

Aim of lesson

To see how Elisha learns of the closeness of God's power to those who are his servants.

Bible background

2 Kings 2:1-18; 2 Kings 6:8-23.

Outline of lesson

Taking over

Taking over from a great man – Elijah – was another great man of God. Elijah had more than once called down fire from heaven (see 2 Kings 1). He had prayed for drought and prayed for rain. He had confronted kings and risked his life in service to God. Elisha, as his disciple, had seen much of this and he knew that he was to succeed Elijah as God's prophet. Discuss with the class how Elisha might have felt about taking over such a role.

Today's lesson is from 2 Kings 2. Read with the class how Elisha knows this is the day. The class can fill in the first part of the workbook with their ideas about how Elisha might have been feeling.

Chariots of fire

As you read together the events in 2 Kings 2:6-15, ask the class to think about their effect on an apprehensive disciple. The workbook can be used to record what each thing may have meant to Elisha.

- The chariots and horses of fire represent God's power close at hand and active.
- Elisha saw Elijah as he was taken by the whirlwind, and he knew from the words of Elijah (v10) that this was the sign that he would receive a double portion of his spirit. (A double portion is the one given to the first-born son. It may be this that Elijah is thinking of. He calls Elijah his father, v12).
- Elijah's cloak had been left for him. This was used by Elijah to part the river and would reinforce Elisha's conviction of having now received the same power that Elijah had enjoyed. In fact Elisha seems to immediately 'try it out', v14.,
- The river Jordan parted for him. He had asked the question 'Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' v14. God gave him the answer. He was there, with him, as he had been with Elijah.
- The company of prophets, who had perhaps all been disciples of Elijah, apparently see this demonstration of power by Elisha and are convinced that he has inherited Elijah's role. Their saying this to Elisha must have encouraged him.

It is possible that this was not the end of Elijah's life as he writes to a king of Judah some years later (2 Chronicles 21:12). Perhaps this spectacular demonstration of God's power was to indicate his desire for Elisha to take on the role of his prophet. Elijah may have retired from his public role. It would have been difficult for Elisha to be accepted if Elijah had stayed there. The prophets do not consider Elijah is dead (see v16). The words the prophets use sound like the words of Acts 8:39 about what happened to Philip.

Surrounding the city

If you have time, read with the class 2 Kings 6:8-23. Ask the students to note the lesson of God's power surrounding him which Elisha learned. He is not afraid when he sees a whole army entirely surrounding him. He has learned that 'those who are with us are more than those who are with them'. The class could write this lesson in their own words. Note in the workbook the kindness which Elisha is confident enough to show to the enemies of Israel who had been sent to capture him.

Digging deeper

What happened to Elijah?

This study considers what happened to Elijah and compares his departure with the belief in heaven-going.

Relevance to our lives

The class could think of different situations today where it is important to remember that 'those who are with us are more than those who are with them', for example, when surrounded by people who do not respect God or his standards.

Prayer

'Help us to remember, Lord, that with you we have more strength on our side than any army or show of human strength'. The class could write a prayer that Elisha might have prayed after Elijah had been taken away.

Other suggestions for activities

- The newspaper of the time of Elijah could be concluded.
- An older class could follow up other references to the figure of chariots and horses representing God's presence and power, e.g. Zechariah 6:1; 1 Chronicles 28:18; and horses in Zechariah 1:8.
- Ask the class if they have ever thought that they will have to take over the roles of their parents or teachers. How can they prepare themselves now for such events?