

51 Keys to Dynamic Bible Study  
Footprints of Jesus: Elisha's Story  
Read 2 Kings 2:1-14; Matthew 3:13-17

A chariot with horses, fire, and indescribable splendor splashed before the prophet, seemingly between the span of one heartbeat and another. When it was over, Elisha, yanking his gaze from the heavens, grasped the cloak that he found lying in a heap on the ground. The cloak had dropped from Elijah's shoulders as the horse-drawn fiery chariot had arrived to snatch him away in a whirlwind.

Overcome with the bewildering sense of loss and grief, Elisha considered what he must do next. Uppermost in his mind was his request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. He had pleaded for the double portion as he had walked along the road to the Jordan with Elijah. "Tell me what you would like me to do for you?" Elijah had asked. Elisha had replied immediately, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." He had just witnessed the exodus of Elijah from this world--a prerequisite, Elijah had forewarned, for obtaining the desired double portion. Now Elisha simply needed a sign from Yahweh—a sign that would establish him as the person chosen to continue Elijah's ministry.

Elisha saw religious men, known as "Sons of the Prophets," observing him from a short distance away. While he and Elijah were traveling to the Jordan River, clusters of them had met him at each town along the way, warning him: "Do you know that Yahweh will take away your master from over you today?" He had known. But the manner in which Elijah had been taken still whirled around in his thoughts. Now, the sons of the prophets were expecting a replacement for Elijah. Were they considering him as a possibility?

As the Sons of the Prophets pointed and conversed, Elisha walked toward the waters that had recently separated for Elijah. It was a portion of the river where the roots of trees had reached out to taste the cool water. Here Elijah and Elisha had arrived, crossing from the other side of the Jordan on dry ground, just before Elijah's departure. Verification that he was Elijah's prophetic heir must transpire in this place of grassy banks and leafy myrtle trees. Elisha caught himself holding his breath in anticipation. Would the Jordan River part for him, too?

*It is written*, thought Elisha as he approached the Jordan, *that Joshua received confirmation as the successor to Moses at the Jordan River. Had it not parted before Joshua and the children of Israel*, recollected Elisha, *duplicating what had occurred when Moses was at the Red Sea?* Elisha inched even closer to the waters that tumbled jubilantly over rocks and slid beneath low-lying branches. The pathway for Joshua had been on dry ground, as it had for Moses. Joshua and his people had marched between waters heaped high on either side of them. And the people had believed in Joshua, as they had Moses.

Only if the waters parted for Elisha would others know that he was Yahweh's choice. So, Elisha seized the cloak and, as Elijah had done on the opposite side of the river, struck the Jordan with it, crying out, "Where is Yahweh, the God of Elijah?" Instantly, the river parted as the waters had for Moses, Joshua, and Elijah. When the Sons of the Prophets saw that Elisha crossed over on dry ground, they exclaimed, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha!"

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The apostle Paul describes the Red Sea crossing as a baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). Each water-crossing afterwards—Joshua's, Elijah's, and Elisha's--was a replica of that baptismal scene. These scenes bear the imprints of Jesus' feet, for He also had a baptism: at the Jordan River. As Jesus went down into the waters to be baptized by John, he identified Himself with those in the past who had been "baptized." Moreover, He was confirmed to be the beloved Son of God by the heavenly Father Himself. In turn, believers, as they walk down into the waters of baptism, identify with Jesus and confirm to the world that they are the children of God. They fulfill Christ's commandment, given just before He left earth, to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. For that reason, through baptism, they have the privilege of stepping into the footprints of Jesus.