

People of the Bible

Elisha

Elisha, son of Shaphat of the tribe of Issachar, was the prophet of God to the Northern Kingdom of Israel around 849-786 BC. He was a prophet who governed the Church, promoted the study of doctrine, and gave many political counsels to the kings of Israel.

He came from the town of Abel-meholah. Elisha was called from the plow to the prophetic office (1 Kings 19). He governed among the people of for more than eighty years.

He was a faithful and diligent disciple and successor of the prophet Elijah. When Elijah was about to ascend into heaven, Elisha asked for a double portion of his spirit, or the gifts necessary for managing Church and school among the people of God with a great and cheerful mind (2 Kings 2). Upon seeing his mentor, Elijah, taken up into heaven, Elisha assumed the prophetic office and took up the mantle of his predecessor.

Elisha also performed many miracles, such as curing the Syrian army commander Naaman of his leprosy (2 Kings 5) and restoring life to the son of a Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:8-37). He made the bitter waters healthy by sprinkling salt in Jericho (2 Kings 2); by this image, he at the same time showed that the roots of doctrine and virtue are bitter, but when God blesses and the salt of wisdom seasons, the fruits are most sweet.

Elisha provided for one hundred scholars in Gilgal at the time of famine, with the meager provisions of herbs of the field and wild gourds, whose bitterness he took away by pouring in the flour of the Word and divine promises (2 Kings 4). He made the iron of the ax that fell into the Jordan River to float on the surface of the water (2 Kings 6).

Finally, in sickness he prophesied concerning the victories of Joash, king of Israel, and he died (2 Kings 13). When the body of a traveler who was killed by robbers was cast into Elisha's grave, the traveler came back to life (Sirach 48).

Elisha lived up to his name, which means "my God is salvation."