love for the Lord and his called servants, she was moved to provide for Elisha generously.

God, through Elisha, gave this barren woman the blessing of a son. Tragically this son, like the son of the Zarephath widow, died. Nevertheless, this woman's faith was strangely confident as she proclaimed, "*It's all right*" ([2 Kings 4:23, 26](#)) to her husband and Gehazi.

What? How is this "*all right*?"

The text does not clarify to which situation the woman is referring. Is it *all right* that her son has died, or is it *all right* that she is going to bother God's prophet?

Such a simple phrase is shockingly correct for both questions. When can we come before our God with the distresses of our hearts? Through Jesus, the answer is *anytime* for *any reason*. Can death ever be *all right*? Through Christ's resurrection, death is more than *all right*. Death is now just a sleep between this life and eternal life with God.

Conversation Starters:

- **How does this story show that God is in control over life and death?** (Don't forget to include the woman's barrenness and the miraculous birth of her son.)
- **How does this story comfort you when it seems like life is not *all right*?**
- **What interesting similarities and differences do you find between this story and the Widow of Zarephath's story?**

Sharing Personally

Have you ever witnessed someone act abnormally calm in the face of death?

"It's all right," said the Shunammite woman when her son died in 2 Kings 4.

Any parent who has lost a child will tell you it is not all right. Death is not all right!!! How could she talk like this?

Without hesitation, the woman took her distress to Elisha, who knew the One who was not all right with death and had the power to reverse it.

Because God is not all right with death, he sent his son to erase its sting. Through Christ's death and resurrection, we no longer have anything to fear. Death is all right because it is just a sleep between life and earth and life eternal with God.

2 KINGS 5

At this time, Elisha was God's prophet in Israel. He was a miracle worker who had inherited a double portion of Elijah's Spirit. The king of Israel was likely Jehoram, son of wicked king Ahab. He, too, was an idol worshiper.

In Israel, not only did lepers suffer physically from skin disease but also from spiritual rejection and loneliness. The temple and society exiled the leper. In a sense, leprosy was a picture of what sin does to us. Because of sin, humanity suffers, dies, and becomes eternally separated from God.

As we look at Naaman, an unbelieving gentile, and one of God's elect, consider who he was and his journey to faith. He was a successful, highly respected, mighty military chief valued by his king. He was a man of strength, power, and wealth. He was used to honor, victory, strength, and control.

There are hints of God's direction in Naaman's life. 2 Kings 5:1 says that *the Lord* gave him victory. We also surmise that it was no coincidence that a believing Israelite girl had become part of his household.

The degenerative skin disease, no doubt, was slowly robbing Naaman of his abilities, his position, and his control. It had already reduced his ego, so he was willing to accept advice from the young, foreign, insignificant slave girl.

The unnamed girl was of a lowly position but used by God to have a powerful influence. Notice that she did not witness by sitting with Naaman to give him a Law and Gospel presentation. She merely told him where to go. Not all of our witnessing needs to involve prolonged, deep spiritual conversations. More simply, we can invite others to hear the Word. Our invitations may sound like, "come to church," "come to Bible study," "come to vacation Bible school," and "come meet my pastor." In our witness to Mormons, we can do the same thing and say, "Come with me to a special Christmas or Easter event at church," or "We would love to have your children join ours for Vacation Bible School."

When he arrived in Israel, the respected and influential military leader Naaman was insulted by the simple instructions given to him by way of a messenger. He wanted the prophet's direct attention, a religious ceremony, or something great to do. This humiliating suggestion meant the complete death of Naaman's ego.

Our human nature craves doing something extraordinary to be considered worthy of redemption. People today want to do great things for God. They want to offer him money, build significant buildings for him, earn his favor, and pay for the blessings he has given them. While there is nothing wrong with doing great things for the Lord, everything we do for him—every act of worship—is done out of thanks for his gracious gifts of love and forgiveness.

Mormon teaching emphasizes the need to do. Follow all of the commands, wear the proper undergarments, marry the right person in the temple, and complete the list of demands to show appropriate repentance. But all that is required is that we are spiritually washed and cleansed from our sins. The only thing we contribute to our salvation is the dirt of sin that made it necessary.

As Naaman washed in the river, his leprosy disappeared, his ego died, and a new man full of faith rose from the waters.

In response to the salvation he had been given, Naaman offered a gift to Elisha. However, Elisha refused because **the gift was a gift**. It was **free**. If Elisha had accepted payment, it would no longer have been a **gift**. LDS resources highlight Gehazi's lack of integrity and honesty, which misses the point. Gehazi's actions were wicked because **he ruined the gift!** Gehazi received the curse of leprosy as a reminder of what the curse of sin does to those who refuse the gift of God's grace. He would now be the one separated and scorned.

Conversation Starters:

- **How does leprosy remind us of the curse of sin?**
- **Why was Naaman initially insulted by the simplicity of washing?**
- **Did Naaman believe that the washing would work? Did he need faith to be cleansed? What created faith?**
- **How does this story remind you of baptism?**
- **Why do our egos resist God's grace?**
- **Why did Elisha refuse to accept gifts for this miracle? How did Gehazi ruin the gift, and was that such a big deal?**

Sharing Personally

Did God save Naaman after all he could do?

The story of Naaman the leper in 2 Kings 5 is for all of us with big egos that need to die. When Elisha offered him healing, Naaman scorned this gift. He instead wanted to do something great, more than wash in the river. Naaman didn't even believe that the miracle would work. He did nothing to deserve what he received.

As Naaman washed in the river, his leprosy disappeared, his ego died, and a new man full of faith rose from the waters.

*He again tried to pay for it after being healed and receiving the gift. But, again, Elisha refused because this salvation was a **gift** with no strings attached.*

Does God save you after all you can do or despite all you can't do?

Let your ego die and see that God has cleansed you from the stains of your sin.

2 KINGS 6-7

Christians, do you ever feel as hopeless as Elisha's servant when Aram's army surrounded him and his companions? When he looked at the landscape, all he could see were the horses and chariots of a mighty enemy. What could he and Elisha do against so many?

Many of you live in a land filled with unbelievers. Is the landscape of your neighborhood filled with cross-less steeples and temples? Or maybe you are surrounded by high-rises built to the gods of financial success or in a school that worships Darwin and human sexuality.

The Lord wants us, as his people, to open our eyes and see that all around us are the armies of the Lord fighting for us and defeating our enemies.

Our enemies are many, but God has given us so much more. He has promised to be with us (Matthew 28:20), to send his angels to protect us (Psalm 91:1), and has, as Paul explains, equipped us with his full armor.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:10-17).

The Lord created a hopeless situation by leading the Arameans (Syrians) to surround Dothan. But the Lord delivered the city through a great miracle. The Lord sometimes allows difficult situations so that he might show us his glory and goodness.

Sharing Personally

Don't you love how the army of Aram, the enemy, is treated in 2 Kings 6?

Instead of slaughtering and ridding the world of the Aramean army, Elisha tells the king of Israel to give them a good meal and send them home. Mercy and kindness seem rather counterintuitive, don't they? But then, after, the Arameans stopped raiding Israel. What an unusual way to treat an enemy!

In a similar way, God has shown us mercy. By nature, we are his enemies. (Romans 5:8-10). But instead of annihilating us, he chose to save us and make us his friends!