



GOD OF FIRE & RAIN

—THE STORY OF—
ELIJAH & GOD

8



YES, NO & MAYBE

1. I've seen something so unbelievable, that I don't talk about it in public.
2. If God were to take me to heaven today, there are some things I'd feel bad that I've left undone.
3. God does miracles on your command.
4. God sent a fiery chariot to pick up Elijah.
5. God has already given me a double-portion of His Spirit.

> READ 2 Kings 2:1-15 (NIV)

When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 Elisha said to Elisha, "Stay here; the Lord has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

3 The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "so be quiet."

4 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the Lord has sent me to Jericho."

And he replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho.

5 The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," he replied, "so be quiet."

6 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan."

And he replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on.

7 Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. 8 Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"

"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

10 "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not."

11 As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. 12 Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

13 Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. "Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

15 The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

» **2-10 Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan** - This trip from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan retraces backwards the first movements Israel made in the promised land (cf. Josh 1-8), and the parting of the Jordan may also remind readers of the crossing of both the Jordan

DIG DEEPER... CONTINUED

River and the Red Sea. This text stresses the continuity of God's message and God's messengers in Israel's history and places Elijah on a par with Moses. The reverse tracing of Joshua's itinerary also serves as a reminder that every foot of the promised land belongs to God and is under the authority of God's word. This is Elijah's "farewell tour." He took his young student, Elisha, on a farewell visit to the groups of prophets at Bethel (v. 1), Jericho (v. 4) and Gilgal by Jordan (v. 6). His coming departure was reiterated by the prophets there (vv. 3, 5), as was his assurance that the LORD had sent him on the journey (vv. 2, 4, 6).

- Why do you think that God announced to the other prophets that He was going to take Elijah to heaven before it happened? What does this say about God?

» **8 Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it.** - Like the rod of Moses, it had the divinely operating power of the Spirit.

- Why do you think Elijah seems to intuitively know that the Jordan River will part if he strikes it with his cloak? Do you think God puts those thoughts in people's minds, or does He honor a person's expectations with miracles like this?

» **9 a double portion** - The request for a double portion was not that he might excel his master but that he should receive the eldest son's share according to the law (Deut. 21:17). Such a son had the responsibility to carry on the father's name and work. The 'hard thing' (RSV, NIV difficult thing) for Elijah was that since God alone can make the gift of his Spirit to anyone (cf. John 3:34; 1 John 3:24; 4:13) it was impossible for him to give the spiritual inheritance. God alone would decide that.

- What spiritual inheritance does God have for each of us? Is it the same inheritance for everyone?

» **11 & 12 The chariots and horsemen of Israel** - The fiery horses and chariot were symbols of God's power in battle. Horses and chariots were the mightiest means of warfare in that day. God was saying in this event that His power was far greater than any military might. It was this power that Elijah had demonstrated and which Elisha in his wisdom valued so highly (cf. Ex. 14:9, 17; 1 Kings 10:29; Ps. 104:3-4; Isa. 31:1).

» **11 Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind** - The whirlwind was thought to have looked like a storm with lightning and thunder. Like the pillar of cloud that led the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21), it represented God's presence.

- Because of early artists' depictions of this story, most people picture Elijah being taken to heaven in a fiery chariot. But Scripture tells us that Elijah was actually taken up in a whirlwind, much like Jesus ascended into the clouds. So, what message do you think God was trying to send by using the visual of fiery horses and chariots (which are a symbol of power and might) between Elisha on the ground and Elijah ascending to heaven?

» **12 he took hold of his garment and tore it in two** - Elisha "tore" his clothes, which was a common expression of grief upon the death of a loved one.

» **14 He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it.** - Only Elijah's cloak remains. Elisha takes it back to the Jordan and asks where Elijah's God is—the God who caused drought, brought fire from the sky, raised the dead, and took Elijah to heaven. When Elisha strikes the water with the cloak, he discovers that while Elijah is gone the Lord is not, for the water parts again. The prophets who witness the whole scene understand that Elijah's spirit, the spirit of zeal and power, now rests on Elisha.

- « What does it say about God that He empowers and gives credibility to the young and inexperienced spiritual leaders? Why does He not make Elisha earn the power to do miracles (because, seriously, he's a young man and it's not that far to swim across!)?

Elijah's ending has proven as spectacular as his beginning. Just as fire from heaven once proved Yahweh is more powerful than Baal, so now a similar heavenly fire proves that Elijah is a true prophet of God. And just as another fire from heaven protected him from wicked King Ahaziah (1:9-12), so now it removes Elijah permanently from any further dangers or discouragements.

MY PRAYER...

1. How high are my expectations that God wants to work a miracle through me?
2. What is God's spiritual inheritance for me?
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to know?



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