**ELIJAH AND ELISHA**

WILLIAM LEANDER POST.

From the [August 19, 1911 issue](http://sentinel.christianscience.com/issues/1911/8/13-51) of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

In the Bible record of the closing scenes in the earthly life of Elijah, the greatest of the prophets, is a narrative of marked interest and suggestiveness, and especially to loyal Christian Scientists today. Elijah's work extended over the idolatrous reigns of several aggressive kings, and his activities and prophecies were directed almost wholly toward delivering the children of Israel from the worship of false gods and the disastrous results contingent upon their disobedience. For many years he patiently persisted in voicing the word of God to an unhearing and unheeding nation. Misunderstood, maligned, and persecuted, his life was continually threatened, and even the recognized religious leaders were in league against him. Notwithstanding all this opposition, through undaunted faith in God he persisted in his work and was finally rewarded by the realization that his message was heard and somewhat heeded, as witnessed in the respectful tolerance, if not acceptance, of his prophecies by all Israel and the comforting love of those who more fully understood his teachings.

Among his faithful followers, none of whom sufficiently apprehended the message he brought or the works he did to approximate his standard, was a poor plowboy, Elisha by name, who after many struggles with self in parting with friends and familiar pursuits, had ardently applied himself to understand and demonstrate the truths he daily heard and saw practised by his beloved teacher. It is recorded that at last, "when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven," Elisha accompanied him on his long journey among the people. Wherever they went on this farewell pilgrimage, the "sons of the prophets," who were skeptical as to Elijah and doubtless jealous of his success and of that of his companion, taunted Elisha with the question: "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day;" as if to say, What will become of you when he whom you follow is no longer with you? But the courage of the young prophet-disciple failed him not, and invariably he replied, "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." Going on with his beloved teacher, they at last reached the borders of the land and the great Jordan stretched before them, stopping their progress; and Elijah with his mantle, a symbol of the all-powerful Truth which had clothed and sustained him in his many and varied experiences, smote the rushing waters of limitation "and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground."

Think you Elijah performed this last great work to verify to his own consciousness man's unabated control over material conditions through his realization of the "law of the Spirit," or was it done as a source of encouragement and further enlightenment for faithful Elisha, and of strength to the fifty doubting sons of the prophets who "stood to view afar off," wondering, no doubt, if what he had evidently foretold of his departure would come to pass? Whatever his reason, he certainly accomplished all these things by his act, and as they walked on after this positive demonstration of spiritual truth over mortal conditions, he is recorded as having said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee," to which Elisha immediately replied, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." Recognizing perhaps in this request a certain clinging to personality, but also beholding through his spiritual intuition the earnest desire for Truth, Elijah replied, "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."

Elijah knew that if Elisha should still see him when he should be taken from him, still recognize and cling to his spiritual identity as man in God's image, after he had disappeared to material sense, this realization of the truth of being, taking the place in his consciousness of a hitherto personalized and therefore limited concept, would indeed baptize him with a double portion of the spirit of Truth which had so grandly wrought for humanity in his own experience. It would enable him, as the faithful follower of a great expounder of God's law, to take up the work his master had left, and enable him to attain by degrees the greater heights to which the inspired teacher's works and words had pointed.

Elisha did rise to a fuller consciousness of his own life-mission, and as Elijah ascended beyond his powers of penetration he gave up his human concept of a leader and teacher, and did not mourn, but shouted, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof," for he realized in that sublime moment of spiritual exaltation that the same power which had carried and sustained Israel throughout all its history, and which would hereafter support him, had enabled his master to overcome mortality. With this sustaining thought Elisha returned to the banks of the Jordan, and calling not upon his departed teacher, but upon that teacher's God, he parted the hindering waters of doubt and went forward to his work of demonstration, confident that in the degree of his love and loyalty would his works measure up to the high standard set for him by his teacher and friend.

A careful study of these incidents, as found in I and II Kings, will prove profitable; and while the narrative nowhere states that Elisha continued to love and reverence Elijah, still we may be sure that the seeing of Elijah when he was taken from him must have included a right apprehension of the personal Elijah, as well as a clearer interpretation of impersonal Truth.