

## **2 Kings 2: Elijah is taken up to heaven and Elisha succeeds him**

VV notes for 14 February 2026

Elijah means 'My God is Yahweh'. Elijah was one of Israel's greatest prophets.

- Elijah declared there would be no rain for three years (challenging Baal who was the God of thunder, rain and lightning)
- During the three years, Elijah lived in the home of the widow of Zarephath and resurrected her son while he was there. There was also the oil and flour that kept refilling overnight.
- He defeated the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel by calling down fire from heaven.
- He was afraid and fled into the wilderness where he was strengthened by angels.
- Elijah travels forty days and nights to Mount Horeb, where God passed over him and then spoke to Elijah in a still small voice.
- He goes forth and anoints kings of Judah and Aram, and Elisha as his successor.
- He prophesies against Ahab (and Jezebel) again after Naboth is murdered for his vineyard.
- Elijah prophesies against Ahaziah when he tries to enquire of a pagan god as well as calling down fire on Ahaziah's men twice before the third one takes a different attitude.
- Elijah never dies, he is taken up to heaven in a chariot, which is seen by Elisha as a sign that he will receive a double portion of Elijah's Spirit.

It seems everyone knew Elijah was going to be taken up to heaven: Elijah, Elisha and the 50 prophets who met them. In verses 1-6, Elijah tries three times to leave Elisha behind, but each time Elisha says, "As surely as the Lord lives, I will not leave you".

- ❖ Why do you think Elijah tried to leave Elisha behind?
- ❖ What is the significance of this happening three times?

Elijah parts the waters of the river Jordan by hitting it with his cloak

- ❖ Discuss

Elijah allows Elisha to make a request of him before he is taken up to heaven. Elisha asks for a double portion of his spirit. According to commentary that I read, this does not necessarily mean that Elisha wanted twice as much as Elijah had, it refers to the portion that went to the first born son (Deuteronomy 21:17). Elisha is actually asking for the right to be Elijah's successor in spirit. While he had been made Elijah's successor in 1 Kings 19:19, this was a request for the spiritual power to fulfil the calling he had already received. It was very uncommon for prophets to have a successor.

- ❖ Discuss

Elisha begins his ministry as a prophet

Elijah had stated that when he is taken up to heaven, if Elisha saw it happen then his request would be granted. As they walked, they are separated by the fiery chariot of Israel and its

horsemen and Elijah is taken up in a whirlwind. Commentary points to this event as revealing that it is not Elijah nor Elisha nor a prophet that is the source of protection for Israel but the Spirit who is with them.

❖ Discuss

There are also a number of similarities between Elijah and Moses including:

- Associated with fire on mountains
- Met God in Sinai
- Travelled for units of 40 (days/years)
- Fasted 40 days
- Made powerful prayers
- Parted waters
- Left this world in mysterious ways
- Were both transfigured on the mountain with Jesus Christ

❖ Discuss

After Elisha sees Elijah taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, he picks up the mantle/cloak of Elijah (an intentional act) and we begin to see the power of God with Elisha.

- He uses Elijah's cloak to part the Jordan and walk across just as Elijah did before he was taken up to heaven.
- He throws a bowl of salt into a watercourse to purify a town's watercourse.
- He curses the forty-two youths/boys that mock him, and they are mauled by bears.

The writer is now giving the evidence for Elisha's successorship of Elijah. One particular sign has always bothered me. The mauling of the youths/boys from Bethel. However, my readings found that youths here were not necessarily teenagers but more likely referred to young men in their twenties. Joseph was referred to in this way when he was 30 and Solomon when he was 20. The other thing to note is that Bethel was the centre of pagan calf worship and 'go up' refers to Elijah going up to heaven (i.e. dying). This was not a childish prank but concerted opposition to Elisha as a prophet of Yahweh by at least 42 men (against 1) from a centre of pagan worship.

❖ Discuss