

Elisha (9th cent. BCE) prophet

Today the Orthodox churches commemorate the prophet Elisha, whose story is told in the First and Second Book of Kings.

Elisha, the son of Shaphat - who was, according to tradition, a prosperous farmer of the Jordan valley - received his prophetic vocation through Elijah's mediation.

His task was that of continuing the legacy of Elijah's prophetic work, as two biblical episodes recount: the story of Elisha's call to the prophetic life, and the narrative of Elijah's ascension into heaven in a fiery chariot. The two-thirds of Elijah's spirit requested by Elisha represent the portion of inheritance that firstborn sons received from their families in that time.

Elisha, whose name means "God saves," carried out his ministry during the second half of the ninth century BCE. He announced the life-giving power of Israel's God with his words and with works done in God's name, for the benefit of the poor and the suffering in particular. In the Northern Kingdom he courageously called for faithfulness to the one God in a time of uncertainty with regard to the future of the monarchy in Israel.

Elisha died at the beginning of the eighth century BCE, after giving his last instructions to Joash, king of Israel.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Jas 5:10-20; Lk 4:22-30

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Richard Baxter (d. 1691), Puritan theologian

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (7 ba'unah/sane):

Abaskhiroun of Asyut and companions (3rd-4th cent.), martyrs (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Godescalc of Benevento (d. 1066), witness to the point of bloodshed in North Germany

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Elisha (9th cent. BCE), prophet; *Methodius the Confessor* (d. 847), archbishop of Constantinople