



Elijah Taken Up Into Heaven

2 Kings 2



When Elijah's time of serving the Lord was complete, the Lord took him up into heaven. His duties were passed on to his faithful student, Elisha. God uses different people at different times to complete His work on earth. God always gives people what they need to do His will.

Day #1: Soaking Up Wisdom

Do you have a sponge in your house? Pour a little water on the counter and watch how the sponge soaks it up. Elisha (ee-LY-shuh) was like a sponge, soaking up knowledge from his teacher, Elijah.

God had given Elijah an amazing ministry, and Elijah's time of serving God on the earth had come to an end. But Elijah was not going to die. God made it clear that He was going to take Elijah in a special way.

In his final hours on earth, Elijah visited all the men who were training to become prophets. His faithful student, Elisha, was by his side. Several times, Elijah gave Elisha the opportunity to stay behind.

+ *But Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you!" - 2 Kings 2:2b NLT*

Elisha had been with Elijah from the moment Elijah found him plowing in the field and invited him to become a prophet. In these last hours, Elisha would not leave his teacher.

Elisha was very wise to remain with Elijah. He knew that God had used Elijah in amazing ways. The Bible says that there was nothing super-human about Elijah. He was a regular person just like us. It was his faith in the one true God, and his fervent prayer that set him apart from other men (James 5:17-18). Elisha wanted to learn how to abide in the Lord and to be used like Elijah. Elisha soaked up every bit of wisdom and experience that he could from his teacher.

***** It is incredibly wise to learn from people who have known the Lord longer than you have. Ask questions of your grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles who are believers. This type of learning does not end as you grow up. People of every age should find someone a little older and a little wiser to "soak up" wisdom from. (See 1 & 2 Timothy, the letters of Paul to his student in the faith.)

Day #2: Double Portion

After Elijah said his final words to the lesser prophets, Elijah and Elisha came to the Jordan River. Fifty of the other prophets stood at a distance watching to see what would happen.

Elijah rolled up his prophet's coat. When he struck the Jordan River with it, the water parted. Each time we have seen waters part in the Bible, God is inviting His people into a new era, or a new beginning. This time was no different. Elijah crossed the Jordan by faith, sure that he is going to a new place, where God wanted him to go. Elisha, also, was crossing into a new beginning. Both men walked across the riverbed on dry ground.

+ *After they had gone across, Elijah spoke to Elisha. He said, "Tell me. What can I do for you before I'm taken away from you?"*

"Please give me a double share of your spirit," Elisha replied. - 2 Kings 7-10

Elisha did not ask for anything that he could touch or hold. He knew that God's Spirit was better than anything this world has to offer, and he wanted as much as God would give him. He asked for a double portion of God's Spirit, just as a first-born son would receive a double portion of his father's blessing. Of course, this was not up to Elijah - it was up to God. Elijah told Elisha that if God allowed him to see him taken away by God, then he could be sure that God had given him what he asked for.

***** There is no such thing as greed when it comes to wanting to know God. You can freely ask to know God more, or be more controlled by His Holy Spirit, or to see God's hand at work! God does not refuse those who want more of Him (Exodus 33:18-19, 1 Chronicles 4:9-10).

Day #3: Chariot of Fire

Elijah and Elisha walked together. They both knew that Elijah was going to leave very soon.

+ *They kept walking along and talking together. Suddenly a chariot and horses appeared. Fire was all around them. The chariot and horses came between the two men. Then Elijah went up to heaven in a strong wind. - 2 Kings 2:11*

Day #3 continued:

The 50 prophets standing across the Jordan River did not see this heavenly vision. But God allowed Elisha to see his teacher taken up into heaven. This gave Elisha the assurance that he would receive the double portion of God's Spirit that he had asked for.

Elisha was terribly sad to see the teacher that he loved and admired leave. As Elijah was taken up into heaven in the whirlwind, his prophet's coat fell to the ground. Elisha leaned down and picked it up. This was a sign that Elijah's responsibilities were being given to Elisha. By this coat, others would see that Elisha was taking Elijah's place as the most important prophet of that time.

Elisha walked back to the river's edge. He, too, struck the water with the prophet's coat. The waters parted once again, and he walked back across on dry ground. This was the beginning of Elisha's faithful service to God. Like his teacher, Elisha would do many amazing things. He would perform many miracles and healings. **God had equipped Elijah** with everything he needed in order to carry out His plan.

 God will never ask you to do something without giving you what you need to accomplish it. If you need strength, He will give it (Psalm 29:11). If you need courage, He will give it (Joshua 1:9). If you need the words to speak, He will give them (1 Corinthians 2:13). Depend on the Lord to supply all of your needs as you serve Him.

Day #4: Spiritual Relay

Have you ever been in a relay race? You may have seen an Olympic relay race on television. In a relay, there are four runners on a team, and each team has one baton. The first runner holds the baton as he runs around the track. When he completes a lap, he hands the baton to the next person on his team, and that person carries it around the track. Then he hands it to the third team member, and finally the fourth team member. In a relay race, the emphasis is not on one individual runner. Every team member has strengths and weaknesses. Each lap of the race is important, and the runners are chosen for a particular lap according to their abilities. The team works together to win the race.

In some ways, God's work on earth is similar to a relay race. God allows His children to be runners in the "race" of building His Kingdom. Like an athlete running a lap, we each have work to do. God has a plan for each of us individually that, in the end, fits into His big plan for the entire world.

This was seen very clearly when God took Elijah up into heaven. His plan for Elijah was complete, and God "passed the baton" to Elisha. We will see that Elisha

Day #4 continued:

will "run the next lap" so to speak. He will do the work that God laid out for him, until it is time to pass the baton to the next faithful prophet.



Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the Champion who initiates and perfects our faith. - Hebrews 12:1b-2a NLT



Discuss the ways a runner prepares for a race. (He drinks water, eats well, rests, stretches his muscles, and exercises every day.) How can you be prepared to "run" the race of God's plan? (You must abide in Him, read His word, listen to Him in prayer, obey in little and big things.) Remember that when you put your trust in Jesus, it's as if you are handed a "baton." Through trust and obedience, you can run your part of the race and finish well (2 Timothy 4:7).

Day #5: Salty Water

Very soon after Elisha was given the important job of main prophet, he began serving God's people.



The men of Jericho spoke to Elisha. "Look," they said. "This town has a good location. You can see that for yourself. But the spring of water here is bad. So the land doesn't produce anything." - 2 Kings 2:19

The water in Jericho was not good for drinking or watering crops. This water was good for nothing. People can't live in a town without clean water, so the men of Jericho went to Elisha to ask for help. Elisha asked for a bowl of salt. He sprinkled salt in the water and pronounced that God had made the water pure. The water would no longer cause death, and now it would be good for watering crops. The people asked the man of God for help, and God gave them living water.

Why would God use salt to make the water clean? Throughout the Bible, salt is used as a **symbol** for purification (Exodus 30:35, Judges 9:44). Salt is unique; there is nothing like it. Salt was so valuable in Biblical times, that people sometimes used it as money. Roman soldiers were paid in salt.

Jesus told His disciples that they were the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). Salt has two main purposes. It flavors food and it keeps food from spoiling. To be the salt of the earth, believers "flavor" our world with Jesus' love and goodness, while "preserving" the world by choosing not to do the sinful things that spoil our lives.



Sprinkle a little salt on your hand and taste it. Remember that Jesus wants you to be like salt - flavoring the world with His love, and preserving the world by remaining pure.