



God Takes Elijah to Heaven

2 Kings 2:1-15

BIBLE BACKGROUND
FOR LEADERS

Elijah Trains Elisha

After God chose Elisha to succeed Elijah as prophet in Israel, Elisha immediately became Elijah's attendant (1 Kings 19:19-21). We don't know how Elisha knew what was about to happen, but apparently he realized that his mentor, Elijah, would soon be taken to heaven. Elisha was totally committed to staying with Elijah until the very end.

Elisha Follows Elijah to the End

We know that companies of prophets existed during the days of Elijah and Elisha. It appears that Elijah visited some of these companies one last time before he was taken to heaven. Elijah's suggestion that he go on without Elisha after visiting each of these places may have been intended to test Elisha's faithfulness. Or perhaps Elijah merely wanted to be alone. Elisha, however, refused to forgo his last hours with Elijah. He wanted to benefit as much as possible from Elijah before Elijah went to be with God. Elisha's persistence was rewarded when Elijah asked what he could do for Elisha before he was taken to heaven.

Elisha Makes a Bold Request

Elisha's request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit was likely based on inheritance rules of the day, which entitled the oldest son to a double portion of his father's estate. Elisha, succeeding Elijah as prophet in Israel, wanted that double portion of God's power to help him face his responsibilities as spiritual leader of the nation.

God Takes Elijah Home

God had supported and protected Elijah throughout his ministry. Now Elisha witnessed a heavenly scene, in the form of a chariot of fire and horses of fire taking

Elijah home to God—Elisha was allowed to see God's spiritual forces at work. The whirlwind and fire were signs of the power and presence of God. Elijah was the second person in the Old Testament to never experience death. As with Enoch before him, he was simply taken to heaven (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5).

Elisha Succeeds Elijah

Elijah had thrown his cloak around Elisha's shoulders when he first called Elisha to join him (1 Kings 19:19). After Elijah ascended to heaven, Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak, symbolizing Elisha's full assumption of Elijah's ministry. Elisha tested how fully the power of God was with him—and demonstrated it to all who could see—when he parted the water of the Jordan by striking it with the cloak. Elisha had been faithful to Elijah and to God, and God rewarded him with the strength he would need to minister as a prophet amid the evil conditions that existed in Israel.

The Jesus Connection

Jesus departed this earth fully alive, too. When Jesus left, he gave his Holy Spirit to those who would carry on his ministry. As followers of Jesus, we are also clothed in his favor and his power!

In 2 Kings 2, Elisha pledges his faithfulness to Elijah three times. In your Bible, underline these three expressions of Elisha's loyalty to Elijah. How can Elisha's pledges translate to your own commitment to God?

Ask Jesus to empower you to keep your commitment and serve his plans here on earth. You can write your prayer here.



God Takes Elijah to Heaven—2 Kings 2:1-15

► **Bible Point**—God wants us to be faithful.

Key Verse—“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

**DIGGING
DEEPER**

Daily Challenges

Choose one or more of these activities to do this week.

- **Choose one quality of faithfulness you'd like to work on and apply to your life this week. Then come up with at least one thing you'll do to add this quality of faithfulness to your life.**
- **Be faithful this week to someone who's hurting. Go beyond showing concern—do something that shows him or her that you really care, and stay committed to showing that care.**
- **Is there an opportunity to serve faithfully in your church or to serve those outside it? Make some contacts, and take some steps toward getting involved.**

Talk Topics

- Invite a faithful Christian you know over for dinner. “Interview” the person with questions such as “Who influenced (and influences) you to be a faithful person of God?” and “What does the Bible say about being faithful to God?”
- Talk about times in your life when you've not been faithful to God. What were the results? What happened to your relationship with God?
- Discuss the difficulties of being faithful to God. What things prevent you from being fully faithful? How can you help each other remain faithful to God?

**OK
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Through the Week

Use the following passages to explore additional biblical perspectives on faithfulness.

Monday—Hebrews 11:1

- Think about your faith in God. What do you hope for? What are you sure of?

Tuesday—1 Samuel 26:23

- How does God reward our faithfulness?

Wednesday—Psalm 89:1

- How can we tell others about God's faithfulness?

Thursday—Hosea 4:1

- What happens when we live a life without faithfulness to God?

Friday—Romans 3:3-4

- Is it possible for God to be unfaithful to us? What can we learn from God's example of faithfulness?

Saturday—James 2:18

- How do your actions show your faith?