

5/29/11

**Elisha, The Successor of Elijah**  
**2Kings 2:1-25**

In every movement or denomination there is always the concern for the one to succeed the man God has used in the past, so there begins a search and at times a grooming of the person to take over.  
\* Now that is not to say this is wrong in and of itself, but if the one chosen is not God's choice, it is a worthless effort!

At times, as difficult as it may seem to us, it could be that God has no successor, due to corruption or that His purpose for the particular work was for that generation and God will raise something else up for the next!

But in the case of Elijah, God did have a successor, it was to be Elisha, for though Ahab and Jezebel were dead, their children lived on to continue the idolatrous evil of their parents.

God had used the prophet Elijah to bring the evil duo to their end, but now God was ready to pass the mantle to Elisha, but he would not be attempting to imitate or be like Elijah.

Elijah and Elisha were two completely different people yet the common thread was that they served and were used by the same God.

1. Elijah was a man of the country, Elisha a man of the city.
2. Elijah was a loner, Elisha was around people.
3. Elijah was called to declare judgment, Elisha to restore.
4. Elijah had a peculiar dress that could not be missed, Elisha was a ordinary, as any other man.
5. Elijah's miracles were used in judgment, Elisha's miracles were used to help individuals.
6. Elisha did nine miracles, depending how you count them.

We want to look at the succession of the prophet Elijah by the prophet Elisha, in three movements:

- I. The anticipation of Elijah to be taken to heaven. vs. 1-11
  - II. The reaction from Elisha over Elijah being taken up to heaven. vs. 12-18
  - III. The actions of Elisha being directed from heaven. vs. 19-25
- I. The anticipation of Elijah to be taken to heaven. vs. 1-11**
- A. The prophet Elijah was prepared for the passing of his prophetic office to Elisha after he finished his last commission to visit the schools of the prophets. vs. 1-8

- \* Some suspect as many as ten years had passed since Elisha's call?
1. Elijah had been told by God of his soon departure to heaven. vs. 1
    - a. The manner would be without ever dying and by a storm-wind, "And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind." vs. 1a-b
    - b. The leadership had already been transferred to Elisha, indicated by the statement, "that Elijah went **with Elisha** from Gilgal." vs. 1c

\* Much like the leadership was transferred from Barnabas to Paul!
  2. Elijah had received revelation from God to go to Bethel and told Elisha. vs. 2
    - a. Elijah tried to dissuade Elisha from going with him to Bethel, "Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel." vs. 2a-d
    - b. Elisha refused to stay behind, "But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to Bethel." vs. 2e-i
      - 1) He swore by the living God and Elijah that he would not leave him!
      - 2) He was a faithful servant, stating this two other times! vs. 4f-h, 6d-f

- 3) He also knew about the soon translation of Elijah to heaven and desired to be with him till the last minute, evident by his answer to the sons of the prophets. vs. 3, 5
3. Elisha and Elijah arrived at Bethel. vs. 3
  - a. Elisha was approached by the student, who also knew of Elijah's departure to heaven, "Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" vs. 3a-c
    - 1) Elijah without doubt had been occupied in the organizing and overseeing of the schools of the prophets started by Samuel. 1Sam. 19:18-24 2Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 12, 15
    - 2) Elisha would be the logical one to continue the oversight of the school of the prophets.
  - b. Elisha mildly reproved them, indicating that he did not want Elijah not hear them, "And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent!" vs. 3d-g
    - 1) These men God had called to be trained, ready to be anointed and sent out by God.
    - 2) These future prophets would guide the people back to God.

- 3) Elisha, himself was in his last steps of training, to succeed Elijah.
4. Elijah again received a revelation from God to go to Jericho and told Elisha. vs. 4-5
- a. Elijah again attempted to dissuade Elisha from going, “Then Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho.” vs. 4a-e
  - b. Elisha refused again and went together, “But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So they came to Jericho.” vs. 4f-j
  - c. The students at the school of the prophets at Jericho approached Elisha, like those of Bethel. vs. 5
    - 1) These students also knew about the translation of Elijah, “Now the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?” vs. 5a-b
    - 2) Elisha again reproved them mildly, not wanting Elijah to hear, “So he answered, “Yes, I know; keep silent!” vs. 5c-f

5. Elijah for the third time received a revelation from God to go to the Jordan and again told Elisha. vs. 6-7
- a. Elijah for the third time attempted to dissuade Elisha from going, “Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan.” vs. 6a-d
  - b. Elisha for the third time refused, “But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So the two of them went on.” vs. 6e-h  
\* The number three is key and the Scriptures, for the Trinity!
  - c. The students went about 5 miles distance and gazed attentively at Elisha and Elijah from the distance, “And fifty men of the sons of the prophets **went and stood** facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan.” vs. 7
6. Elijah performed his last miracle at the Jordan. vs. 8
- a. He used the object symbolizing his prophetic office, “Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that.” vs. 8a-d
    - 1) Elijah had wrapped his face in his mantle at Sinai when he heard the

- voice of God and re-commissioned. 1Kings 19:13
- 2) Elijah had thrown his mantle on Elisha to call him to be a prophet, as he was plowing. 1Kings 19:19
- b. They crossed over together for the last time, “so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.” vs. 8e
- 1) Elisha had proven to be a faithful servant to Elijah!
  - 2) Elijah undoubtedly was pleased with Elisha’s commitment to Yahweh.
- B.** The prophet Elijah personally asked Elisha for his last request. vs. 9-11
1. Elijah indicated he was about to be translated to heaven. vs. 9a-e
    - a. The location of the Jordan was historic, “And so it was, when they had crossed over.” vs. 9a-b
      - 1) Joshua had divided the Jordan at flood season for all of Israel to cross over and possess the land, their temporary home on earth.
      - 2) Elijah now, divided the Jordan to go to heaven, for a temporary period, till he returns as one of the two witnessed in the Tribulation.
      - 3) Moses parted the Red Sea, but never entered to possess the land, yet both Moses and Elijah were

- with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, a preview of the Second Coming to set up the Kingdom, so Israel can possess all the land promised to her.
- b. The offer was the final test for Elisha. vs. 9c-g
- 1) The petition had no limit, “that Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask! What may I do for you.” vs. 9d-f
  - 2) The seriousness of the petition was clear, “before I am taken away from you?” vs. 9g
2. Elisha’s request was in harmony with his call by Elijah, a faithful servant, not some prideful greedy desire. vs. 9-10b
- a. The request of Elisha was out of honor and respect for Elijah and God, “Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” vs. 9h-i
    - 1) This was not a request to perform twice as many miracles or be twice as popular, that would have been an insult to Elijah.
    - 2) This was a request for the portion of inheritance due to the oldest son, for Elisha saw himself as the adopted son of Elijah in his call by Elijah to succeed, having trained him as his disciple. Deut. 21:17

- b. The response of Elijah was sobering, “So he said, “You have asked a hard thing.” vs. 10a-b  
\* Difficult in the sense that only God could bestow that blessing, not Elijah!
- 3. Elijah gave Elisha a condition for his request to be granted, revealed by God. vs. 10c-g
  - a. Patient perception looking up to God, “Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you.” vs. 10c-d
  - b. Personal responsibility, “it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be “ vs. 10e-g
- 3. Elijah without warning was taken up to heaven. vs. 11
  - a. The heavenly angelic escort appeared, “Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them.” vs. 11a-d
    - 1) God sent these angelic warriors to protect Elisha from the King of Syria, And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, **open** his **eyes** that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the **eyes** of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and

- chariots of fire all around Elisha.” 2Kings 6:17
- 2) They are before the throne of God in the vision of Ezekiel. Ezk. 1, 10
- b. The prophet Elijah was translated to heaven, “and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” vs. 11c
  - 1) Not in the chariot of fire, but the whirlwind.
  - 2) Elijah when taken, stood under the shadow of the mountains of Pisgah where Moses died and was buried by God. Deut. 34:1, 7
  - 3) Elijah’s departure was consistent with his introduction as a prophet, suddenly appearing before Ahab and others, suddenly he was gone!
- c. Elijah is a type of the rapture of the church, he went up in a whirlwind into heaven!

### **Illustration**

Moody had no more than a 5th 6th grade education and did poorly even at that. When he attended his first Sunday School class he thumbed through Genesis looking for John. When applying to join Mt. Vernon Congregational Church, he was rejected because of utter ignorance of Christian teaching. His friends thought that seldom did anyone seem more unlikely to fill any sphere of public or extended usefulness. But God can take

what seems small and insignificant and use it greatly, if it is given over completely to Him.

**#5804**

\* He was not even a high school graduate, yet he founded a vast educational system that turned out one of ten American Protestant missionaries and spoke publicly to 100 million persons about spiritual things. **#5864**

### Application

**1.** The believer must be like Elijah, doing the work of the Lord, even when we know we will soon be going home to be with the Lord.

- a. Be it due to our age, knowing we are in that range when we will soon be with the Lord.
- b. Be it due to due to illness or disease.

\* “I have **fought** the good **fight**, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”  
2Tim. 4:7

**2.** The believer who understands the Kingdom of God and work of ministry will prepare others and allow God to be the One to anoint those called.

- a. Teaching them the basic doctrines of the faith.
- b. Encouraging them to get involved in the various ministries.
- c. Giving them the opportunity for God to use them.

\* “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these

to faithful men who will be able to **teach** others also.” 2Tim. 2:2

**3.** The believer will rejoice to pass the baton to those God will raise up, call and anoint.

\* “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2Tim. 4:1-5

*The anticipation of Elijah to be taken to heaven did not keep him from serving to the end!*

**II. The reaction from Elisha over Elijah being taken up to heaven. vs. 12-18**

**A.** The prophetic office of Elisha was confirmed by God. vs. 12-14

**1.** Elisha fulfilled the condition Elijah gave to him, “And Elisha saw it.” vs. 12a

- a. He saw the chariot of fire and the horses of fire.

- b. He saw Elijah taken to heaven in the whirlwind.
- 2. Elisha wailed over the loss of his spiritual mentor and close friend. vs. 12b-e
  - a. The deep loss was vocalized, “and he cried out”, “Esa’ aq”, meaning wailed aloud in grief. vs. 12b
  - b. The affectionate attachment was expressed, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” and he cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!”. vs. 12c-e
- 3. Elisha acted out his mental and emotional pain. vs. 12f-g
  - a. Knowing the parting was final, “So he saw him no more.” vs. 12f
  - b. Renting his garments, “And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces.” vs. 12g
    - 1) This was a sign of grief and mourning, as Joshua and the spies expressed. Num. 14:6
    - 2) David told all to tear their clothes and gird themselves with sackcloth to mourn Abner. 2Sam. 3:31
- 4. Elisha declared plainly that he was Elijah’s successor. vs. 13

- a. His vested authority from God was marked by Elijah’s mantle, “He also took up the mantle of Elijah.” vs. 13a  
\* God told Elijah at Sinai, in his re-commission, to anoint Elisha to take his prophetic place. 1Kings 19:16
  - b. His vested office from God was marked by his readiness to come back into the land of promise to do the work of God, having obtained the promise of God, “and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan.” vs. 13b
  - 5. Elisha demonstrated both his authority and prophetic office by the same miracle Elijah had preformed. vs. 14
    - a. His confident action, “Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water.” vs. 14a-b
    - b. His commanding words, “and said, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” vs. 14c-d
    - c. The commentary, “And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.” vs. 14e-g
- B.** The prophetic office of Elisha was affirmed by the sons of the prophets. vs. 15-18

1. The fifty spectators saw the entire event take place before their eyes. vs. 15
  - a. The prophetic office of Elisha as successor was acknowledged by all the sons of the prophets, “Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” vs. 15a-c
    - \* The law called for two or three witnesses to establish a matter. Deut. 19:15
  - b. The prophet Elisha was honored and revered by the fifty sons of the prophets, indicating their submission to him, “And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him.” vs. 15d-e
    - 1) Not as a man.
    - 2) But as a man of God!
2. The fifty prophetic student were eager to demonstrate their devotion and commitment to the prophet Elisha. vs. 16-18
  - a. They wanted to search and recover the body of Elijah, “Then they said to him, “Look now, there are fifty strong men with your servants. Please let them go and search for your master, lest perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him upon

- some mountain or into some valley.”. vs. 16a-e
- b. The prophet Elisha denied their request, “And he said, “You shall not send anyone. vs. 16
- c. The sons of the prophets were insistent, being a bit embarrassed for them, he told them to go, “But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, “Send them!” vs. 16a-c
- d. The students returned empty-handed, “Therefore they sent fifty men, and they searched for three days but did not find him.” vs. 17d-e
- e. The prophet Elisha mildly reproved them, recognizing he was there to serve them, “And when they came back to him, for he had stayed in Jericho, he said to them, “Did I not say to you, `Do not go'?” vs. 18

### Illustration

“As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? “But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. “But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. “For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before



Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” Matt. 11:7-11

### Application

1. True servants of God, when they replace the one who trained in ministry, they are very thankful and appreciative of that person.

- a. They do not criticize or speak about them in a negative way.
- b. They rather express their love and appreciation of the person for their loving devotion to train them.
- c. The grief when that person is taken home to the Lord is genuine and personal, remembering specific occasions, personal conversation, treasures that were pass off to them.

\* “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each **esteem others** better than himself.” Phil. 2:3

2. True calling and anointing of God will be confirmed by others who you serve, not yourself.

- a. As they witness the work and your words in accord with the word of God and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.
- b. As they observe your consistency of life practice.

c. As they are recipients of your ministry to equip them for life and service to God.

1) “The things which you learned and received and **heard** and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” Phil. 4:9

2) “**Imitate** me, just as I also **imitate** Christ.” 1Cor. 11:1

3. True servants are gracious to those that are learning to be Christians and servants.

- a. Being a novice, young in the Lord beings great zeal and mistakes will be made.
- b. The principle to rule both the novice and the mature Christian is humility and graciousness.
- c. God will use anyone and everyone, whose heart is towards God, being teachable, flexible and reliable!  
\* “Moreover it is **required** in stewards that one be found faithful.” 1Cor. 4:2

*The reaction from Elisha over Elijah being taken up to heaven prompted him to begin serving right away!*

### III. The actions of Elisha being directed from heaven. vs. 19-25

A. The prophet Elisha healed the water of Jericho. vs. 19-22

1. This is the second miracle recorded in the ministry of Elisha. vs. 19
  - a. The men came to Elisha the prophet, “Then the men of the city said to Elisha. vs. 19a
  - b. The contentment of the men in the city was stated to Elisha, “Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees.” vs. 19b-d
  - c. The severe problem was presented to Elisha, “but the water is bad, and the ground barren.” vs. 19e-f
    - 1) The ground was barren, due to the bad water in the region.
    - 2) The water possibly contaminated by toxic chemicals, etc.
    - 3) The curse and fulfillment. Josh. 6:26, 1Kings 16:34
2. Elisha healed the waters and made sure they knew it was God who had done it. vs. 20-22
  - a. The prophet gave them a simple command, “And he said, “Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.” So they brought it to him.” vs. 20
    - 1) The bowl was not magical, but simply new.
    - 2) The salt was common and ordinary.
  - b. The prophet demonstrated to the people the love and power of the God of Israel for His people. vs. 21

- 1) Doing exactly what God told him, “Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there.” vs. 21a-b
  - 2) Saying what God declared to him, “and said, “Thus says the LORD: `I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.” vs. 21c-f
  - 3) This miracle was in contrast to Elijah’s miracle of shutting up the heavens for three and a half years, Elisha provided relief.
- c. The prophet Elisha was only the instrument, God performed the miracle for their permanent benefit, “So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.” vs. 22
- B.** The prophet Elisha declared God’s judgment on some young men. vs. 23-25
- \* This is the third miracle of Elisha, in that they were not killed!
1. Elisha left Jericho, “Then he went up from there to Bethel.”
    - a. He headed back up, slightly north, due west to Bethel. vs. 23
    - b. The area was the heart of idolatry, where Jeroboam had erected one of

- the calf-worship centers, in Ephraim on the border of Benjamin.
- c. The area where God had sent the prophet to prophecy against the altar at Bethel.
  - d. The idolatrous practice was a contradiction to the name Bethel “Beyth-El”, house of God.
  - d. The son of Ahab was king of Israel, Jehoram, following the steps of his Father and mother, Jezebel.
2. Elisha encountered a group of hostile individuals. vs. 23b-i
- a. He was minding his own business, “and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him.” vs. 23b-c
    - 1) The word youth “na’ar”, indicates young men, late teens to early twenties, not children or boys.  
\* The word is used of Isaac when he was call twenty-eight years old and Joseph when he was thirty-nine. Gen. 21:5-12, 41:12
    - 2) They mocked “qalac”, scoff at and derided him. all forty-two. vs. 24c
    - 3) The rebellious people in the centers of idolatry and paganism had no desire nor respect for Yahweh or the things of God.

- b. He received personal insults, “and said to him, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!” vs. 23d-h
    - 1) Without doubt to indicate that Elisha was a bit skimpy on top.  
\* Which we would never had known unless these arrogant air-heads had decided to mock him.
    - 2) These young men were double mocking Elisha, not only that he was bald, but that he might go up to heaven, as Elijah.
3. Elisha dispensed justice to the idolatrous young men. vs. 24
- a. Elisha was not vindicating himself by taking vengeance, this was from the hand of God, looking right into their eyes, “So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the LORD.” vs. 24a-b
  - b. God used the animals He created to discipline and avenge His prophet, “And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths.” vs. 25c
    - 1) The two she-bears tore their clothes and scraped and bruised them.
    - 2) The judgment was deserved by the disrespectful youth.

- 3) The miracle has disturbed some people but it shouldn't for it was comparable to that of Elijah calling fire down from heaven to consume those who came to arrest him.
  - 4) The prophet Elisha was a reminder of Elijah's power encounter on Carmel, the God of Elisha answered by judgment!
3. Elisha proceeded on his journey to the north. vs. 25
- a. The purpose is not indicated, but perhaps to report to those who knew Elijah that he had gone to heaven?, "Then he went from there to Mount Carmel." vs. 25a
    - 1) This was where Elijah had defeated and executed the 450 prophets of Baal. 1Kings 18:19, 40
    - 2) This was the area of Elijah's ministry against Ahab and Jezebel.
  - b. The final destination of Elisha was the city, he would not be deterred or hindered from his prophetic circuit, "and from there he returned to Samaria." vs. 25
    - 1) The capital of the Northern Kingdom.
    - 2) The residence of the idolatrous King.

### **Illustration**

To deny miracles is to deny history!

It has been said that miracles happen today. They are history-making, earth-shaking, which change whole courses of history and the fate of nations. In the late 1800's the historian Arnold Toynbee says that believing in miracles is a basic necessity of mankind: "The fundamental need of our world today is a rebirth of belief in the supernatural. If this rebirth is not forthcoming from the more progressive creators of our mechanical culture, it may come from the "backward" peoples like the native of Africa and Asia, to those who have not yet become victims of the proud materialism of the Great Powers." #5678

### **Application**

1. The need for Christians to intercede and petition God for others is to be a practice, as well as the church leaders.
  - a. Praying for those who are sick, needing wisdom, for their marriages and children, etc, and trusting God to what He wills sovereignly.
  - b. Resisting any personal fault if God does not heal a person, we are mere instruments.
  - c. Always giving God the glory, when he heals a person.
    - \* "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let

him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.” Ja. 5:13-17

2. The Christian does not live for vengeance, but rests in the love and justice of God.
  - a. He knows all things.
  - b. He sees all things.
  - c. He knows every motive of the heart.
    - \* “For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Heb. 10:30-31, Deut. 32:35

*The actions of Elisha being directed from heaven continued serving the purposes of God!*

The succession of the prophet Elijah by the prophet Elisha, unfolded in three movements:

- I. The anticipation of Elijah to be taken to heaven did not keep him from serving to the end!
- II. The reaction from Elisha over Elijah being taken up to heaven allowed him to begin serving right away!
- III. The actions of Elisha directed from heaven continued serving the purposes of God!

## Conclusion