

BOOK OF 2 KINGS
THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH
2 KINGS 2:1-14

Introduction

Tonight we see **the end of Elijah's ministry and his translation** into heaven.

As we think of both Elijah the man and Elijah the prophet, let's understand that he was yet a mortal man that chose to walk with God and believe God.

James 5:17-18 17 *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.* 18 *And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

That phrase, **“a man subject to like passions as we are,”** simply means that he was like us in every way. Even though he was a prophet of God **he had the same flesh to struggle with that we have. He wrestled with personal fears and phobias and insecurities that bother us.** And I'm glad that God has given us the opportunity to see Elijah's failures as well as his successes!

We began by seeing him begin his ministry as **he appeared from a life of obscurity** to deliver a message from the LORD to King Ahab of Israel.

One thing that we have seen in our study is that **ALL of his successes came as he was following the leading of the LORD! (That's an important thing to remember because that is true in each of our lives!)**

When we follow the leading of the LORD we can't go wrong! In fact, the only time that we really saw him down and depressed came when he was exhausted from running on his own to get away from the threats of Jezebel!

He was ready to quit there, but the LORD wasn't done with him! There is a lesson in that for us as well! **The LORD is the one that determines when the ministry he has called us to, as well as our life, is over!**

Before the LORD used him here in the first chapter of this book to deliver a final message before Ahab's son, Ahaziah, the LORD had been using him for about four to six years to school the next generation of prophets, including the fellow that we will see in this Chapter take Elijah's place—Elisha!

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One might sum up Elijah's life by saying **he was both a man of faith and a man of failure.** While he boldly preached before two kings, he ran from a queen. But **mostly he was a man of faith who followed the leadership of the LORD in obedience!**

Elijah is still one of my favorite Old Testament characters! **His faith was still greater than his failures.** And even his failures give us hope that maybe **the LORD can still use us too in spite of the times that we fail. We just need to get back up and get back into the LORD's will! We need to return to a walk of faith and obedience and following the leadership of the LORD!**

We've learned too that **sometimes God's greatest blessings are found when we find ourselves in places of hardship.** But they are definitely found when we are in the center of God's will. When we step outside of God's will is when we begin to struggle and fear and become defeated and depressed!

Elijah's journey to this point had lasted a good number of years and the LORD had used him well. Here we find that **the LORD was about to take Elijah up into heaven by way of a whirlwind.**

We will see as we move through this Chapter that Scripture indicates that both Elijah and Elisha, as well as others of the sons of the Prophets knew that Elijah's time to leave this world was at hand! The beginning of the end finds Elijah taking one more journey. And all of the points of the journey were very significant. Let's take a look at them tonight as this journey leads up to **THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH!**

I. WE SEE ELIJAH BEGAN AT GILGAL. (Vs 1)

Gilgal was known as a place of beginnings. This was where Israel had their **first campsite in the Promised Land. (Joshua 4:19; 5:9-10)**

In **Joshua 4:20-24**, Joshua **set a memorial up** of twelve stones taken from the midst of the Jordan river to commemorate the fact that they had just finished their journey through the wilderness. The LORD had dried up the waters of the Red Sea on the front end as they left Egypt and then the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan River for them on the back end as well as they entered the Promised Land!

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We ALL have a place of our beginning both *physically* and *spiritually*! Both of mine happen to be pretty much in the same place!

My *Gilgal* is found in the unincorporated community of Sterling, Georgia, just outside of Brunswick. It is where I was raised in Sterling Baptist Church from my birth...it is where I was saved and baptized... where I was trained in the Word of the LORD...where I was called to preach...It is a place where I have many fond memories of my faith!

When it comes to the area of our *physical beginnings*, we had no **choice in the matter!** The LORD chose that for us! And I'm so glad that He chose mine! No person chooses if they'll be born or where they'll be born or who their parents will be!

One writer describes his birth like this, "*I came from a nice warm place where I was shoved into a cold, bright room full of strangers and before I had a chance to introduce myself one of them slapped me.*"

Now when it came to our *spiritual beginnings* we did have a choice! That day when the Holy Spirit moved in our hearts to convict us of our sin of unbelief and of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the judgment to come, **we had a choice to believe or not!**

That day was Wednesday, February 17, 1971, for me when I first trusted the LORD!

Aren't you glad you believed? I know some may wish that you had come to the LORD sooner, but praise God that you repented of your sin and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your salvation!

Do you remember your Gilgal? You may not have a date and time, but in your mind you should be able to go back to that Gilgal moment when you crossed over into the abundant life in Christ!

We all need to keep our Gilgal fresh on our mind! Don't forget your your Gilgal!

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SO, THE STARTING PLACE WAS GILGAL...

II. WE SEE THE LORD SENT ELIJAH TO BETHEL! (Vs 2-3)
Bethel means "*the house of God*". It was also a significant place in Israel's history!

A. Bethel Was Significant To Abraham!

This is the place where the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, "*Unto thy seed will I give this land.*" (*Genesis 12:8*)

It says that Abraham built an altar unto the LORD and the LORD appeared unto him in *Bethel*.

When Abram left the land because of a famine and went down to sojourn in Egypt and got in trouble, *Bethel* is the place he came back to when he got right with the LORD! In fact he came back to the altar he had first built there and called on the name of the LORD again! (*Genesis 13:1-4*)

B. Bethel Was Significant To Jacob!

In *Genesis 28:19-22*, we find that Bethel was also a place of commitment to the LORD for Isaac's son Jacob as he was fleeing Esau and journeying to Haran.

In *Genesis 31:13*, a good number of years later when Jacob had been told to return home by the LORD, the LORD appeared to him in a dream and told Jacob, "*I am the God of Bethel.*" (i.e. "*I am the God of the house of God.*")

In *Genesis 35:1-15*, we find God directed Jacob back to *Bethel* with all his house. This is where the LORD reiterated that Jacob's name was changed to Israel!

So we can say *Bethel* ("*the house of God*") was a place of **blessing from God as well as a place of sacrifice and commitment to God.**

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- C. **Bethel, “*The House Of God,*” Is Where The Church Meets— It Is Significant To The Child Of God!**
It is still **a place of blessing from God as well as a place of sacrifice and commitment to God!**

So, after Elijah left *Gilgal*, he went to *Bethel*...

III. **NEXT WE SEE THE LORD SENT ELIJAH TO JERICHO!**
(Vs 4-5)

Jericho is, oddly enough, next to *Gilgal*. In fact, in *Joshua 4:19*, *Gilgal* is described as being “*in the east border of Jericho*”.

Remember how *Jericho* was a great place of victory for the nation of Israel as they obeyed what the LORD told them to do!
(*Joshua 6:1-27*)

(Scripture says that for six days the children of Israel marched around the city once each day with seven priests blowing seven trumpets and the Ark of the Covenant being carried by priests. Then on the seventh day they marched not once, but seven times and when the trumpets blew after the seventh time around they all shouted and the wall fell down flat and they destroyed the city!)

Immediately afterward though, **they experienced defeat at Ai because of their disobedience at Jericho** (*Joshua 7*—That trespass of Achan and the accursed thing). After Israel dealt with Achan’s trespass, then Israel achieved victory at Ai. (*Joshua 8*)

And so here Elijah, no doubt, would be **reminded of both the victory and defeats of Israel and possibly of his own life**. It is a good thing for us to be reminded of our victories as well as our defeats as long as we don’t let the memory of the defeats keep us down!

The reminder of both our victories and our defeats should remind us of the importance of dependence upon the LORD as well as the importance of our obedience to the LORD!

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Before we move on I want to point out that these three places—*Gilgal*, *Bethel*, and *Jericho* were also the location of the schools of the prophets that Elijah oversaw. (Vs 3, Vs 5)

IV. **WE SEE THE LORD SENT ELIJAH TO THE JORDAN RIVER!**
(Vs 6-8)

Crossing Jordan is a phrase that’s often used to describe the experience of death. But Elijah did not die here. Nevertheless, he was ready to be separated from this life and go be with the LORD!

For the Believer especially, **approaching the end of one’s life here on this earth should be a time of both reflection and self-evaluation.**

However, we know that **not everyone has the benefit of knowing the end of earthly life is about to be over** like Elijah did. Therefore we **would all do well to live with the realization that we could be ushered into the LORD’s presence at any moment (whether through death or the rapture!)**

Socrates once said, “*The unexamined life is not worth living.*” Have you evaluated yours lately? Let me encourage you to **evaluate your life today in light of the possibility that it could be over at any moment!**

Elijah’s ministry lasted about 27 years and then **he was translated to heaven which means he never experienced death.** What a blessing! The only other person this happened to in the Old Testament was Enoch. Both of these men’s translation are types of the Rapture!

Elijah had learned earlier in his life the necessity of being exactly where he was supposed to be to receive the blessings of God. He ended his earthly life being where the LORD sent him!

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V. WE SEE ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION INTO HEAVEN! (Vs 9-14)

A. Note Elijah's Question For Elisha. (Vs 9a)

One of the last things that Elijah did here is ask Elisha an interesting question. He says, "*Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken from thee.*"

Elisha had been a faithful student under Elijah!
Elisha had also been with Elijah on this particular journey at each step of the way here to the end!

Elijah had given Elisha ample opportunity at each step of the way to bow out and quit, but we've seen that Elisha wasn't having any part of that! He was obviously expecting God to do something special for this special man of God!

Also, Elisha had a desire to do the will of God with his life and no doubt he wanted to learn all he could from Elijah all the way to the very end!

Theodore Epp once said, "*When our goal in life is to do the will of God, He will open our eyes to see what we should desire and make our purpose in life.*"

B. Note Elisha's Answer To Elijah's Question. (Vs 9b)

We learn a lot about Elisha from Elisha asking for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. His motives were pure in this request.

Elijah had done much for the LORD! Elisha wanted to be used of the LORD too! There is nothing wrong with wanting to be used in greater ways for the LORD than those who have mentored us!

To want to do great things for our great God for his honor and glory is a noble desire! This wasn't about Elisha seeking glory for himself, but rather that God might get more glory from him!

A double portion of inheritance was the amount that went to the firstborn. I get from this that he wanted to be treated like he was Elijah's spiritual son.

When Elijah cast his mantle on Elisha at the first, that was a sign of not only Elisha's calling, but Elijah's spiritual adoption of him to train him. (1 Kings 19:19) And now Elisha was asking for his birthright.

What he was asking for was the Spirit's anointing to be used more of God than Elijah was. And we will find in our study of this book that Elisha performed more miracles than Elijah. (Twice as many!)

We also find that he ministered for about twice as long as Elisha. And so God answered this prayer!

C. Note Elijah's Answer Elisha's Request. (Vs 10)

Elijah said it was a hard thing that Elisha asked because it was really not his call, it was the LORD's call!

We see the conditions of this request being met. We are not told, but I believe it was the LORD that laid out these conditions!

D. Elijah's Translation Into Heaven. (Vs 11-14)

So Elijah took this last trip to the prophet schools. No doubt, he encouraged these men of God before his farewell journey to heaven. He was translated into Heaven, and his mantle fell to Elisha!

Conclusion

Now, that's our Bible study for this evening, but next week, Lord willing we will come back and look at *verses 11-14* a little deeper!