

Where Is Elijah's God?

2 Kings 2:14-18; Malachi 3:6

May 5, 2019

Greg L. Price

When the Lord brings about a seismic change in your life so that your world seems to be shaking at its very foundations (whether it be the loss of a loved one in death, a disruption of your marriage, a betrayal by a friend, a chronic illness, a rebellious child that walks away from the faith, an unexpected demotion or dismissal from a job, etc.), there is only one to whom you can flee who is unshakeable, immovable, and unchangeable—“For I am the LORD, I change not” (Malachi 3:6). If your eye of faith is on the unchangeable Lord Jesus who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, you have no reason to fear “though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof” (Psalm 46:2-3). If like Peter you have stepped out in faith to trust the Lord but take the eye of faith off of the Lord Jesus and begin to look at the huge waves and to feel the strong wind that is blowing against you, you will soon be sinking in worry, anxiety, and fear. It's happened to us all.

Let us consider where Elisha turned as he faced the loss of his spiritual father (Elijah) and as he succeeded Elijah, one of the greatest of God's prophets in all of Scripture. The main points today are in the form of two questions: (1) In Whom Is Your Faith? (2) To Whom Will You Listen?

I. In Whom Is Your Faith?

A. Elisha was facing an enormous change that would alter his life. That day arrived and was accomplished when Elisha's spiritual father (for the past 10 years approximately) was lovingly carried by royal angelic messengers in a chariot of fire into the glories of heaven without passing through death. The grief and sorrow in being separated was great for Elisha (though he no doubt rejoiced in Elijah's gain in being translated into the glories of heaven). Not only is there the cry of Elisha that was noted in 2 Kings 2:12; but there is also the outward sign of the sorrow that he felt in 2 Kings 2:12.

1. Dear ones, it is easy from a distance to criticize the sorrow of fellow Christians over their loss of loved ones and friends who have been used by the Lord to bring them to Christ or to grow them in Christ. But dear ones, in the cry and demonstration of Elisha, the sorrow of separation is real (even though—praise the Lord—it is a temporary sorrow that is tempered by the hope we have in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ—to which Elijah's translation points).

2. Sooner or later, we will all experience that kind of sorrow. If we would know the comfort of the Lord from brethren then, let us be those who offer that comfort to brethren now. The heart of the Lord Jesus was in sorrow over the grief He saw in the words and tears of Martha and Mary, and as He was led to the grave of Lazarus, their brother, He wept (even though He knew where the soul of Lazarus was and even though He knew He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead).

B. After Elijah is translated in the whirlwind into his eternal rest and joy in the presence of the Lord, there remained upon the ground the sign that Elisha's request was answered (2 Kings 2:9,13). The mantle of Elijah was a piece of fabric that was worn upon the shoulders and could be used for warmth at night or shade during the day, but more importantly it was the sign (uniform) of the prophetic office held by Elijah. It was the passing of the torch to Elisha. Elisha's request was heard and answered by the Lord. The Lord confirmed that Elisha was heir to the prophetic ministry of the great prophet, Elijah—he saw Elijah's translation and he received Elijah's mantle.

C. Now the reality sets in. With the mantle in hand he approaches the Jordan River, and this

becomes the first test of faith in facing the many obstacles that would confront him in his new calling. He no doubt could have crossed the bank of the Jordan by ferry to carry him over to the other side. But just as his spiritual father had a short time before (2 Kings 2:8) struck the Jordan River with that mantle and by the power of God the Jordan had opened to them, so now he must either take the easy way of avoiding that test (the ferry) or the difficult way of putting his faith to the test (smiting the Jordan with the mantle). Would this test reveal failure in himself (his eye being upon the obstacle) or faith in the one true living God? As Elisha takes the mantle of Elijah and strikes the Jordan, he at the same time sounds forth this question: “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” That may seem like a doubting question on the surface, but as we shall see, it was not. Let’s consider more closely that question.

1. This is not a question of doubt as if to say, “I cannot see the Lord, where is He?” This is a question of faith, “I have been promised the Spirit of God that rested on Elijah, where is He? He is with me as He was with Elijah?” Elisha’s faith is not in the mantle (that is an outward symbol—like the rod of Moses—like water in baptism or the wine/bread in the Lord’s Supper). His faith is not in the mantle or in Elijah or in the office of Elijah (all those have their proper place). His faith is in Elijah’s God—the God that revealed Himself to be such a glorious God through the ministry of Elijah.

2. This is such an important truth. It is the difference between trusting in the Jesus Christ to save you and trusting in something else to save you? Where is your faith? Is your faith in the means that God often uses to bring what you need and for which you pray (supplements, a job, a loved one, a bank account, the economy, a political party, the government, or even the sacraments and the ministry)? God ordinarily uses means to supply our needs, but is not bound to do so (Mark 8:23).

3. Dear ones, when your confidence and dependence is upon the means rather than upon the Lord God of Elijah, you have made the means God uses the object of your faith and the means that you can see has become an idol that has replaced your God. That is walking by sight, not by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). That is being controlled by feelings and emotions rather than controlling feelings and emotions by the unfailing, incontrovertible, and unalterable promises of God (Genesis 50:20; Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 26:3-4; John 6:37-39; Philippians 4:13; Philippians 4:19). We all fall and fail because our eye is not upon the Lord God of Elijah (or upon His promises), but is rather upon Elijah (people—even godly people), the Jordan River (adverse circumstances), or the mantle (appointed symbols of God’s blessing or offices of authority). Our faith will be weak when our God is small. And our faith will correspondingly be great when our God (the LORD God of Elijah) is great.

D. Why does Elisha appeal to “the LORD God of Elijah”? Why not simply to “the LORD God”? This is how Elisha strengthened his faith—he remembered and reflected on what God had done through Elijah. It was not Elijah that was great, but Elijah’s God (importance of history).

1. First, Elisha desires the God that revealed Himself to Elijah to reveal Himself to him. How did Jehovah God reveal Himself to Elijah?

a. He was the God that fed Elijah and supplied all his temporal needs. He sent bread and meat by ravens to feed Elijah when he was by the brook Cherith (1 Kings 17), and filled the widow’s barrel with meal and her cruse with oil (1 Kings 17). Does the LORD God of Elijah care any less for you, His redeemed child (Matthew 6:26,30,33)?

b. He was the God that gave courage to Elijah to stand before the king and before hundreds of prophets of Baal, and sent fire from heaven to consume Elijah’s sacrifice, and showed the powerlessness of all false religions before Almighty God (1 Kings 18). Elijah was in the minority. He did not lead hundreds or thousands to the Lord. There was no great reformation in Israel. And yet the Lord used him. Is the LORD God of Elijah now less sovereign and powerful over all His enemies (religious and political)? Certainly not! Jesus is Lord of all—no enemy could keep Him in that tomb. We have even more revelation (not less) to confirm God’s absolute sovereignty through Christ’s resurrection.

c. He was the God that heard the prayers of Elijah who prayed that it not rain for 3 ½ years and then prayed that the Lord would open the windows of heaven and send rain to water the drought-ridden land of Israel. True, Elijah was a mighty prophet of God, but God doesn't only hear and answer the prayers of such prophets (James 5:16-18).

d. He was the God that stood with Elijah and restored him even when Elijah was so overcome by fear and failure that he wanted to give up—he wanted God to simply take his life right then and there (1 Kings 19). How many times have we wanted to give up? But just as the Lord came to Elijah and fed him, rested him, rebuked him, renewed his faith, and sent him forth to serve Him, so the Lord has done with us countless times. It is His persevering grace, not your mere determination. Your weakness reveals His power and His mercy (2 Corinthians 12:9).

2. The second reason that Elisha calls out for “the LORD God of Elijah” to reveal Himself in parting the Jordan River (rather than simply “the LORD God”) is to reveal the historical connection between Elijah’s God and Elisha’s God.

a. These were not two different Gods, any more than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is different from the God of Peter, James, and Paul, or of Mary and Martha, or of Luther, Calvin, and Knox, or of yours and mine. Our sovereign, almighty, holy, and gracious God is still the same unchangeable God that He always has been.

b. God does not change in His nature, His attributes, His eternal purposes, His gospel of free grace, His moral law, His promises, or in the way we are to approach Him in worship. Fad and fashions change. Churches change to keep up with the standards of the world. Nations change according to the whim of the popular majority. People will fail you, betray you, and turn against you, but God will never change.

E. When Elisha smote the Jordan River (that great obstacle that stood in his way), appealing to the LORD God of Elijah to reveal Himself, the Jordan parted and he walked across to the amazement of the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 2:14-15). They immediately acknowledged the spirit of Elijah to be upon Elisha as they beheld the same power of God upon Elisha that was upon Elijah in parting the Jordan River and beheld the mantle of Elijah upon Elisha (2 Kings 2:15).

II. To Whom Will You Listen?

A. It is so interesting that these same sons of the prophets that told Elisha that Elijah would be taken away (2 Kings 2:5) and that witnessed the miracle of Elijah (2 Kings 2:7-8) and that saw Elisha come back alone in the power and spirit of Elijah (2 Kings 2:15) are the very ones that badger Elisha to the point of shame in asking Elisha to send them to find Elijah or his body elsewhere (2 Kings 2:16). Elisha at first tells them not to go, but then because they are relentless, he tells them to go. After three days they return exhausted—no wiser, but certainly more foolish. Elisha rebukes them by saying, “Did I not say unto you, Go not” (2 Kings 2:18)? What does this teach us?

1. Just as the sons of the prophets would not heed the command of Elisha when he told them not to go searching for Elijah and they returned exhausted and empty-handed, so many professing Christians live their lives in a similar manner by way of not obeying the doctrines and commandments of the Lord. God declares in His Word, “Don’t do that! Don’t go there!” And yet they do so.

2. Many times, those who profess Christ are so filled with constant changing from one doctrine to another doctrine (the newest and most novel). They do not know where they stand. It is no wonder they have little or no assurance of faith when their foundation is so shaky. Eventually, they become skeptical of whether any doctrine or commandment can be known to be the truth because they have changed so often in these matters. I pity them.

3. God warns us against not only those given to disobedience of God’s commandments but

also against those given to change and who pursue the latest fad in doctrine, the biggest church ministry, or the most recent claim to raise the dead (Proverbs 24:21-22). Don't follow those given to change.

4. Dear ones, be not like these sons of the prophets who cannot simply accept and believe the plain teaching of God's Word. Questions and doubts are not a reason to immediately change where you stand. That happens to all of us. Search the Scriptures like the Bereans (Acts 17) and research the scriptural testimony of the faithful throughout history who served the LORD God of Elijah and who faithfully summarized the teaching of Scripture in Confessions, Catechisms, and Covenants.

B. Why didn't Elisha plainly tell these sons of the prophets that he saw Elijah translated body and soul into heaven in a chariot of fire?

1. If they would not receive the simple command (not to go) of him whom they acknowledged to have the power and spirit of Elijah, they would not receive more truth and revelation. The same is true of each of us. If we will not obey in love the authority of the Lord in His simple commands in His Word or if we will run to and fro looking for the truth because we do not want to hear the simple command of the Lord, God will not give us greater understanding of His truth. Our minds will be darkened and we will be more susceptible to believing a lie.

2. Dear ones, the only safe dwelling place in which to live in this constantly changing, progressively evil world is to dwell in the shadow of the Almighty who never changes (Psalm 90:1-2).

Copyright 2019 Greg L. Price.