

BIBLE STORY: ELIJAH ASCENDS TO HEAVEN

2 Kings 2:1-15

Central Thoughts

- Elijah was Elisha's spiritual father through the Word of salvation he taught Elisha.
- The Lord's victory over sin, death, and the power of Satan is proclaimed in the ascensions of both Elijah and Jesus.
- As the ministry of the Word was passed on to Elisha from Elijah, so Jesus passed on the ministry of the Word to the Apostles at His ascension.
- Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is present to comfort and strengthen us in our earthly pilgrimage wherever His Word and Sacraments are faithfully preached and administered.

Discussion Questions

What does the name Elijah mean?

Yahweh, or the LORD is God.

What does the name Elisha mean?

God is salvation.

Note: Elisha was called by God, through the prophet Elijah, to be a prophet of the Lord who would take Elijah's place. Their very names summarize the message that they were called to preach. As Elijah prepared the way for Elisha's ministry, so John the Baptist would prepare the way for the greater ministry of Jesus. Jesus' name means, "the Lord is salvation" and that He is both God and Lord. The ministry of Elijah and Elisha finds its fulfillment in the ministry of Jesus, the Son of God, and His work of salvation for us.

Before Elijah was taken up into heaven, he and Elisha passed through significant Old Testament locations connected with the promise of salvation. What happened at Bethel and what does the name mean?

The Lord visited Jacob at Bethel and confirmed the promise of salvation made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Wherever the Lord's Word is, there the presence of the Lord is. This is why the place was called, "Bethel"- House of God. Bethel emphasizes the promise of salvation.

What happened at Jericho?

Jericho was the first city of conquest in the Promised Land. The Lord brought the walls of Jericho tumbling down and gave Israel a great victory through the ministry of Joshua. The conquest of Jericho marked the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation.

What happened at Jordan?

The river Jordan was the body of water the Children of Israel passed through on dry ground as they entered the Promised Land. The crossing of the Jordan signifies God's promise of salvation fulfilled.

Who were the sons of the prophets?

They were the men in training to preach God's Word.

What did the sons of the prophets keep reminding Elisha of?

That the Lord would take his master Elijah from him.

Why did Elisha tell them to keep silent?

Elisha desired fervently to remain with his teacher Elijah.

Why did Elisha love Elijah?

Elisha had taught him the saving Word of the Lord.

What does Elijah's mantle signify?

His office as a prophet, called to preach the Lord's Word. The pastor's stole and chasuble are similar symbols of the Office of the Holy Ministry.

When Elijah struck the water with his mantle, what does this signify?

It was the Lord, through His Word, that divided the water. Elijah's only authority as a prophet came from God's Word.

What did Elisha desire to receive?

He asked for a double portion of the Holy Spirit that he might be faithful to the Lord as Elijah's successor.

What did Jesus give to the Apostles when He ascended into heaven?

He gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, so that they might faithfully preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments of Christ that He gave them.

What would be the sign that Elisha would receive a double portion of the Spirit?

He would see Elijah ascend into heaven.

What did the Apostles see at Jesus ascension?

They saw Him ascend into heaven.

What promise did Jesus make to His disciples, who did not want to be parted from Him, when He ascended into heaven?

"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age!" (Matthew 28:20)

How would Elisha and the Apostles continue to be joined to their Lord, though Elijah and Jesus were taken from their sight?

They and we are in the presence of the Lord and joined to Him wherever His Word and sacraments are faithfully proclaimed and administered.

What does the whirlwind and the fiery chariot signify?

The Lord's triumphal victory of salvation and the ultimate fulfillment of all that He had promised.

Did Elisha see Elijah ascend into the heavens?

Yes.

How did Elisha express his fervent love for Elijah and his desire never to be separated from the Lord and His Word which had given him such comfort and peace?

Elisha cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!"

What had Elijah become for Elisha?

His spiritual father.

What sign was given to Elisha that established him as Elijah's successor before the sons of the prophets?

When Elisha touched the Jordan river with the mantle it divided.

What did the sons of the prophets rightly confess about Elisha?

That the Holy Spirit who rested upon Elijah now rested upon Elisha.

Meditation on the Bible Story

The ascension of Elijah into heaven in the victorious image of the whirlwind and fiery chariot points to Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the power of hell as He triumphantly ascended into heaven after His death and resurrection. As Elijah had been Elisha's spiritual father, so Jesus was the spiritual father to His disciples. As Elisha took up the mantle of office and continued the work of preaching the Word of God after Elijah's ascension, so the disciples became Jesus' apostles and preached the Word on His behalf in all the world. The Holy Spirit who rested upon Elijah was given to Elisha. The Holy Spirit who rested upon Jesus was given to the Twelve. By Jesus' Word and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles would faithfully proclaim the Gospel, and by the Apostolic Scriptures the Word of Jesus is carried into all the world. The Lord's promise of salvation has been fulfilled and in the preaching of the Gospel the victory over sin is proclaimed for the salvation and comfort of countless souls. As Elisha loved his spiritual father Elijah because of the Word of life he received from Him, so the Apostles loved Jesus and desired never to be separated from Him. Wherever Jesus' Word is preached in its truth and purity, and wherever His Sacraments are faithfully administered according to His institution, there is Jesus with all the blessings of salvation that He won for us upon the cross. Our spiritual Father, Christ Jesus, is always with us by His Word and Spirit— "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age!"

Prayer on the Bible Story

O Lord, as Elijah ascended into heaven in victory and gave the ministry of the Word to Elisha, teach us to believe that Jesus gave the ministry of the Word to His apostles at His ascension, that through the faithful preaching of His Word we might always abide in the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



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