

The Call of Elisha

How far do you want to go?

By I Gordon

Introduction

This is the start of a new series on the life of Elisha. The particular study entitled 'How far do you want to go?' will be in two parts. So let's start where any serious study should begin... With a quiz! Let's see how much you can remember about Elisha and Elijah.

Q1: Were Elijah and Elisha prophets, priests or kings?

Q2: Who ministered first – Elisha or Elijah?

Q3: In the O.T are there more chapters devoted to Elijah or Elisha?

Q4: Did they serve in the northern kingdom of Israel or Judah in the south?

Q5: Which of these two did the most miracles?

Q6: Does Elisha mean 'God is salvation' or 'Yahweh is God'?

Q7: Which of the two men is mentioned in the New Testament?

Answers in the small print^[1]

Elisha was one awesome prophet of God! His name means 'my God is salvation' and the whole ministry of Elisha would prove to be an outworked testimony to the meaning of his name^[2]. You see, Elisha lived in dark times. Apostasy abounded and Israel's enemies were circling. Yet through countless situations, Elisha stood as a light... a voice in the wilderness... showing through his life that the God of Israel was well and truly alive! In fact, Elisha performed more recorded miracles than anyone in the Bible other than Jesus. But I shouldn't get ahead of myself. Let's look at how it all began. Let's start at the beginning with the call of Elisha...

Forgetting that which is behind...

***1 Kings 19:19-21-** So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and mother good-by," he said, "and then I will come with you." "Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?" So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant.*

The first thing we see about Elisha is that he was a plowman. Here he was, plowing with his oxen to break up the tough rugged ground. He would remain a plowman to the end of his life although God had a whole new 'ground' in mind for Elisha. It wouldn't be the hard natural ground that would concern Elisha after this point... Oh no! God had an even harder ground for Elisha to plow! It would be the hard hearts of the Israelites themselves that Elisha would now be concerned with.

So Elijah comes up and throws his mantle around Elisha. You will see from above that Elisha didn't have to ask 'what's going on?' He knew exactly what that meant. Mantle's were typically made of animal hair (not overly popular today!) and were generally worn by kings and prophets.

They were symbolic of the owners calling, position, and authority. So Elisha didn't have to ask Elijah what was going on. He knew. This was a passing of Elijah's calling and position onto Elisha. Now there are a few points that come out of this call of Elisha.

God's sovereign choice

From the passage we see that God chose Elisha. Elisha was simply going about his normal daily business of ploughing the fields, when God came through his prophet Elijah and sought him out. In like manner, we read in the New Testament that 'the son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost'. And, as Jesus said, 'You did not choose me, but I have chosen you.' Can I explain God's sovereign choice and man's free will completely? No. Do I understand it completely? No. But have I experienced it? Yes. No doubt about it. When we arrive at Heaven God can explain it all to us^[3]... until then, Christians should thank God that He has called and chosen them while still believing and agreeing with the call that '*whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*'

Counting the Cost

We see also the seriousness of Elisha's response. How seriously did Elisha take this call from Elijah? Well, this is answered above where we read the Elisha slaughtered his oxen as a sacrifice and burnt the plowing equipment to cook the meat! No going back for this boy! In doing this we see a great example of someone leaving behind the old life when the call of God comes. He knew this was a new beginning for him and there is no compromise with his past life. Jesus said it well (as normal) "*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.*" ([Luke 9:62](#)). There is no looking back here! How about you? Have you been looking back or are you pressing on to the higher calling of our Lord?

Ministering unto the Lord

The last thing that we read in the passage above says '*Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.*' How true of us this is. Not with Elijah of course, but with our master, the Lord Jesus. We arise, count the cost, leave the past behind, and follow Him! And what's more, we are called to minister to Him as well.^[4]

Pressing on to the higher calling

*2 King 2:1-6 When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. **Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel."** But Elisha said, "**As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.**" So they went down to Bethel... Then Elijah said to him, "**Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho.**" **And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you."** So they went to Jericho. The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" "Yes, I know," he replied, "but do not speak of it." Then Elijah said to him, "**Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.**" **And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you."** So the two of them walked on.*

The next passage I will draw your attention to is 2 King 2:1-6. We saw earlier that Elisha had forsaken all to follow Elijah and minister to him. He was willing to submit himself to the will of Elijah and follow him wherever he went. Now, there are three things that stand out in this passage before us.

- 1) At each stage Elijah tells Elisha to stop and not to go any further with him.
- 2) At each stage, Elisha's determination to press on and not leave Elijah is seen.

3) Each of the four places mentioned are highly significant and symbolic locations in Israel's history.

The third point, that of the significance of the locations mentioned will have to wait till the next study. But for now, I want to concentrate on points 1 and 2. Three times in the passage above Elijah tells Elisha to stop and stay where he is! Mmmm... kind of strange wouldn't you say? Well, I certainly thought it was. It's almost like Elijah is testing Elisha as to how far he is willing to go. Actually, there is no 'almost' about it! That is exactly what he is doing. And I believe that it applies to us as well. Let me ask you... How far do you want to go with the Lord? Have you been tested whether you will press on to the higher calling of our Lord?.. Because you will be tested. Even when the Lord was on earth He tested people to see if they truly desired to be with Him. Let's have a look at one example in [Luke 24:13-33](#)

The road to Emmaus - Testing your desire

*"Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, **"What are you discussing together as you walk along?"** They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, **"Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"** **"What things?"** he asked. **"About Jesus of Nazareth,"** they replied. **"He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."** He said to them, **"How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. **As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther.** But they urged him strongly, **"Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over."** So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, **"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"***

Now, I realise that was quite a long passage but it is pretty awesome! I for one would definitely have liked to have been at that Bible study! But the point that I want to bring out is that Jesus 'acted like He was going further.' In the language of modern relationships, he was 'playing hard to get.' He had wet their appetite by showing them himself in the law and the prophets, **but now He was testing their desire for Him.** And sometimes He will do this with you. Like Elijah testing Elisha, the Lord also longs to see whether we will press on further, following hard after Him^[5], with the desire to know Him better. Had these disciples not truly had a desire for more time in the presence of this man on the road to Emmaus they would have missed out on Christ revealing himself to them further at their home.^[6] Don't miss out!

Conclusion

I really like the words quoted above from [2 Kings 2:6](#) where Elisha said "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." **So the two of them walked on.** There was nothing that was going to stop Elisha from following Elijah no matter where that led him^[7]! And so the two walked on! I hope you are going 'on'. I also hope that attitude to 'go on' is found within me! Whether it is serving the Lord in small or great things, it really doesn't matter. Whether the Lord seems close or far away, all that matters is that the Lord has His rightful place in your life and that you are 'pressing on to the higher calling of our Lord'. From Gilgal, to Bethel,

to Jericho and to the Jordan...How far did Elisha want to go? Just as far as Elijah wanted to take him!

May we be the same!

^[1] Answers from my incredibly difficult quiz are as follows -

A1: They were prophets. I hope you are 1 from 1.

A2: Elijah came first and then he trained Elisha.

A3: More chapters are devoted to Elisha (10) than Elijah (6)

A4: They served in the Northern kingdom which didn't have any good kings!

A5: Elisha did the most miracles – 16 to 8 apparently.

A6: Elisha means 'God is Salvation'. Elijah means 'Yahweh is God'.

A7: Ok, let me guess... You are so far 6 from 6 and you have answered Elijah for the last question to win the car? I'm sorry. Both Elisha and Elijah are mentioned in the New Testament. Kind of a trick question to prevent pride creeping in!

^[2] I find it interesting that the ministry of both Elijah and Elisha is for told in the meanings of their name. Elijah means 'Yahweh is God' and that was his ministry. The people didn't know who the true God was anymore. Most followed Baal. Elijah had to come to again show them the true God. Elisha means 'God is salvation' and that was his calling. Not so much to point out who the true God was, but to show that God was alive and well and was able to save. That is why Elisha performed more miracles than anyone else in the Bible apart from Jesus. He showed that God is salvation.

^[3] Someone once said that free will and election are like two parallel lines that seem to have no crossing point. But if you follow those lines right to heaven you will see that they do meet. Until then, we should believe both lines of thought as both are presented to us in the Bible.

^[4] While we spend a lot more time asking and thinking of how the Lord ministers to us, we shouldn't forget that we can actually minister to Him! We know from the Old Testament that the priests would minister unto the Lord. (**Exodus 28:1-5, Psalms 106:6**). Now the sacrifices that we give in this New Testament covenant of grace are through our praise, thanksgiving and the offering of ourselves to the Lord. In this way, we still 'minister' to the Lord. But is there another way that the Bible says we can minister unto Him? Can you think of any? Come on, think. Alrighty... I see you struggling. Time for a clue... People at a particular judgment in the future shall one day ask the Jesus 'Lord, when

did we see you...?'. Ring any bells? Answer in mighty fine small print (See **Matt 25:37-40, Heb 6:10** – It is an amazing concept that the church is a body. When we look after the members of that body that need help, we are actually doing it unto the Lord! We are ministering to Him! Look at what Jesus says at the sheep and goats judgment – 'The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' That is how you can minister to the Lord today – look after His brethren!

^[5] A.W Tozer, in his book 'The pursuit of God' quotes psalm 63:8 which says 'My soul follows hard after you. Your right hand upholds me.' It's a good scripture. He goes on to say the following – 'In this hour of all but universal darkness, one gleam appears. Within the fold of conservative Christianity there are to be found increasing numbers of persons whose religious lives are marked by a growing hunger after God himself.'

^[6] To quote Tozer further - "But complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to his people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us, he waits so long, so very long, in vain."

^[7] Certain people, at certain times, have characterised this courage and determination to follow the narrow path no matter what. It is the attitude of Ruth who would not leave Naomi even though it meant forsaking all that she knew in her old life. (**Ruth 1:16**) It is shown in the attitude of good old Ittai when King David said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why should you come along with us? Go back and stay with King Absalom. You are a foreigner, an exile from your homeland. You came only yesterday. And today shall I make you wander about with us, when I do not know where I am going? Go back, and take your countrymen. May kindness and faithfulness be with you." But Ittai replied to the king, "As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be." It will also be the attitude of the 144,000 Israelites in the last days who will 'follow the lamb wherever He goes.' (**Rev 14:4**)

Bible Study on Elisha

Elisha's Journey - How far do you want to go? (Part 2)

By I Gordon

Introduction

We saw in the first study that Elisha went from being a ploughman, working in the fields one day, to being a prophet of the Lord the next. It's fair to say that's a mighty big change for Elisha! And you will remember that what we also looked at the testing of Elisha. At each step of the journey Elijah was saying "stay here, don't go any further" and he was testing Elisha to see if Elisha would stay with him and how much Elisha wanted to follow him and to be with him. And Elisha passed the test saying (in so many words!) "Look, there's no way, no way at all I am leaving you. I am staying with you and I don't want to be anywhere else."

What I wanted to do in this study is actually look at the four places mentioned in [2 Kings 2:1-6](#). It's not a geography lesson and it's not even a history lesson.^[1] **Each of the four places mentioned (Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho and the Jordan) are highly significant in Israel's history and I believe they are highly symbolic of stages in the Christians life. Here is the passage again:**

[2 Kings 2:1-6](#) *'When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel... Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho... Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on.*

Where it all starts: Gilgal (Separation)

(Alter/ Blood/ Seed) Added by TFTC

So the first stop on the journey was Gilgal. Before we look at the passage, let me ask you a question... "If you were to go to Gilgal in the days of the Israelites, what would you see?" The answer - stones. Of course, you would see stones in any location, but in this case, there were some pretty specific stones.

[Joshua 4:19-24](#) *'On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God.'*

This is the first real mention of Gilgal and it is very significant. Gilgal was a very important place in Israel's history. It was a base where Joshua and the Israelites used to go out from. And it was also the very first place that they came to when they entered the Promised Land. Now there are two important things in Gilgal. The first are these stones that were set up as a monument and a

reminder so that anyone that looked at them would remember that God is alive and well. God wanted it known and remembered that He is a living God and that He acts on behalf of His people. That is why the stones were there. It is, of course, something that we need to be reminded about repeatedly! So often we think and act as if God was not even alive. We act like He doesn't even know about the situation that we are going through. We need to be reminded that God is a living God and that He acts on behalf of His people.

But the second thing in Gilgal, is in Chapter 5 verse 2, 6-9:

*At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make **flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again.**"... The Israelites had moved about in the desert forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the LORD. For the LORD had sworn to them that they would not see the land that he had solemnly promised their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way. And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed. **Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you."** So the place has been called Gilgal to this day.*

So this little passage gives us the reason why it is called Gilgal. Gilgal means the 'rolling' or 'roll-away' and so it is called Gilgal because God was saying to them **"I have rolled away the past. I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt, I have separated you from all those taunts that you had, that you would never get into the Promised Land".** They were now a separated people, separated from the past, but also separated unto a living God - which is what circumcision speaks of. It was a sign that they had made a covenant with God. And so, if we were going to boil it down to one word, Gilgal symbolically stands for **'separation' - being separated from the past and being separated unto God.** Now, I would remind you that this is where Elisha started from. And this is where the nation of Israel always started from. As mentioned earlier, Gilgal became a base of operations for the Israelite nation. It is so important to not just talk the talk, but to actually walk the walk in the Christian life. We should, in our lives, be separated from that which would seek to draw us away from God, and be separated, as living sacrifices, unto the living God.

Next stop... Bethel (House of God)

(Lavar/ Encountering God through Scripture/ Water) Added by TFTC

Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you."

The next stop on the journey was Bethel. Alright... here is a difficult question. Can anyone remember who gave Bethel its name? No? Have a look in Genesis chapter 28 verse 10-19:

*Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and He said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "**Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.**" He was afraid and said, "**How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.**" Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. **He called that place Bethel,** though the city used to be called Luz.'*

So it was Jacob who called the place Bethel. And Bethel means the 'House of God'. And he called it the House of God because he'd had this amazing time with the Lord. He had been in the very presence of the Lord. Later in Israel's history, during the time of Judges, Bethel was where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. **So people always used to go to Bethel to enquire of the Lord.** It was known as the House of God. Now, what does that mean for us? Well, as a type, **Bethel speaks to us about the Lord's presence. It is where He is!** It is the desire that we should have to be in His presence. So this is the second stage. **The first stage is to do with separation. The second stage is to do with a desire for God and a desire for His presence.** ^[2]

- TFTC, Tabernacle Teaching

Once we choose to follow God through Gilgal (Alter/ Submit driving factors) the next place we come to is encountering God through His word. It is very important that when we open our bible we are not just reading words on a page, but we are going to a source to encounter the person of Jesus Christ. (John 5:37-4:40- And the Father himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And you have not his word abiding in you: for whom he has sent him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life).

*Reading our bible is not just about reading words on a page, reading a history book about people that lived thousands of years ago. When we open our bible we should be coming to "Bethel" a place where we **encounter Jesus!** **Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.***

I was reading through the Psalms the other day and one small verse stood out to me. It was talking about the nation of Israel and it said 'When He (God) afflicted them then they sought Him.' That is summing up Israel's history. When things were hard or went wrong for them, then they sought Him. Otherwise they didn't really seek him a heck of a lot. And the nation of Israel speaks to us of what we are like in our earthly natures. But how different was King David^[3]. The presence of God was his desire. In good times and in bad.

Jericho – Walk by Faith

(Table of Showbread and Lampstand, Anointing/Oil) Added by TFTC

Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho.

The next stop in Elisha's journey was Jericho. Now the first real mention of Jericho is back where we were before in Joshua. What do you think of when you hear of Jericho? Walls comin' a tumbling down! Absolutely! It is probably a story that many Sunday school participants hear many times. It's a bit of a classic. So if Gilgal was the first place that Israel came to when they entered the Promised Land, Jericho was the first battle that they had to have in the Promised Land. But it was no ordinary battle obviously.

'Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our

enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"' (Joshua 5:13)

Bit of a strange answer don't you think? Joshua sees this guy, he's got a sword and he looks as if he is going to be a real good fighter and so Joshua obviously wants to know whose side he is on - 'Are you with us, or are you with our enemies?' he asks. To which the guy answers 'No'. I love what Major Ian Thomas says about this. 'In so many words Joshua was saying to Him 'whose side are you on, are you on our side or on theirs?' But he said '**No, I haven't come to take sides. I have come to take over!**' And that is what he was meaning. **Joshua was in the presence of the Lord! And the Lord doesn't come merely 'to help'. He comes to take over the situation.** Obviously, as the first battle, God was going to teach the Israelites something special here. Let's have a look –

*Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. **March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in.**"*

If you ask yourself, 'how is Israel going to win this battle?' The answer is - they weren't... the Lord was. So what did they have to do? Well, they had to walk and they had to walk in faith... quite literally. Their job was to walk around the walls.^[4] God, here in the first battle in the Promised Land, was teaching them a new principle - and that was to walk by faith. **So Gilgal speaks of being separate... Bethel speaks of the presence of God and Jericho teaches about the walk of faith.** It's easy to talk about, but it's more than likely that you've got problems. I know this because things are seldom easy on this crazy planet. When you're in the midst of a problem, it's very hard to simply trust that God is adequate for your situation and to walk by faith, even though it sounds great and is so, so, so biblical! But it means that you are not walking by sight. It means that you are actually going through a situation where you cannot see how things are going to turn out. And that can be dreadful at times. But we need, obviously, to trust. We need to trust our Father. ^[5]

The Eternal Principle of the Jordan – Death and Resurrection

Alter of Incense (Fire/ Pruning) *Added by TFTC*

Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on.

The final test for Elisha came with the Jordan. The Jordan, as I'm sure you remember, is what the Israelites had to cross to pass into the Promised Land. The Jordan separated the land of Canaan from their wanderings in the wilderness and was a highly significant place in the Israelites history. You will remember that God miraculously separated the waters as the Israelites passed through on dry ground. In fact, God even commanded Joshua to take 12 stones from the midst of the Jordan and to set them as a memorial for the sons of Israel forever so that no one would forget what God had performed there. So would Elisha go as far as the Jordan?

Ok, so you already know that Elisha went as far as the Jordan so no prizes there! But what about you? What does the Jordan speak of for you and me? **The Jordan, like the Israelites**

Red Sea experience, speaks to us of baptism – death and resurrection. The practical outworking of this is a laying down of our lives. That is why I called this section ‘the eternal principle’. Jesus’ whole life demonstrated this principle, but it was clearest as He contemplated the cross...

John 12:23-26 “Jesus said ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. **But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.**^[6] **Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.**’

Notice that Jesus, while thinking of the cross, said that ‘where I am, my servant will be also.’ This eternal principle of the wheat falling to the ground and dying was not just for Jesus! No, Jesus clearly said that to be His servant would mean that the same principle applied. Elisha knew this, and when the call of God came his way, he readily let go of his own life, his own hopes and dreams, and followed the call of God to wherever that would lead him! What a fantastic attitude and a great picture for our lives.

New Testament Confirmation

So we have looked at the four locations where Elisha was tested at. **Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho** and the **Jordan**. And these speak of **separation**, the **presence of God**, **walking by faith**, and **death and resurrection** respectively.

When I was thinking about those four places, it dawned on me that there is a well know New Testament passage that corresponds to each of these locations. It is **Phil 3:6-10**. To make things easy (hopefully!), I have added the following table.

Location	Principle	N.T Verse	Passage
Gilgal	Separation (from the flesh, the past, and unto God)	Phil 3:6-7	If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more... But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ
Bethel	House of God (a desire to know God and be in His presence.)	Phil 3:8	What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord , for whose sake I have lost all things.
Jericho	Faith (Walk by faith and not righteousness or strength)	Phil 3:9	I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.
Jordan	Death & Resurrection (Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground...)		I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death , and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Conclusion

We are back to where we were at the end of the first study on Elisha. And that is with what was spoken about Elisha and his master Elijah –

“So the two of them walked on.”

Or, in the language of the New Testament passage of Philipians 3 -

“I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me... But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

That was the heart of Paul. Even Paul didn't think that he had arrived, and wasn't content with what he currently knew and had experienced in the Lord. **It's important not just to start the Christian life well. It's important to carry on well and to finish well.**^[3] Press on Christian, to lay hold of that which God has for you.

^[3] Bethel is summed up by the heart of King David when he wrote;

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.**(Psalm 27:4)**

^[4] You can imagine Joshua trying to explain what they were going to do to his generals and the people of Israel. They would be thinking, how are we going to beat Jericho? How are these walls going to come down?. Are we going to go through the gate, are we going to try and go under it, is there anything we can throw over the top? Joshua said "No - we are going to walk around the walls. We are going to walk around it for six days. And then on the seventh day we are going to walk around it seven times.' They would be thinking 'OK right, are we looking for a way in here? 'No, no, no' Joshua says. 'Here is the cool part - On the seventh day after we have walked around it seven times we are going to blow our trumpets and the walls are going to come crashing down! Cool plan huh?' They would be thinking - 'RIGHT - who else have we got for a leader! Joshua has obviously had to much desert sun!'. But God's ways are not our ways. His ways bring glory to the one who truly deserves the glory – God!

^[6] Jesus repeatedly said 'He who loses his life for my sake shall find it.' In fact, this saying is repeated in all four gospels (sometimes more than once) and is one of His most frequent sayings! (See **Matt 10:39, 16:25, Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24, 17:33, John 12:25**). Why? Because we all try so very hard to hang on to all that we think is ours... our possessions, our rights, our independence, our wisdom, our strength... And yet, standing against all this is an eternal principle that does not move. The principle that states that unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides ALONE.