

- Elisha would indeed inherit the prophetic ministry of Elijah. Because he remained with Elijah, Elisha got to see the man of God taken up into heaven alive. Because he refused to be waylaid, distracted or sidetracked, Elisha got exactly what he asked for. If Elisha had looked off for just a moment he could have missed the departure and the blessing, but Elisha had been faithful to stay with Elijah and to faithfully wait for his translation.
- Elisha's cry in v12 - *My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof* - was one of endearment & tribute to Elijah. Elijah was the true defense of Israel, like the chariots or horsemen (cf 6:15-17; 13:14). The real strength & the ultimate protection and defense of Israel lie in the ministry of this great prophet Elijah. Elijah had been the true army of Israel, its bulwark of defence. The ultimate defense or source of blessing for any nation lies in a godliness based on biblical absolutes (Prov 14:34; Ps 33:12-19).
- As Elijah was taken to heaven, his mantle was left behind. The mantle did not fall from heaven and rest on Elisha's shoulders. Elisha had to decide to pick it up and put it on. For Elisha this meant responding to God's call for his life. It meant carrying on and taking Elijah's place as the spokesman of God, a very daunting task in those days (Lk 9:62).
- Elijah was a faithful and mighty servant. Yet, when Elijah died, the mantle passed on to another. The real story is not about Elijah; it is about the Lord. When one faithful servant dies, the Lord raises up another. The work of the Lord goes on even though the workers change. None of God's great heroes is indispensable. Sooner or later God is going to remove us or someone whose ministry we are depending on. No matter how important we may think we are or others may think we are to a work, the only One who is truly indispensable is the Lord (2 Cor 4:7).
- This is the end of the remarkable ministry of Elijah the Prophet.
 - Elijah was 1 of 2 who have escaped physical death. He went straight to heaven. He appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:3). Elijah will be coming again (Malachi 4:5).
 - What a contrast between the departure Elijah sought in 1 Kings 19 and that which God wrought in 2 Kings 2! If God had granted Elijah's request in 1 Kings 19, he would have died a failure. Now, Elijah goes "God's way," and departing triumphantly. God's ways are so much better (and higher) than ours.
 - The life of man is absolutely at the disposal of the Lord: "*when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven....*" (v1). The way of our going, as well as the time, is of the Lord's determination, and not of ours. He appoints the time; our lives are in God's hands (Eccl 3:2; Ps 31:15a).
 - Note the contrast between Ahaziah's death and Elijah's departure: Elijah sought to take his life, but God refused him permission; Ahaziah sought to save his life, but God took it (Matt 16:24-25).

2 Kings 2 – From Elijah to Elisha, The Passing of The Mantle

- With the death of King Ahab of Israel, Elijah's work was almost completed and the day came to pass the baton to a new leader & prophet - Elisha.

1. The Translation of Elijah (2:1-13)

(i) Elijah's Impending Departure, 2:1-7

- According to v1, Elijah knew the precious truth that God was going to take him to heaven in a whirlwind without having to pass through death. This was a privilege that had only been enjoyed by one other person in history – Enoch (Gen 5:24). It appears that God had also revealed the impending departure of Elijah to Elisha and to the sons of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho.
- Elisha had been ministering to Elijah, being his servant (1 Kings 19:19-21). He had been serving his master and mentor quietly behind the scenes, just like Joshua who served Moses for years. Servant-hood is always the path to greatness in God's kingdom (Mk 9:35). If you want to be an Elisha, you're going to need to serve an Elijah behind the scenes.
- As Elijah anticipated his departure from this world, he continued to live as he always had. He humbly went about his God-assigned responsibilities - "*the LORD hath sent me...*" (v2,4,6). Through the last day of his life he kept up his work, serving God, trusting Him with his life. There is no higher calling than that of following the Lord and doing what He bids us to do. God wants us to be occupied with His work until He returns to take us home (Lk 19:13).
- We see Elijah moving from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho and across the Jordan. These journeys were divinely directed. It would appear that God wanted Elijah to make this last circuit with Elisha, so that by the time the day was over, all the prophets would realize that Elijah was gone and that Elisha was his replacement. It is also odd that Elijah seemed to be trying to get rid of Elisha at each stop along the way (v2,4,6). 2 possible reasons:
 - Elijah did not want his departure to be a self-gratifying spectacle. Whatever glory would occur on that day would be to God, not to him. Elijah did not wish anyone to be witness to the honour conferred on him by God. This is the secret to Elijah's greatness in God's kingdom – his humility! (Mt 20:26; cf Mt 11:11)
 - Elijah knew that God would take him away and that his ministry would be continued by Elisha. Hence, Elijah wanted to test the depth of Elisha's commitment and faithfulness to the ministry.
- Elisha's insistence that he would not leave Elijah alone is very remarkable. His loyalty to his master was unmovable. He knew for certain that God had called him to Elijah's side. Therefore, nothing would move him from his place of duty (cf John 6:66-69; Mk 14:50). It is important that we know where God has led us and who He has placed us next to.

- Elijah seemed to have become the head of the schools of prophets (cf 1 Sam 19:20). The prophets in Bethel were somehow aware of what would be happening on this day and they told Elisha about it. But the prophets were asked by Elisha not to speak of Elijah's imminent departure. Perhaps it is simply a matter of showing respect to the great man who was about to depart or it is an indication of Elisha's grief at contemplating the loss of his master.
- At Bethel, Elijah urged Elisha again to tarry behind as he prepared to leave for Jericho, but Elisha still insisted that he would pass on with Elijah. Elijah continued to test the devotion of Elisha, and Elisha continued to stay with his mentor until his anticipated unusual departure. At Jericho, Elijah again instructed Elisha to stay behind as the Lord had called him to Jordan. But Elisha refused and stayed with his master. Three times Elijah tested his successor; thrice Elisha passed the test. Then, while the 50 prophets anxiously awaited the Lord's dealing with Elijah, he and Elisha crossed over the Jordan to the other side.

(ii) *Elisha's Bold Request to Succeed Elijah, 2:8-10*

- Elijah's mantle or cloak is a symbol of his office and authority with which God endowed him. Rolling up his mantle into a kind of rod, Elijah struck the waters and the Jordan was once again parted and the two prophets walked across on dry ground. Even at the end of his life, Elijah was still walking by faith. Elijah did what he always does; he expected the impossible from God and received it by faith!
- As Elijah realized that his hour was quickly drawing near, he asked Elisha what he could do for him in the final hour of his life on earth. It was only when Elisha had passed the test with such unwavering resolution that Elijah asked him what could be done for him in his ministry. Even at this climatic moment, Elijah thought not of himself but of Elisha and for the continuation of God's work. His ministry was coming to an end and he was prepared to step aside for Elisha.
- When asked to make a request, Elisha asked without hesitation for a "double portion" of the spirit of Elijah. Elisha was not asking for twice as much of the prophetic spirit or spiritual powers as Elijah had possessed. This request for a "double portion" relates more to the law of inheritance, to ask for the double portion that went to the firstborn son (Deut 21:17). By asking for a "double portion" of the spirit of Elijah, Elisha was asking for the right to be regarded as the successor or heir to Elijah, as his firstborn son in regard to the ministry. His request was most humble in nature. Elisha knew that Israel needed a man of God to deliver the Word of God and do the work of God. He knew that if he was to be that man, then he needed the endorsement and power of God working in him and through him. To be a dedicated, outspoken man of God

during the dynasty of the house of Omri and Ahab was to live a life of constant danger. Elisha was willing to answer the call (cf 1 Cor 9:16).

- Elisha could have asked for anything, but he asked for the spiritual inheritance and power to discharge his office well. He was asking that the same spirit that had empowered the ministry of Elijah, this great man of God, be given to him as well – a spirit of faith, obedience and courage. Elisha merely wanted to take over where Elijah had left off. He wanted to be the next prophet to Israel!
- Knowing that he was only an instrument and that certain things were in God's sovereign control, Elijah answered that only God could grant Elisha's request. Even though Elijah knew Elisha was to be his replacement and that he had been grooming him for over these several years, ultimately it was God who would appoint his successor. This matter was God's prerogative. The true minister of God is not ordained by the church unless he is ordained first by God (Acts 13:1-4). Elijah knew that his promotion of Elisha into the ministry would mean nothing unless God did it first.
- A condition was attached that would manifest God's will regarding Elisha's request. If Elisha was permitted by God to see Elijah when he was taken away, that would be a sign that God had granted his request to become the successor to Elijah. For this would manifest the will of God, demonstrate Elisha's determination, and show that Elisha, as the witness of this dramatic event, would be the prophet's successor. The idea here is that this blessing can be his, but Elisha must remain faithful unto the end. Had he dropped out along the way, he would never have received the blessing he desired and needed. From the time it became apparent that Elijah was leaving until the moment he left, several trials crossed Elisha's way that attempted to hinder him. However, Elisha remained focused on obtaining the double portion. His commitment to Elijah was from principle and not convenience. Had Elisha taken the easy route and stayed behind, he would have missed the blessing. It pays to be faithful to your calling.

(iii) *Elijah's Translation to Heaven, 2:11-13*

- As the two prophets talked, suddenly a fiery chariot drawn by horses of fire separated them and a whirlwind took Elijah up and into heaven. It was over in an instant. Elijah was gone!
 - Elijah was taken up to heaven in the *whirlwind*, not in the *chariot of fire and horses of fire* which came between the two of them. Elijah went to heaven in what is literally "a storm of the heavens."
 - Elijah, like Enoch, was taken to heaven without seeing death. This will also be the experience of believers living at the time of the Rapture when Christ comes for His Church (1 Cor 15:51; 1 Thess 4:17).
- Elisha had witnessed the entire translation of Elijah and fulfilled the requirement mentioned in v10.