

1 **Passing on the Mantle**

2 Kings 2:1-15

2 **The players**

- Elijah – The chief prophet of God to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, his name means “Jehovah is God.”
- Elisha – A wealthy young farmer that Elijah called to be his servant and eventual successor. Name means “My God is Salvation.”
- Sons of the Prophets – “Minor” prophets and worshippers of Jehovah in Israel, attended one of the many “schools of the prophets.”

3 **The legacy of Elijah**

- Elijah’s was a Legacy of Blessing
- Elijah’s was a Legacy of Persistence
- Elijah’s was a Legacy of Power
- Elijah’s was a Legacy that Lasts

4 **1) Legacy of blessing**

- God informs Elijah that He is going to be calling him home soon.
- Elijah promptly begins to get his affairs in order – this includes, most crucially, a final visit to all of the Schools of the prophets to confer a final blessing on each of them.

5 **Exit: Elijah**

- The statement in 2 Kings about Elijah’s exit upon the scene of events comes almost as abruptly and as matter-of-factly as his entrance:
- 2 Kings 2:1 – *“And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.”*

6 **The final blessing**

- What we sometimes fail to realize is how much is actually in this one verse.
  - God has revealed to Elijah (and as we will see later, to all of the other prophets as well) that it is time for Elijah to leave this world.
  - Elijah then begins making the rounds of all of the Schools of the Prophets to impart his final blessing on the Sons of the Prophets before being taken away.

7 **The final blessing**

- This final blessing would have been considered by all of the prophets to be very important.
- For those whose lives have been dedicated to the service of God, this is the equivalent of receiving the final inheritance or blessing from their father before he dies.

8 **The importance of the final blessing**

- To receive the final blessing from their father was considered important enough to Jacob and Esau that Jacob was willing to deceive his own brother at the risk of his own life.
- It was important enough that Joseph became cross and corrected his father when he thought Jacob had mistakenly blessed the wrong son.

9 **Leaving a legacy of blessing**

- Elijah’s life was lived in such a way that those who came after him wanted to have what he had.
- Even if God has not called you to a life of marriage and children, it is still possible to have sons and daughters “in the gospel” for whom you will be responsible to love, nurture, and bless spiritually.

10 ■ **2) A legacy of persistence**

- Starting in verse 2, we see an dynamic begin to unfold between Elijah and Elisha:
- *And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet." (2Ki 2:2-3)*

11 ■ **Testing Elisha**

- Three separate times here God through Elijah tests Elisha, to see how determined he truly is to receive the blessing.
- Each time it would have been easy for Elisha to stay behind with his friends and colleagues, content to accept the farewell blessing that Elijah had already bestowed on them.
- Elisha chose to hold on because he wanted something more – he wanted to experience the best that God had for him.

12 ■ **Sticktoitivity**

- When Elisha would eventually become the prophet of Israel, he would hold that office for sixty years.
- Elijah knew it was important that any successor of his possessed the kind of persistence and determination to follow hard after God to "stick it out" for a long time to come.

13 ■ **Sticktoitivity**

- This was the same kind of determination and faithfulness that Elijah had already experienced throughout his whirlwind ministry.
- Though Elijah at times struggled with depression, he never once wavered in his faithfulness to Jehovah. Never once did he weaken his message to appease the hearers.

14 ■ **3) A legacy of power**

- Elijah lived in such a way that it was always clear that God's presence was with him. Verse 7:
- *Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground. (2Ki 2:7-8)*

15 ■ **Parting the waters**

- The parting of waters has, throughout Jewish history, been a longstanding symbol of God's power and presence:
  - Moses parting the Red Sea
  - The last time the River Jordan was parted it was to make way for the Ark of the Covenant – the symbol of the very presence of God.
- For Elijah to part it with his mantle showed to all that the presence of God rested upon him.

16 ■ **Elisha's request**

- Once they have crossed over the Jordan, it is just Elijah and Elisha now. Because Elisha has been faithful to server his master and to wait for his blessing, Elijah rewards him (verse 9):
- *When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on*

*me.*" (2Ki 2:9)

17 **The double portion**

- Elisha's request is no easy one. In fact it is difficult enough that Elijah refers to it as a "hard thing."
- Certainly, it would not have been a hard thing for God to grant Elisha's request.
- However, the fulfillment of the request itself would be difficult on Elisha. Elijah was a man who ministered and lived with greater fervency than most people can imagine. Now Elisha is asking for a double portion of that spirit.

18 **Why the double portion?**

- What Elisha is essentially asking for is the inheritance of the firstborn son.
- But unlike a physical inheritance, the Spirit of God is not limited. Thus Elisha would receive from God a double portion of what Elijah received.
- As earthly fathers, we should strive to leave our children with a greater spiritual inheritance than we received from our fathers.

19 **The request granted**

- *And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so."* (2Ki 2:10)
- Elisha is promised that, if he remains faithful in following Elijah until he is taken away, he will receive a double portion of the prophet's spirit – that is, a double portion of his effectiveness and ministry.

20 **Elijah taken**

- *And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.* (2Ki 2:12-13)

21 **Elijah taken**

- This is not the first time that God has taken up someone into heaven without their experiencing a physical death:
- Genesis 5:24 – *"And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."*
- Elisha was present when Elijah was taken up, and thus received the double portion, as well as Elijah's mantle.

22 **Elijah's mantle**

- Understand that there was no power in the mantle itself. The mantle was not a relic to be worshipped or enshrined – it was a significant garment to be worn.
- By wearing Elijah's mantle, Elisha would instantly identify himself as Elijah's successor to all of Israel.
- Elisha would go on to perform twice as many miracles as Elijah and have a ministry that would last at least twice as long as Elijah's.

23 **The Jordan parted again**

- *And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over. Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.* (2Ki 2:13-15)

24  **Elisha acknowledged**

- By parting the waters again Elijah proved that the Spirit had come to dwell upon him, and that he was now filling the office of Prophet in Israel.
- The Sons of the Prophets recognized this when they saw the visible sign, and subsequently acknowledged that the spirit of Elijah had come to rest on Elisha. This was a verbal acknowledgment of Elijah's legacy.

25  **4) A legacy that lasts**

- Elijah left a legacy that went beyond the people and things he influenced and did within his own lifetime.
- During his lifetime, Elijah stopped up the heavens, raised the dead, fed the sick, called down fire, and put the prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth to the sword.
- But what was he remembered for?

26  **a) His boldness**

- *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."* (Mal 4:5-6)
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27  **a) His boldness**

- *And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."* (Mar 9:12-13)
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28  **b) His love for God**

- Elijah so loved God, was so close to Him, that Elijah is one of only two saints to appear alongside the glorified Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration.

29  **c) His faith**

- *The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 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.* (Jas 5:16-18)
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30  **The secret to legacy**

- Elijah's legacy was ultimately more than anything else a legacy of *worship*.
- The entire thrust of Elijah's ministry can be found in the meaning of his name: *Jehovah is God*.
- The thing that you worship will determine the legacy that you leave.

31  **C.T. Studd**

- C.T. Studd – Left his wife, alienated his children because they were getting in the way of his ministry.
- William Carey – Did not provide for his family, lost his children (one died).

– Drove his wife to the breaking point – went insane.

32  **David Livingston**

- David Livingston – Took his wife and children to Africa.
- Children were destitute, daughter died of dehydration.
- Sent his children away to live in poor houses.
- Only spent 4 out of 17 years of marriage with his wife.
- Only saw his youngest daughter once.
- Wife died as an alcoholic. Livingston did not think she was a Christian.
- 18 year-old son died in prison. “It had something to do with the fact that I never fathered the boy.”

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33  **John Wesley**

- “If we have children, they will need to live at the orphanage, because I do not have time in my ministry for family.”
- “A preacher should be in one place no longer than 6 weeks.”
- Married a 48 year-old widow with children, made no attempt to love or parent those children.

34  **John Wesley**

- John Wesley had an amazing “theology” of marriage, but there was no reality to it.
- Lived in a separate house – his wife never once stepped foot in his home.
- “I cannot understand how a Methodist preacher can answer to God to preach one less sermon or travel one day less in a married than in a single state.”

35  **John Wesley**

- Numerous accounts of domestic disputes between John Wesley and his wife.
- John Wesley physically beat his wife.
- Final correspondence between them: “If you were to live a thousand years, you could not undo the harm you have done.”
- John Wesley’s wife buried in an unmarked grave.

36  **A.W. Tozer**

- Had a poverty theology, did not provide for his wife and children.
- Spent almost no time with his children.
- Would frequently move to different towns and work for weeks without telling his wife, refused to buy his wife a car. She had to move her kids everywhere by foot.
- His wife had to walk and hitchhike just to get to church.

37  **A.W. Tozer**

- Tozer refused to work, or even accept a salary or honorariums for his ministry.
- Sent his sons to the army.
- Left his wife a penniless widow.
- When Tozer died, his wife married a loving, generous man who took care of her:
  - “At least my final years were joyful.”

38  **Hudson Taylor**

- Sent his children away, never spent any time with them again for the remainder of his life.
- Wrote at the death bed of his daughter born in China:
  - “I laid my dear wife and the darling children and myself on the altar of this service.”

39  **What the Bible says:**

- *But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1Ti 5:8)*

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40  **What are you worshipping?**

- The thing that you worship will determine the kind of legacy that you leave.
- If we lose our families – if we lose the people that God has placed nearest to us – then we have sacrificed the things that God has given us on the altar of the things for which we would grasp.