

2 KINGS 2 | *Elijah's Cloak and Spirit Pass to Elisha*

Elisha's Determination to Follow Elijah

1 Now when Yahweh was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 And Elijah said to Elisha, Please stay here, for Yahweh has sent me as far as Bethel. But Elisha said, As Yahweh lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you. So they went down to Bethel.

3 And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, Do you know that today Yahweh will take away your master from over you? And he said, Yes, I know it. Keep quiet. 4 Elijah said to him, Elisha, please stay here, for Yahweh has sent me to Jericho. But he said, As Yahweh lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you. So they came to Jericho.

5 The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, Do you know that today Yahweh will take away your master from over you? And he answered, Yes, I know it. Keep quiet. 6 Then Elijah said to him, Please stay here, for Yahweh has sent me to the Jordan. But he said, As Yahweh lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you. So the two of them went on.

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7 Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. 8 Then Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up, and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you. And Elisha said, Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.¹ 10 And he said, You have asked a hard thing. Yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.

11 And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.² 12 And Elisha saw it and he cried, My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen! And he saw him no more.

¹ **Lk 11:9-13** 9 ...Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. ...13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

² **Ac 1:9** 9 ...When [Jesus] had said these things, as [the apostles] were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.³ 13 And he took up the cloak⁴ of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water saying, Where is Yahweh, the God of Elijah? And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

15 Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha. And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

Elisha's First Leadership Test

16 And they said to him,

Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men. Please let them go and seek your master. It may be that the Spirit of Yahweh has caught him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley.

And he said, You shall not send. 17 But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men. And for three days they sought him but did not find him. 18 And they came back to him while he was staying at Jericho, and he said to them,

Did I not say to you, Do not go?

Elisha Heals the Water of Jericho

19 Now the men of the city [Jericho] said to Elisha, Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful. 20 He said, Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it. So they brought it to him. 21 Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said,

Thus says Yahweh, I have healed this water. From now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.

22 So the water has been healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.

Elisha "Bears" the Bratty Boys of Bethel

23 He went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him saying,

³ Eph 4:22-24 22 ...To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ...24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

⁴ Lk 24:49 49 ...Behold, I [Jesus] am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!

24 And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of Yahweh. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys. 25 From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

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1. Introduction

- a. Images.
 - (1) The changing of the guards at Buckingham Palace.
 - (2) The passing of the baton in 4x100m race.
- b. Need.
 - (1) Local churches have leaders, and those leaders won't be leading forever. They must pass on leadership at some point. How do they do so successfully?
 - (2) How do we transition leadership from one generation to the next while making sure God is in it?
- c. Subject.
 - (1) The passing of leadership from one generation to the next.

2. Elisha's Determination to Follow Elijah Proven in Three Trips (2 Ki 2:1-8).

- a. Elisha the disciple follows Elijah the disciple-maker from Gilgal to Bethel (v. 2), from Bethel to Jericho (v. 4), and from Jericho to the Jordan (v. 6).
- b. Elijah is testing the faithfulness of his would-be replacement, Elisha (vv. 2, 4, 6).
 - (1) The best followers often become the best leaders.
 - (2) The best leaders often walk in the footsteps of a great leader.
- c. Elisha is determined to follow Elijah, his disciple-maker, to the end (vv. 2, 4, 6). Elisha wants to become the new leader of the school of the prophets (vv. 3, 5). He wants the Spirit and the cloak (vv. 9, 13). It is not a bad thing to want to lead.
 - (1) **1 Ti 3:1** 1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.
- d. The passing of leadership from one disciple-maker to another is a public event (vv. 3, 5, 7).
 - (1) The sons of the prophets want to know whether Elisha will be able to lead them in Elijah's absence (vv. 3, 5).

3. Elijah's Cloak and Spirit Pass to Elisha (2 Ki 2:7-15).

- a. The passing of leadership is to be a public event (v. 7).
- b. Elijah parts the Jordan with his cloak to show God is with him (vv. 7-8). Elisha does the same to show God is with him (vv. 13-14).
 - (1) God shows both Elijah and Elisha are on par with Moses (Ex 14:21-22) and Joshua (3:15-17).
- c. Elisha wisely requests a double portion of Elijah's spirit (vv. 9-10). He knows it is the Holy Spirit who enables prophecy and leadership.
 - (1) Jesus instructed his disciple to ask for the Spirit (Lk 11:13).
- d. Elisha sees Elijah go up into the sky (vv. 11-12). This is necessary for him to receive the Spirit and the cloak (v. 10).
 - (1) The apostles saw Jesus go up into the sky (Ac 1:9). Ten days later they received the Spirit (Ac 2:1-4).
- e. Elisha tears his clothes and takes up the cloak of Elijah (vv. 12-13). This is symbolic. As the new leader of the sons of the prophets, Elisha will no longer live for himself.

He will live for those he leads. He now has the authority and responsibility to lead. He is the only person authorised to wear the cloak. He is God's authorised leader.

- f. Elisha's leadership is recognised by the sons of the prophets (v. 15).
 - (1) Joshua's leadership was recognised in the same spot in the same way (Jos 3:7-8).
 - (2) The prophet John the Baptist passed on leadership to Jesus the Prophet in public at the Jordan river (Mt 3:13). After the passing of leadership, John decreased, and Jesus increased (Jn 3:30).
 - (3) Jesus passed on leadership to the apostles in a public way, on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2:1-4).
 - (4) Paul passed on leadership to Timothy publicly through the laying on of hands (2 Ti 1:6).

4. Elisha's Leadership Proven (2 Ki 2:16-25).

- a. A Pointless Search Confirms Elijah's Passing (vv. 16-18).
 - (1) Elisha is immediately tested by the son of the prophets, who shame him in getting their way. However, Elisha is proved right. Elisha no doubt learned that leadership by shaming is not God's plan of leadership. God's leaders listen to him and are not manipulated by the crowd (cf. Aaron in Ex 32:1-4). Elisha won't make this mistake again.
 - (2) Leaders must have a superior knowledge of what God is doing. Here, Elisha's superior knowledge of what God is doing is proven (vv. 16, 18).
- b. Elisha Heals the Water of Jericho (vv. 19-22).
 - (1) Jericho was one of the oldest cities in the world. Its water had always been bad. But here, amazingly, God heals it through Elisha (v. 22). Not even Elijah himself did this. God is truly at work in Elisha. He is God's authorised prophet and the leader of the sons of the prophets.
 - (2) Jesus is our healer (Mt 9:12). He came to take away death (Heb 2:14-15) and make us fruitful (Jn 15:5). He gives us the living water (Jn 4:13-14). We are the salt that purifies (Mt 5:13). Ultimately, Jesus will heal humanity and the earth and establish fruitfulness everywhere ([]).
- c. Elisha "Bears" the Bratty Boys of Bethel (vv. 23-25).
 - (1) It is never wise to ridicule God's anointed prophets (1 Ki 10:16), priests, or kings.
 - (2) A bald head doesn't prevent us from being useful to God (v. 23)! God doesn't use us because we are physically attractive or impressive. He uses us because we are faithful, available, and teachable (FAT) and because we have grown in conviction, character, and competence (CCC).
 - (3) A curse coming from God's anointed ones will happen (v. 24). None of us are anointed in the way Elisha was, so it is not for us to call down curses on our enemies. In fact, we are to bless our enemies (Lk 6:28; Ro 12:14).
 - (4) Elisha retraces the journey of Elijah. Elijah went from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan. Elisha goes from the Jordan to Jericho, to Bethel (v. 23), to Mount Carmel (v. 25), to Samaria (v. 25), verifying through miracles at the Jordan, Jericho, and Bethel, that he is Elijah's replacement. At Mount Carmel, Elisha no doubt reflects on Yahweh's victory over Baal many years before (1 Ki 18:38-39). He then returns to the capital Samaria (v. 25), ready to lead the sons of the prophets and confront the leaders of Israel.