Research: Elijah Ascends

II Kings 2:1, 6-12

“Elijah was the first great prophet of the northern Kingdom of Israel. He is identified with the period in Hebrew history in which the prophets began to appear as dominant figures to combat widespread apostasy [total departure from one’s faith or religion, a total desertion of faith] and raise the ethical standard of Israel’s religious worship.

“The social discontent generated under Solomon reached its climax at the accession of Solomon’s son Rehoboam to the throne. The kingdom was split when ten of the twelve tribes revolted against Rehoboam’s rule. This rift was an important event in Israel’s history. The United Kingdom was divided (933/32 B.C.E.): the tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the southern Kingdom of Judah, continuing to be loyal to the house of David; the remaining ten tribes formed the northern Kingdom of Israel. These two monarchies went on side by side for the next two centuries. . . .

“Ahab, seventh king of Israel, was one of its most apostate [one who has forsaken church to which he before had adhered; one who has abandoned his religion] rulers. Ahab’s wife Jezebel was a Phoenician princess of Tyre, a fanatic champion of her native deity Baal, and through her influence Tyrian Baal worship with its gross immoralities was introduced into Israel. It flourished widely and threatened to smother the faint monotheism which still remained.

“During this period of almost total apostasy the great prophet Elijah suddenly appeared to pronounce God’s judgment of Ahab’s sinful conduct” (Shotwell 118).

**“**PROPHET**.** A spiritual seer; disappearance of material sense before the conscious facts of spiritual Truth” (*S&H* 593).

“ELIJAH (Heb. "my God is Jehovah"; E-LI-jah)

The first of the great Healing Prophets, he is considered by many

as the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. Just as Jezebel is

world famous for her depravity, Elijah is renowned for his vivid,

courageous denunciation of the corrupt King and Queen of Israel.

He earned the title "The Scourge of Kings," but he could be kind

and gentle too; as for instance, when he helped the poor widow of

Zarephath through the famine and later raised her son when he died.

During a period of great fear when Jezebel threatened his life, Elijah

communed with God on Mount Horeb and learned that He is not

to be found in violent material phenomena such as earthquakes,

wind and fire, but His is "a still small voice." Like Enoch, and

perhaps Moses too, Elijah was translated to the next experience

without going through the portal we call death. His successor,

Elisha, saw him disappear, took up his mantle and carried on the

important work that Elijah had begun” (The Old Testament Made Easy, page 351).

1 And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

“Gilgal. Probably identical with the modern Jiljilia, a place between Bethel and Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim” (Dummelow 229).

“when the Lord would take up Elijah—A revelation of this event had been made to the prophet; but, unknown to him, it had also been revealed to his disciples, and to Elisha in particular, who kept constantly beside him.

Gilgal—This Gilgal was near Ebal and Gerizim; a school of the prophets was established there. At Beth-el there was also a school of the prophets, which Elijah had founded, notwithstanding that place was the headquarters of the calf-worship; and at Jericho there was another [2Ki 2:4]. In travelling to these places, which he had done through the impulse of the Spirit (2Ki 2:2, 4-6), Elijah wished to pay a farewell visit to these several institutions, which lay on his way to the place of ascension and, at the same time, from a feeling of humility and modesty, to be in solitude, where there would be no eye-witnesses of his glorification” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, *As* the Lord liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

“On the way to the place of his translation Elijah bade farewell to

these schools. He went with Elisha from Gilgal (“circle”). He said,

“Tarry here . . . for the Lord hath sent me to Beth-el [‘house of God’].”

A second time he commanded, “Tarry here . . . for the Lord hath sent

me to Jericho [‘place of fragrance’].” A third time Elijah said, “Tarry, I

pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan [type of

immortality].” Each time Elisha answered, “As the Lord liveth, and as

thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.” How close the unity of purpose

and rapport of thought of these two God-directed men! “And they two

went on . . . they two stood by Jordan . . . they two went over on dry

ground . . . they still went on, and talked” (Shotwell, 120).

“Elijah is aware that his work is finished. He therefore bids Elisha come with him as far as Gilgal. Three times, at Gilgal, at Bethel, and at Jericho, Elijah bids Elisha stay behind. Elisha steadily persists in clinging to his master till the end” (IB.3.192).

“Elijah makes a third effort to detach his follower from him or a third trial of his fidelity” (Pulpit Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

“*to Jordan*] The journey tends across the river to that part of the country whither Elijah had at first fled for fear of Ahab. In that same land of Gilead, which was Elijah’s birthplace ([1 Kings 17:1](http://biblehub.com/1_kings/17-1.htm)) and whither we find the prophet’s first flight directed ([1 Kings 17:2-3](http://biblehub.com/context/1_kings/17-2.htm)), is to be the scene of his assumption into heaven” (Cambridge Bible, www.biblehubcom).

“*Fifty men stood to view —*To observe this great event, Elijah’s translation to heaven, which they expected every moment: and whereof they desired to be spectators, not to satisfy their own curiosity, but that they might be witnesses of it to others. *Afar off —*As they were not permitted to accompany him to the place where he was to be taken up, as Elisha was, they looked after him as far as they could see, probably from some eminence that overlooked Jordan” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“All his efforts, however, to prevail on his attendant to remain behind, were fruitless. Elisha knew that the time was at hand, and at every place the sons of the prophets spoke to him of the approaching removal of his master. Their last stage was at the Jordan. They were followed at a distance by fifty scholars of the prophets, from Jericho, who were desirous, in honor of the great occasion, to witness the miraculous translation of the prophet. The revelation of this striking event to so many was a necessary part of the dispensation; for it was designed to be under the law, like that of Enoch in the patriarchal age, a visible proof of another state, and a type of the resurrection of Christ” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped *it* together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

“Mantle. The symbol of prophetic authority” (Dummelow 229).

“Elisha’s ministry began when Elijah, at divine direction, cast his

mantle upon him. The prophet had been directed, “Elisha . . . shalt thou

anoint to be prophet in thy room” (I Ki. 19:16). Elisha was “plowing

with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth” when the

call came. At once he left his work, his family and home, to minister to

Elijah.

“Five years or more of consecrated preparation for his calling were

accorded him under the tutelage of Elijah (the latter years of Ahab’s

reign, those of Ahaziah’s, and possibly the early years of Jehoram’s). He

was known as that prophet “which poured water on the hands of

Elijah.” Elisha also profited by the religious education afforded him

through association with the schools of the prophets” (Shotwell, 120).

“Elijah’s hairy mantle is endowed with supernatural power. Elisha receives through it the wonder-working power which belonged to his master Elijah; he then smites with it the waters of the Jordan.” (EB.3.193).

“And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together.... Folded it up close together, in a position to smite with it; this is thought to be not his hairy garment, but a shorter robe, that was worn upon his shoulders; but the Greek version renders it by "melotes", and so in [2 Kings 2:14](http://biblehub.com/2_kings/2-14.htm), which, according to Isidore (l), was a goat's skin, hanging down from the neck, and girt at the loins; and being thus clothed, perhaps, may be the reason of his being called an hairy man,

“and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither; just as Moses lifted up his rod, and the waters of the sea were divided for the Israelites:

“so that they two went over on dry ground; in like manner as the Israelites did through the sea” Gill’s Exposition of the Bible, www.biblehub.com).

9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

“Elisha reckoned himself Elijah’s first-born spiritual son, and asked for the elder brother’s share, because he had been designated as successor, and would require more than others for his work. The new sense of responsibility is coming on him, and teaching him his need. . . Elijah knows that his spirit was not his to give, and can only refer his successor to the Fountain from which he had drawn; for the sign which he gives is obviously not within his power to determine. If the Lord shows the ascending master to him who is left, He will give the servant his desire” (MacLaren’s Expositions, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“The double share is the portion of the heir, the first-born. Elisha desires to succeed to the leadership of the prophetic guilds (the sons of the prophets), and so to have the authority and power which belonged to his master.” (AB.3.194).

“**A double portion.**—The expression used in [Deuteronomy 21:7](http://biblehub.com/deuteronomy/21-7.htm) of the share of the firstborn son, who by the Mosaic law inherited two parts of his father’s property.

“Elisha asks to be treated as the firstborn among “the sons of the prophets,” and so to receive twice as great a share of “the spirit and power” of his master as any of the rest. “Let me be the firstborn among thy spiritual sons;” “Make me thy true spiritual heir;” (Ellicott’s Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

Elisha possessed the spirit of prophecy superabundantly. While Elijah performed eight mighty demonstrations of divine and prophetic power, Elisha demonstrated sixteen, thus verifying he was indeed endowed with a double portion of the spirit of Elias—the spirit of prophecy or divine Science.

10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless,* if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be *so*.

“ Thou hast asked a hard thing—an extraordinary blessing which I cannot, and God only, can give” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, www.biblehub.com).

If you have eyes (spiritual perception) to see the chariotry of the Lord, then your prayer will be answered.

“Spiritual realities are not discerned by the outward eye, but are perceived only by those who are intent upon and sensitive to them. . . If we do not see these realities, it is not because they are not there to be seen, but rather because we have not the eyes with which to see them. The difficulty is not with the thing to be perceived, but with the perceiver” (AB.3.194).

“The sign of acceptance is to be his actually seeing his master's translation. Probably the chariot and horses were not visible to the natural human eye, any more than the angelic hosts were who compassed Elisha himself about at Dothan ([2 Kings 6:17](http://biblehub.com/2_kings/6-17.htm))” (Pulpit Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

“*a chariot of fire, and horses of fire*] Compare with this description the notice of the sight which Elisha’s servant ([2 Kings 6:17](http://biblehub.com/2_kings/6-17.htm)) was permitted to behold, when he was terrified by the king of Syria’s hosts. ‘The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.’ There it was in answer to Elisha’s prayer, ‘Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see’, that the encouraging enlightenment was vouchsafed. And here we may well think that it was of God’s grace and as an assurance that Elisha should receive his petition, that his eyes were opened to behold the glory which carried away his master. Henceforth he was sure that that power was constantly near God’s servants, and could say with firm assurance, ‘They that be with us are more than they which be with them’. The vision was a source of strength and encouragement in the labors which were before him with no master at his head. He learnt the source of his master’s spirit” (Cambridge Bible, www.biblehub.com).

12And Elisha saw *it,* and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

“The rending of garments is the traditional sign of grief” (AB.3.195).

“After at least five more years of faithful service this great prophet

was translated, taken up into heaven in “a chariot of fire,” an event

witnessed by his successor Elisha.

 “It was in the wicked Antediluvian Age that Enoch was translated, an

expression of God’s commendation of holiness. And now in the Prophetical

Age, so far away from God, is this repetition of this great truth. . . .

That this Elijah continued to exist was abundantly established by his

appearance, centuries afterwards, in the Mount of Transfiguration. There with

Moses, the great representative of the Law, and Elijah the representative of the

Prophets, is Jesus the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

“Elisha labored for approximately fifty years under four of the kings

of Israel: Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash. Like Elijah, he was the

mouthpiece of God’s will.

The many miracles of Elisha’s ministry, all of which took place after

he received the double portion of the Spirit, evidenced the grace, mercy,

and goodness of God, working blessings to men in the common walks of

life.

At Jericho he purified the waters of a spring;

He multiplied the widow’s oil to the saving of her house;

He comforted the Shunammite woman with the promise of a son;

He raised her son from the dead;

He rendered poisoned pottage harmless;

With twenty loaves he fed a hundred men;

He healed Naaman the Syrian of leprosy, but punished his own

servant Gehazi for abusing his master’s name;

He caused an iron axe head to float;

Elisha’s bones restored a dead man to life.

Elisha fulfilled two of the commissions given Elijah at Horeb: to

appoint Hazael king of Syria and to anoint Jehu king of Israel (II Ki.

8:7–13; 9:1–10). Through Hazael’s wars against Israel, Israel was

weakened; through Jehu the house of Ahab was totally destroyed, the

wickedness of Jezebel against God’s prophets was avenged, and Baal

worship was exterminated in the Kingdom of Israel”