GOD'S SEERS

JEANIE C. E. ANDREWS

From the [February 4, 1911 issue](http://sentinel.christianscience.com/issues/1911/2/13-23) of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

In the experience of all who have learned through Mrs. Eddy's teachings to ponder lovingly the records of the Scriptures, there are moments when some well-known Bible story is suddenly illumined with the glow and radiance of divine Science. With this illumination great lessons and a great joy pour into the waiting consciousness, and gratitude stirs an earnest longing to share this joy with others. Such was the writer's experience not long ago, while reading in the second book of Kings the record of the parting of Elijah from Elisha; and it is with the desire that it may help others as it helped her, that she offers the lessons gained.

Briefly the story is this. The aged prophet, after many experiences of strenuous work, of faithful conflict against the beliefs in false powers, false laws, false gods, had attained a time of comparative peace, had seen the false prophets and kings overcome, famine turned into plenty, and schools for sons of the prophets established in many towns. Realizing more and more his nearness to the Father, seeing that the younger students would be stirred and uplifted to greater individual activity when left to rely on God alone, he felt the time of his departure was at hand. He told Elisha, his student and companion, that God had called him to Bethel, and suggested that Elisha should stay behind. Elisha refused, wishing to accompany and serve his master to the last. On their arrival at Bethel, sons of the prophets came out and warned Elisha that God would take away his master; but, still unmoved, he journeyed on, though Elijah repeated his offer to leave him behind. At Jericho the same scene took place, with the same results. At Jordan, the sons of the prophets stood afar off, and Elijah and Elisha were left alone. Then Elijah asked his companion what good thing he should give him, and Elisha requested that he might receive a double portion of his master's spirit

We know the rest. To the material sense of the sons of the prophets, a whirlwind arose which seemed to carry Elijah up with it, and to the spiritual sense of Elisha appeared a chariot of fire, from which fell the mantle of inspiration. Next we read the natural outcome of what each seemed to see. The students hastened out to seek a material body, and Elisha awoke to a great life-work. After three days' search, the former returned with their eyes opened to the barrenness of the land (the material state of consciousness) in which they were dwelling, and they requested Elisha to purify the waters which had made it so. This Elisha declared done, using salt as the symbol of purification. The Bible Story is brief indeed, but illumined by divine Science its teaching is profound and full of hope and inspiration.

First we note the patient tenderness and wisdom of the aged seer. There was no stern requirement, no desire to force the unprepared thought into experiences too hard for it, into positions it was not ready to take. Gently he bade his student see whether he was ready to share with him Bethel, Jericho, Jordan.

Bethel! The scene of Jacob's lonely, weary sorrow, where he was brought face to face with the results of the sinful sense which had made him a homeless outcast, where he learned so to know himself that through repentance he could see a ladder of thought ascending to the Father. Was Elisha ready for such self-knowledge and ascension?

Jericho! The scene of the great trial of the Jews' capacity for humble obedience and unity, when for seven days they were bidden to march in steady order in the face of their enemies, without striking one blow for what they wanted, and finally to shout united praise and thanksgiving before the victory was outwardly theirs. Was Elisha ready for such obedient humility, thanksgiving, unity?

Jordan! To the Jews forever typical of the separation of the real from the unreal, of the necessity of consecration and purification. Was Elisha ready to stand in the midst of the waters (as the priests of old had stood), his trust consecrated to the unseen power of Spirit, the one God? Would Elisha dare to accompany his master through all these stages of ascending experience? Unfalteringly he answered, "Yes," and in his reason lay the certainty of success. "As the Lord liveth," he said, "and as thy soul [spiritual sense] liveth, I will not leave thee." Elijah knew this reason was all sufficient, "and they two went on."

The next lesson we notice is in Elisha's answer to the sons of the prophets, when they suggested to him that God would take away his master. He answered, "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." Elisha knew,—knew that what had led him and drawn his willing and obedient service was not the personality they saw, but the spiritual insight of Elijah; that it was the right thinking of the seer and not his bodily presence he had followed, and therefore no loss or separation was possible. Elijah would always go on thinking, and all right thinking blesses universally and eternally, and so he bade them, "Hold ye your peace." The belief in and fear of loss could not enter his heaven of Soul.

The third lesson comes after Elisha had proved his willingness and ability to share all these experiences. It was then that Elijah asked him what he could do for him. And Elisha answered, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." What a lesson here for all of us,—a lesson in the understanding and unity of love that is real! Elisha knew that his desire was a right one, knew the limitless resources of good and God's law of progress. He had no fear of being misunderstood, of being rebuked for presumption or accused of rivalry. He knew that for them both there was one interest, one longing—to serve the Father. What a lesson in high hope and courage and brotherly love; and in Elijah's response there is no rebuff, no holding down, for he, too, knew no limit to the power and liberality of God. He showed nothing but the gentleness of the merciful teacher; he did not want his student to be discouraged or disappointed, and he admitted freely that the goal he had in view was difficult to attain, but he wanted Elisha to attain it, and so told him the way. "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."

How this action comes home to us and searches our desires and motives! It is not easy always to want those we have helped to receive a double portion. It is easy to want them to get on, but do not many of us want them to stay just a little bit behind us? Only the great-hearted have done or can do what Elijah did. The loving, generous shepherd-king could joyfully prepare what Solomon was to build, Elijah could show Elisha the way to surpass him, Christ Jesus could pray, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;" and promise, "Greater works than these shall he do." Our beloved Leader could write, "I long to see the consummation of my hope, namely, the student's higher attainments in this line of light" (Science and Health, p. 367).

It is only the great, loving hearts that can find their own in another's good, and so Elijah told Elisha the way. "If thou see me, ... it shall be so." "See me"—not the flesh and blood of the corporeal Elijah, but the very essence of the man, his purpose and life-work, the meaning of that noble striving, watching, praying. Elisha knew that he could see. The man whose reason for following was "as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth," could not know failure. As Elijah was parted from him, he saw his master's life-experiences as a chariot and horses of fire,—the fire of God which exalts and purifies; saw its meaning for his race,—that its example should be a mighty force, drawing all men with the swift strong power of thought ascending to the Father, and in a great burst of joy and thanksgiving he exclaimed, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

As he thus cried, the mantle of Elijah, the holy spiritual thoughts which had clothed his master's consciousness, fell upon him. He too divided the waters, and so radiant was the joy and power and consecration he reflected, that the sons of the prophets with one accord recognized it as the power of Spirit, God, and bowed before it. This, then, to the spiritual insight of Elisha, was the meaning of the experience he had shared; but how different the same events seemed to the less awakened thought! The recorder says simply that Elijah was carried up into heaven by a whirlwind, expressing, no doubt, the general thought of that day, which was, probably, that Elijah had lost his life in a whirlwind.

The sons of the prophets saw beyond that. They felt that with such spiritual understanding as Elijah possessed there must be some other explanation. They were not cognizant of the fact that it is because God lives that there is no death; and so they wanted to see it proved in matter; they wanted to assure themselves, in their own particular way, that Elijah had not died, and they thought and they felt that the way in which they could be convinced would be by finding a matter body. That was their idea of the demonstration Elijah ought to make of immortality, and so we find them asking Elisha to let them go and look for one. At first Elisha refused, but as they urged him he gave in to their desire.

Perhaps he felt that if obedience was not willing, not the result of understanding, it was worthless; felt, too, that he ought to show something of the patience Elijah had shown him, and so he let them go and waited three days while they vainly sought. Those days of fruitless seeking, however, uncovered their error to them, and they gained so greatly in understanding through the experience that they were no longer satisfied with materiality. They recognized that, though they had been placed in a pleasant land, they were barren because the springs of their thought were tainted. Elisha saw the spiritual uprising taking place through this recognition of the fruitlessness of looking for spirit and life in matter, knew that the purification of the waters of human thought had begun, and calling for salt (the symbol of purification), he threw it on the water, declaring with prophetic insight, "Thus saith the Lord, I have

healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land."

In this new-old story of two of God's seers, we see an example of the patient and gentle guidance we should give to those who seek our help in their journey from sense to Soul,—the consecration of thought along every step of the way, demanding of us the generosity and unity of those who truly love. We find that what we see materially is the phenomena of what we believe and nothing else, but that what we discern spiritually is the manifestation of what God thinks. We learn, too, not to be discouraged over our seeming mistakes. The error that made the sons of the prophets wish to seek a corporeal Elijah led, through its reversal, to a desire for more fruitful labor and consequent purification. The great Master has said to all his students, "Ye are the salt of the earth." Each one of us, then, can cast the salt of our thought, purified and strengthened by experience, on the waters of mortal mind; and if we do so in the daily ascension of consecrated, united, grateful obedience, the time will surely come when we too shall declare, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land."

This story of the prophets has a parallel in our experience today. In deepest gratitude we recognize that one of God's seers has been living and working among us, in tender patience pointing out the way of Bethel, Jericho, Jordan, and we are longing that a double portion of that pure, brave, loving spirit may rest on us. The mistake of the sons of the prophets teaches us that what helps us is not personality, but righteous thinking, and that in eternal Mind's infinite circle right thinking and great loving never cease. Let us seek to see our Leader as Elisha sought to see Elijah, and even as we are bidden: "In hope and faith, where heart meets heart reciprocally blest, drink with me the living waters of the spirit of my life-purpose,—to impress humanity with the genuine recognition of practical, operative Christian Science" (Miscellaneous Writings, p. 207). So shall we receive the mantle of inspiration as did Elisha and go forth radiant with love and joy and power, to help and heal.