

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 30, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



“A No-Death Contract”
2 Kings 2:1-14

“¹And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. ²Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So they went down to Bethel. ³Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?” And he said, “Yes, I know; keep silent!” ⁴Then Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So they came to Jericho. ⁵Now the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?” So he answered, “Yes, I know; keep silent!” ⁶Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So the two of them went on. ⁷And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. ⁸Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. ⁹And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?” Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” ¹⁰So he said, “You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.” ¹¹Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. ¹²And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. ¹³He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.” -2 Kings 2:1-14 (NKJV)

While many people like to stick with the New Testament when it comes to reading the Bible, I must confess that the Old Testament has a special place in my heart. I love reading the testimonies of faith heroes like Abraham, Moses, David, Esther, Joseph and more. Their lives are so inspiring and if we're honest, filled with enough drama and conflict to keep me on the edge of my seat. One of my all-time favorite testimonies in the Bible is that of the Prophet Elijah, that we have been looking at the last few weeks as we began our study on his life.

This man was on fire for God. Literally at his request the Lord answered with a consuming fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:36-38). Elijah was sent on mission from God to turn the Israelites hearts back to their One True God. When we first read of Elijah, the Israelites have been worshipping both the God of their ancestors, who is the One True Living God, and the false God Baal. Enough was enough. God sent Elijah to confront their wavering faith and lead them to make a decision.



7 Things To Remember About Elijah in the Bible:

- (1) God uses the **ordinary**, like Elijah, to do the **extraordinary** - James 5:17-18 reminded us that he was an ordinary man just like us. *"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit."* - James 5:17-18 **ESV** Elijah, a biblical prophet is one of the most interesting characters in the Bible. His life was colorful. God used him during a really important time in Israel's history to oppose a

wicked king and to bring revival to those people. Like many other characters in the Bible, Elijah's life was not without its challenges. His life was filled with turmoil. There were times when he was decisive and valiant, but there were also times when he was fearful and uncertain. He also demonstrated victory and defeat, trailed by recovery. He recognized the power of God, but he also knew the pits of depression. His life was devoted to the work of restoring true worship in Israel. Ultimately, Elijah urged the people of ancient Israel to turn from sin and to return to the true God and his message is just as important for us today. Elijah's admonition that God's people faithfully serve Him with their whole heart is just as relevant now as it was during his time on earth.

- (2) **Elijah was chosen by God** - God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Similar to many of the prophets of the Bible, Elijah didn't seek to be one of God's messengers. Instead, God chose him directly for the position. When he was called, Elijah didn't hesitate to take on his mission, even though it appeared his life would be threatened by the wicked king. Elijah set out at once for the capital city of Samaria to deliver the announcement to King Ahab. Then God sent Elijah into hiding as the drought dried up the streams and withered the crops of the nation (1 Kings 17:7-15; 1 Kings 18:1). Elijah was chosen to confront the followers of Baal simply because he had a relationship with God. In addition to confronting the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, he also performed many miracles: providing an endless supply of flour for a widow and raising a young boy from the dead.
- (3) **We don't know a lot about Elijah's past** - Elijah's name means "my God is the Lord." He came from Tishbeh in Gilead, but little is known of his family or birth. While many prophets of the Bible are introduced with information about family lineage, this wasn't the case with Elijah. This shows that his selection by God was divine. He came out of nowhere to do the extraordinary at time when he was so desperately needed. Only God can do that. While we don't know a great deal about his life, we do know a lot about his nature and character. Elijah was attentive to God's voice and walking in obedience to His Word. Through this, Elijah found encouragement, reward and victory. Like any human, he struggled with his own frailties, but he was still used mightily by God. Our Heavenly Father uses us for those same purposes.
- (4) **Prayer was Elijah's key strategy in his ministry**- Elijah prayed to God vehemently. His prayers were bold and he called on God to do the miraculous. His requests weren't small – He prayed for a drought in the land, prayed to raise the widow's son from the dead and called down a fire from heaven to consume the offering on Mount Carmel. The Bible tells us, "At the usual time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, 'O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am Your servant. Prove that I have done all that is at your command. Immediately the fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench!'" (1 Kings 18:36,38). We see through Elijah's life that prayer is truly powerful. His life reminds us that if we trust in God through prayer, it will make a significant impact.
- (5) **Elijah, like many faithful believers today, suffered with depression in his life**- Depression is often triggered by life circumstances and can really pull you into the pit. There are numerous biblical references to depression. Scripture describes the struggles of people who suffered with depression even though they were faithful servants of God. These men did not suffer primarily because they were sinners. They suffered because they were human and were susceptible to severe pressures. Elijah grew depressed when he was rebuked while he was anticipating a moment of triumph. His lofty hopes were crushed; he became sick at heart. Up until this point, Elijah had been the epitome of spiritual courage. He now collapses, runs away when Israel most needs his leadership, possibly missing the chance for national repentance and turns suicidal. He suffered from spiritual depression – a specific kind of depression that is related to

commitment to God. Elijah's depression, along with many other biblical characters, alerts us to the fact that being committed to God does not necessarily exempt us from being depressed.

- (6) **Elijah faced persecution in his life and his life was under threat** - When the false prophets of Baal were dead, Elijah's life was threatened by Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab. As Israel's queen, she brought the worship of her god Baal, influencing King Ahab to worship Baal and set up idols in Israel (1 Kings 16:31; 1 Kings 21:25-26). God's prophets who bring messages of warning are often hated and accused of being the cause of such suffering. Jezebel and the false prophets of Baal hated Elijah and they did everything in their power to catch him. In a moment of human weakness, Elijah was deeply discouraged. But it wasn't long before God reassured Elijah and sent him back to face King Ahab. Elijah was sent to deliver the message that Ahab and Jezebel would both die a humiliating death because of all the wicked deeds they refused to repent of (1 Kings 21:20-24).
- (7) **Elijah was one of only two men in Scripture who never died, but rather he was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire in a whirlwind** - This is going to be where we are in today's study, as we witness the end of Elijah's earthly ministry, and the beginning of his disciple, Elisha's, ministry.

Many people think that the prophets were morally or spiritually superior to us, and it's easy to think of Elijah in this way. But the truth is, he wasn't. Like us, Elijah needed correction, encouragement and the knowledge that other believers were standing against Baal too. Elijah wasn't exceptionally spiritual or superior. He was completely human. But what made Elijah extraordinary was his complete commitment to the Will of God. Elijah gave all his energy and heart so that the world would know the one true God. God uses the ordinary to do the extraordinary.

We have traveled with Elijah through many experiences... from the heights of Mount Carmel to the depths of despair beneath the juniper tree; from the activity and threat before Ahab and Jezebel to the science of the brook Cherith and the solitude of the widow's home. In every place, God proved Himself faithful, constant, and encouraging. In this study of Elijah we bid the prophet farewell. We also witness the final scenes of his life before he was taken up into God's presence by a whirlwind (in Hebrew, literally "gust" or "stormy wind").

REFLECTION: PLACES AND MEANINGS (2 Kings 2:1-7)

"¹And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. ²Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to Bethel. ³Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent!" ⁴Then Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they came to Jericho. ⁵Now the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" So he answered, "Yes, I know; keep silent!" ⁶Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So the two of them went on. ⁷And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. -2 Kings 2:1-7

God moved His prophet around during his final days on earth.. from Gilgal to Bethel, next to Jericho, and then on to the Jordan River. Each place had special significance to Elijah which is worth noting. Let's glance briefly at each...

4 Places of Significance In Elijah's Last Days:

1. **Gilgal... a place of beginnings (v.1)** – *“¹And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.”* Places of beginning and roots often represent “security” and “safety.” Gilgal was such a place for Elijah, in that it was the spot upon which the Israelites had stood immediately after crossing the Jordan, following nearly forty years of wilderness wanderings (Joshua 4:19-24). It was the last place security was enjoyed, because from there they moved from one battle to another until the Land of Promise was recaptured from the Canaanites. At Gilgal, more than five hundred years before this time Elijah's life, Joshua built a monument honoring God for His opening a path through the Jordan, allowing the Israelites to cross the pathway.
2. **Bethel... a place of the altar (v.2)** – *“² Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So they went down to Bethel.”* The name “Bethel” means “house of God.” It was a place of sacrifice, fellowship and communion. Here, many centuries before, Abraham met with God (Genesis 12:8; 13:3-4). There he had occasions of searching, dedication, and preparation. While at Bethel, Elijah probably reflected upon this place of altar and its historical impact. As this place had been the altar of Abraham, Elijah's had been at Cherith and Zarephath.
3. **Jericho... a place of battle (v.4)** – *“⁴ Then Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So they came to Jericho.”* This was the first battle target of the Israelites who had set out, with God's help, to recapture their homeland (Joshua 6). Located in the midst of the country, Jericho was strategic. To conquer Jericho was to gain a beachhead for further conquests. This was a city of memories. The city had been captured by “unconventional means”... circular marching around the city (once a day for six days; seven times the seventh day), horn-blowing, and shouting. Perhaps standing upon the remains of the city of Jericho, he thought of his own battles... such as the one with Ahab and Jezebel.
4. **The Jordan River... a place of death (v.6)** – *“⁶ Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So the two of them went on.”* The Jordan is sometimes portrayed as a place of death to the “self-life.” Elijah could remember back to the days when he had to dies to his own wishes and desires in order to be effectively used by God.

What things stand out to you in these verses and places?:

1. God was in each place -
2. God lead Elijah to each place -
3. God provided for Elijah in each place – In what ways did God provide for Elijah in each place? Elisha (stayed with him to support, encourage, uplift Elijah)

APPLICATION: PLACES OF EVALUATION

The significance of these places for our own spiritual journey:

1. **Gilgal... a place of beginnings** – This is the phase in which our Christian walk begins. It represents our roots and our initial feelings of security.
2. **Bethel... a place of surrender** – This next phase represents the time(s) when we are forced to surrender those things most dear and precious to us. This surrender is often brought about by sickness, or demands, and/or helplessness.
3. **Jericho... a place of attack** – Here we encounter the difficult times of life, often tempting, when we undergo severe attack. We may battle the flesh, the devil, or just life itself. For example, we may experience the breakdown of a friendship, varied disappointments and discouragements, unfulfilled dreams, or the loss of one dearly loved.
4. **The Jordan River... a place of death** – This might represent the scene of either physical death or death to self. It is at this Jordan of life that we become vulnerable, willing to be spent and to live without being continually satisfied and fulfilled.

SEPARATION: WORDS OF DEPARTURE (2 Kings 2:8-11)

⁸ Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. ⁹ And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." ¹⁰ So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." ¹¹ Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Elijah had been accompanied by a traveling companion, a true friend who refused to leave him. His name... "Elisha." Before traveling to each place (to Bethel... to Jericho... to the Jordan), he gave Elisha the freedom to stay behind (see verses, 2,4, and 6). Elisha stuck close to Elijah. Prior to the prophet's removal from earth, Elisha requested that he be given a double portion of Elijah's spirit. He wished to be the heir of Elijah's unique and powerful ministry. Elijah told him in verse 10, ¹⁰ So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." Shortly after that, Elijah, left... look at verse 11, ¹¹ Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

Something to think about: *Who had most impacted your spiritual/Christian life? Why specifically? What most attracted you to their life that made you want to be like them or imitate them in their walk? What characteristics most impacted you and why? What difference has it made in your life to this day?*

CONTINUATION: MANTLE OF POWER (2 Kings 2:12-14)

¹² And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. ¹³ He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over."

Filled with excitement over Elijah's departure, Elisha shouted in verse 12, *"¹² And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!' So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces."* Elisha had his request fulfilled. He picked up the mantle of Elijah which had fallen to the ground and used it to again part the waters of the Jordan. This act alone was evidence of God's presence with him. Interestingly, the mantle was made of animal hair and was a garment of distinction worn by prophets and kings. Also, it was something of real value, as we learn from Joshua 7:21, 24. Elijah was gone... Elisha's work had begun.

OBSERVATION: WORDS FOR TODAY

Looking at the final moment of Elijah's life and the beginning of Elisha's ministry, we learn two things.

2 Important Observations from the End of One Prophets Life and the Beginning of Another Prophet's Life:

1. When a man of God dies, nothing of God dies
2. When the work of a great man is finished, the beginning of another great man is started