



ELIJAH AND ELISHA

MESSENGERS IN WORD AND DEED

Prophets and Christ

- Prophets are God's messengers; Christ was the ultimate messenger
- 1 Kings 17:24, John 1:1-4, and Hebrews 1:1-4
- In times of idolatry, injustice, fear and suffering, God raised up prophets to declare His truth, confront sin, and call His people back to covenant faithfulness.

Prophets and Christ

- Their miracles were used to validate God's message and draw His people back to Him.
- The primary role of the prophet was to be God's messenger, His spokesperson.
- The Hebrew word *nabi* ("prophet") literally means "to bubble up," illustrating the way God's Word arises from within and is proclaimed outwardly.

Prophets and Christ

- Though the prophets did many things, their message was primary; everything they did supported and/or illustrated the message.
- Miracles showed the people the prophet was sent from God so they would believe the message, like the widow declared when Elijah raised her son, “Now I know” you are a man of God and His word is truth (verse 24).

Prophets and Christ

- Though the details may have been different, every Old Testament prophet's message was essentially the same.
- They told the people how they had broken God's covenant, called them to repent, and told them what covenant "curse" or consequence would happen if they didn't or what consequence was already happening to prompt them to repent.

Prophets and Christ

- Not all of their messages were negative; they also preached messages of hope to come.
- But even those messages were centered on repentance – what the future would be like when they turned back to the Lord, both in the near-future return of the remnant to the land and the far-future messianic kingdom.

Prophets and Christ

- Repentance was the John the Baptist message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). He came in the same spirit and power as Elijah (Luke 1:17).
- Jesus was the “prophet like Moses” whom Moses prophesied would come and speak God’s Word faithfully as an intermediary between God and humanity (Deuteronomy 18:15–19).

Prophets and Christ

- But Jesus was more than just a prophet.
- The writer of Hebrews and the opening of the Gospel of John explain how. Jesus was not just a human prophet; He was God Himself made flesh (John 1:14).
- He was the exact imprint of God's nature (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus didn't just speak the Word of God; He was the Word of God (John 1:1).

Prophets and Christ

- Elijah, Elisha, and the other prophets spoke the words God told them to speak.
- When they weren't sharing His message, they were just human beings, capable of making mistakes.
- But Jesus was God, so everything Jesus said and did embodied and expressed the Word of God.

Prophets and Christ

- The lives of Elijah and Elisha point beyond themselves and their own time to the greater reality of the big picture of God's story with humanity – His relentless commitment to make Himself known to His people.
- Through the prophets, God spoke into real moments of rebellion, pain, and need, not to condemn without hope but to restore relationship.

Prophets and Christ

- They remind us that God's Word is not distant or silent but living and active, persistently calling His people back to Himself.
- The prophets were never the focus; they were vessels through whom God made His heart known.
- Their lives urge us to listen carefully, respond humbly, and trust fully in the God who still speaks.

Prophets and Christ

- Ultimately, they lead us to Jesus, the final and perfect revelation of God.
- Where the prophets declared God's Word, Jesus is the Word. Where they called for repentance, He makes repentance possible. Where they warned of judgment, He bore it on behalf of His people.

Prophets and Christ

- In Him, the message and the messenger are perfectly united.
- As we reflect on the lives of Elijah and Elisha, we are left with a question that echoes through every prophetic word: will we listen?
- The same God who spoke through them has spoken through His Son, calling us to repent and follow Him.

God's Sovereignty

- God's sovereignty is displayed in both judgment and mercy
- 1 Kings 17:1 and 21:25-29; Romans 3:21-26; and 1 Corinthians 5:21
- Elijah and Elisha's ministries reveal a God who disciplines His people not to punish but to restore.

God's Sovereignty

- This balance finds its fullest expression in Jesus, who bore our judgment on the Cross so mercy, healing, and life might be offered to all who believe (Isaiah 53:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24).
- The ministries of Elijah and Elisha unfolded during one of the darkest periods in Israel's history, when idolatry, injustice and spiritual rebellion had become entrenched in the nation.

God's Sovereignty

- In Elijah's ministry, God's sovereignty was revealed through decisive acts of judgment as the consequences of breaking the covenant.
- Elijah's announcing the drought to Ahab showed that everything in creation, including the rain the pagans attributed to Baal, is under Yahweh's command.

God's Sovereignty

- The drought was not random; it was listed in the law as a consequence of breaking the covenant (Deuteronomy 28:24).
- Yet God showed long-suffering love for His people.
- He didn't punish them the first time they committed idolatry; He waited hundreds of years to enact the consequences of their disobedience.

God's Sovereignty

- On Mount Carmel, God answered by fire, exposing the powerlessness of false gods and the futility of divided allegiance.
- These moments were not merely dramatic; they were theological. God was asserting His exclusive right to be worshipped and obeyed. He alone is God; there is no other (Isaiah 45:5).

God's Sovereignty

- Even within judgment, God's mercy was present.
- Elijah's invitation to the people to commit fully to God and stop "limping between two opinions" revealed God's desire for them to return to Him rather than perish (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

God's Sovereignty

- Elisha's ministry, while still containing elements of judgment, was more focused on God's compassion, provision and restoration.
- Through multiplied oil, healed waters, raised life, and the feeding of many people, God showed Himself attentive to the needs of individuals as well as the nation

God's Sovereignty

- These acts of mercy are not disconnected from His sovereignty; they reveal its fullness.
- God is not only powerful enough to judge; He is also gracious enough to save, sustain, and restore.
- Even His judgment, when it came, was purposeful and always accompanied by opportunities for mercy.

God's Sovereignty

- Together, the stories of Elijah and Elisha give us a unified picture: God's sovereignty is expressed not in cold control but in righteous justice and steadfast love for His people.
- He is not an unfeeling judge but a loving Father.
- The Lord disciplines the one He loves (Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6).

God's Sovereignty

- The Hebrew term *chesed* (“lovingkindness” in the NASB; “steadfast love” in the ESV) describes the deep, covenantal loyalty, compassion and mercy of God toward His people when they don’t deserve it.
- God confronts sin because He is holy and just, yet He extends mercy because He is faithful to His promises and His covenant love.

God's Sovereignty

- The ministries of the prophets point beyond themselves to a greater fulfillment in Christ. Like Elijah and Elisha, Jesus confronted sin, called for repentance, and performed works that authenticated His message. But He did so with a completeness they could only anticipate.
- The judgment sin deserved was not set aside but borne by Christ Himself (2 Corinthians 5:21).

God's Sovereignty

- Romans explains how the law and the prophets bore witness to the righteousness which came through Christ.
- In Christ's work, God shows Himself to be both the just and the justifier, both Judge and Savior (Romans 3:26).
- The mercy long extended through prophetic calls was secured through His life, death and Resurrection (Ephesians 2:1–10).

God's Sovereignty

- The ministries of Elijah and Elisha are theological signposts. They reveal a God who reigns in both judgment and mercy.
- In Christ, we see God's ultimate purpose is not simply to judge or spare but to redeem – to bring His people back into right relationship with Himself.

Prophets Pointed to Jesus

- The prophets lack of “success” pointed ahead to our need for Jesus
- Malachi 4:5-6 and Luke 24:13-27, 44-47
- Elijah and Elisha’s ministries stand at a pivotal moment in redemptive history, not only confronting Israel’s rebellion but also preparing the way for something far greater.

Prophets Pointed to Jesus

- By the end of Elijah's ministry, even though he had proven God's superiority over Baal at Mount Carmel, the people were still worshipping Baal.
- By the end of Elisha's ministry, they had ended Baal worship, but the people had not returned fully to the Lord; they were still worshipping the golden calves.

Prophets Pointed to Jesus

- This reality may make us feel Elijah and Elisha's ministries were unsuccessful. The people did not turn their hearts back to God. Most of the Old Testament prophets were not "successful" as we think of success.
- They were often ignored, mocked or persecuted. But that doesn't mean they didn't accomplish their mission. Even their lack of "success" points us to our need for Jesus.

Prophets Pointed to Jesus

- The Old Testament prophets didn't do a bad job of sharing God's message of repentance.
- They did a great job, but the people's hearts were hardened (Isaiah 6:10).
- They needed a new heart, a heart of flesh, not a heart of stone (Ezekiel 36:26).

Prophets Pointed to Jesus

- This is what Jesus could do that none of the prophets were able to do – because He was God Himself.
- Instead of just calling for obedience, Jesus changed people's hearts.
- The lack of Elijah and Elisha's "success" – the fact that the people did not return to the Lord even with such great miracles – shows us the depraved depth of humanity's sin.

Prophets Pointed to Jesus

- Elijah prepared the way; Elisha expanded the work; but Jesus fulfilled it.
- Elijah's role was preparatory. He cleared the ground, exposed sin, and called for repentance, themes that echoed forward into the ministry of John the Baptist, who came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" to prepare the way for Christ.

Prophets Pointed to Jesus

- The ministries of the Old Testament prophets were ultimately anticipatory.
- They were meant to be incomplete and unsuccessful because they point to the coming of Jesus Christ, who did not merely continue their work but brought it to completion.

Prophets Pointed to Jesus

- Like Elijah, Jesus calls people to repentance and confronts false worship, but He does so with unmatched authority, not as one who speaks for God but as God Himself.
- Like Elisha, He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and raised the dead, yet His miracles were not only signs of God's power; they were revelations of His identity as the source of life itself.

Prophets Pointed to Jesus

- Elijah and Elisha's ministries invite us to participate in sharing God's Word with the world in our time and place the way that the prophets did.
- We stand in the new covenant era, where all of Christ's followers are empowered by the Holy Spirit, not just those who were uniquely anointed.

Prophets Pointed to Jesus

- The same Spirit who empowered Elijah and Elisha now dwells in us (1 Corinthians 3:16).
- We have been given a mission to make disciples of all nations means to call people to repent and follow Jesus (Matthew 28:19–20). Every believer is called to speak the hard truths of God's Word to the world and to one another as the prophets did (Ephesians 4:15).

Resources

