

Elijah Taken to Heaven

In a whirlwind with chariots of fire, Elijah is taken up to heaven without dying. His successor Elisha receives a double portion of his spirit.

2 Kings 2:1-14

CHARACTERS: Elijah, Elisha, The company of prophets

THEMES: Translation, Succession, Double portion, Persistence, Mentorship

WHEN THE LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah 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.

The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha. 'Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?'

'Yes, I know,' Elisha replied. 'So be quiet.'

Again Elijah tried to send Elisha away at Jericho. Again Elisha refused to leave. Fifty men from the company of prophets followed at a distance as they walked to the Jordan River.

Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up, and struck the water. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

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. This was not greed but the inheritance of the firstborn son, the one who carries on the father's work.

'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.'

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.

Elisha saw this and cried out, 'My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!' And Elisha saw him no more. He took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He struck the water with the cloak. '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.

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

Elijah never died. He was taken directly into God's presence. And the one who followed faithfully received what he asked for—the power to continue the work.