

II Kings 2:1-14; Mt. 3:13-17; Passed from Elijah to Elisha I. Elisha's Commitment II. Elisha's Request III. The LORD'S Answer

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what will happen to your life's work after you die? Will your children or your coworkers carry on your mission? As you may remember, when President Biden took office, he spent his first days effectively undoing or reversing many of the executive orders that President Trump had signed.

Much of the work done by one person can be undone by the next! That can happen in our lives and with our work as well. The next in line after you may take your work in a totally different direction. But will that happen with Elijah and Elisha? Will the apprentice continue his master's work? Well, today we find Elijah passing the baton to Elisha his protegee. In our text from II Kings 2, we move from promise to fulfillment, a picture of the OT moving to the NT, and from John the Baptist to Jesus. So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals the power and presence of the Spirit as Elisha takes up Elijah's mantle.

### **I. Elisha's Commitment**

In our first point, we see Elisha's commitment in that he will not turn aside or turn back from following Elijah to the end. We see Elijah giving Elisha an option- go back. Stay here- as found in v. 2, 4 and 6. The LORD has sent me on- now you stay here. Go back to your own home and family- return to the life from which you came. I am giving you the option- now you can choose which path to take. If you choose to follow me- you will be hated and hunted. People will mock you because of your office and calling. You will be called upon and your mission will be challenging. And to each of these statements- Elisha responds- No- I will go with you. Elisha has a total commitment and dedication to Elijah- and he will not turn aside nor will he turn back. Although called and appointed by Elijah- Elisha has become one in his service with his master. He commits himself and utters a vow- as surely as the LORD lives and as you live- I will not turn back! This is a common vow or promise made by the Israelites- as surely as the LORD lives- I will certainly do what I have promised. The certainty of an everlasting and unchanging God is the vow of my dedication. 3 separate times- in 3 different locations- Elisha was told- stay here as I go on. But Elisha will not forsake- although tried 3 times- he would not forsake his calling! He takes up his cross and follows his master. There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother- but

Elisha is not just committed to a person- to following his mentor- he is committed to his calling! He will not turn aside nor forsake what he has been called to do. We do not see this kind of commitment very often today. Not only is it a common trend to hop from church to church- job to job- and fail to put down roots and jump ship whenever things get difficult. But the calling to be a Christian is not one that we can take on and forsake at our every whim! It is very tempting to deny your identity as a Christian when times are tough. It is easy to claim Christ as your master when it is in vogue- but when push comes to shove it is a lot harder to remain diligent and follow our Lord. Generally speaking, we are all called to follow Jesus to the end. To forsake family and friend- to love none other more than He- to take up our cross and follow Him- to go where He sends and come when He calls. But to illustrate what this calling of Elisha was like; we could compare it to the calling of a shepherd to serve a church. The calling into the ministry is a weighty matter- it should not be entered into lightly nor should it be abandoned at the first difficulty. Imagine a preacher who was not prepared for Sunday because they were busy with their own pursuits. Or if the elders of a church decided that they were tired of going to meetings every month- so they just decided to stop going and leave the office. No one can take up the mantle of ministry without counting the cost! Elisha knew what it meant to be a follower of the LORD- what the price would be- that the demand was a total and all-consuming demand. Having a master means that His life and demands set the pattern for your life! And since we belong to Jesus Christ in body and soul- we must remember that our lives must be lived in light of this calling to forsake this world and follow Him! We are not masters of our own lives- we live at the beck and call of our owner and Lord! Our life and times are in his hands!

## **II. Elisha's Request**

Now that Elisha has passed the test- he will not forsake his calling- 3 times he reaffirmed his commitment to Elijah and his calling. He will not take the easy way out- he perseveres. In our next point, we consider the request that is given. Elijah says in v. 9, what do you want me to do for you? Ask and it will be given you. And of all that Elijah had or could do, the only thing that Elisha asks for is this- a double portion of Elijah's spirit.

Notice what Elisha does not ask for- he does not ask for lands or property- he does not seek a family or children, health or prestige. Of all the things that Elisha could have asked for- He asks for a Spiritual gift! This brings to mind Solomon- when asked by the LORD what do you want- what gift would you like as I Kings 3 says. Solomon does not ask for wealth or military victory, but he asks for wisdom and discernment instead! So Elisha asks for a double portion of the Spirit. Now to ask for a double portion was to make the request of a first-born son. In Dt. 21, the double portion was the lot given to the first-born son when the father died. So the eldest son had the right to receive twice the inheritance at the death of the father of the household. Now, Elijah the father, was going to soon be taken away. What does his spiritual son ask for? Nothing but a double portion of the spirit! Here Elisha is asking for presence, power and wisdom that the Holy Spirit had given to Elijah- as Elijah had been anointed by the Holy Spirit- Elisha desires this same overshadowing. His first desire is the ability to be faithful to his calling- to be equipped and anointed for the work of the prophet to which he was being called! I sometimes wonder what I would have said- if asked- what can I give you? What shall I do for you? Of all the things that we could ask for in this world- there is a gift that we are told to explicitly ask for! Listen to these words from Luke 11:13- ask and it will be given to you- seek and you will find. Will not the Father surely give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? Did you catch that? After Jesus teaches us how to pray- and why we should pray- He specifically promises that that Father will give the Holy Spirit to all those who ask for that Spirit in prayer! I wonder- how often do we pray for this gift? How often do we ask the Father to give us the Holy Spirit- the Spirit of power, wisdom and truth? If Elisha knew the importance of the Spirit in his work of being a prophet- how much more we who are share in the anointing of Christ? To be prophets who know and speak the truth! We need the Spirit to fall on our hearts to equip us for our work! And getting back to this concept of double portion and sonship- do you remember what we read back in Mt. 3. When Jesus was baptized, He was given the same Spirit. It was at this time that the Father declared- this is my Son with whom I am well pleased! Jesus is the Son of the Father who received the double portion of the Spirit at his baptism! The Spirit who would anoint and equip Jesus to be the perfect prophet.

### III. The LORD'S Answer

Now that we understand the significance of this request made by Elisha, we find how the LORD answers this request in our last point. Although the promise of the Spirit was made by Elijah- it was the LORD who answers and sends this gift of the Spirit. It was the LORD that allowed and ordained that Elisha would be able to watch as Elijah was taken up. In taking Elijah up- it is as if the LORD was saying- well done good and faithful servant! Your battle is over- the victory won! It was the LORD that caused the mantle to fall to Elisha- and it was the LORD that sent the Spirit to fall upon and empower Elisha as well. As Elijah said in v. 10- you have asked for a difficult thing. This giving of the Spirit is not something that man can control or purchase- the Spirit is not at man's beck and call- His presence and power cannot be purchased by man as Simon would learn in Acts. But the LORD sends His Spirit in His good time. So as Elijah and Elisha are walking and talking in v. 11, suddenly Elijah is taken away. First of all, the flaming chariot and horses separated the two men. And next, Elijah is taken up to heaven in whirlwind. Contrary to popular art, Elijah does not go to heaven in flaming chariot- he goes to heaven in a whirlwind. Now the whirlwind was a sign of God's presence- as He was with the Israelites in Ex. 15 as a pillar of fire or whirlwind of glory. As Isaiah 66:15 puts it, the LORD will come in fire and his chariots like the whirlwind. And the flaming horses and chariot of fire is a reminder of God's power. He is the LORD of hosts- the God of angel armies- His ministers are flames of fire. As both fire and wind are present on Pentecost when the Holy Spirit is poured out. At this sight, Elisha tears his cloths. He has seen the presence of God- He is filled with awe! And his beloved master and mentor has been taken up- he is filled with grief. Now the mantle falls on his shoulders. But this too is from the LORD. Although anyone can pick up a hairy cloak- only one chosen, anointed and equipped can truly carry the prophetic mantle as Elijah and Elisha do. And to prove this fact- Elisha repeats the miracle of Elijah in v. 14. Where is the God of Elijah- He is present in the person and work of Elisha! The Spirit has fallen on his shoulders. A beautiful affirmation and confirmation of Elisha's ministry and the presence of the Spirit upon Him. The parting of the waters is a miracle rich in symbolic purpose. Think of Moses and Joshua- where the Israelites were baptized into their appointed mediator and

leader. Here with Elijah and Elisha- the water parts at the presence of the LORD'S prophet to prove the identity of the prophet as one filled with God's Word. And, let's not forget what we read in Mt. 3. At the baptism of Jesus, both John and Jesus were in this same Jordan River. But this time, instead of the waters parting, heaven itself parts! And instead of a mantle falling, the Holy Spirit Himself comes down in the form of a dove- falling on, remaining in and filling Jesus. It is this same Jesus who baptizes His people not with water alone- but with the Spirit. Baptism is a sign of the Holy Spirit being sent- being poured out on God's people. And it is this same Spirit who is called in II Tim 1:7- not a Spirit of fear; but of power, love and self control. That is the Spirit that we have been given- who comforts us in our affliction, brings to mind all that Christ did and said, and leads us in the way and wisdom of God! By this Spirit, we too are prophets who confess the name of Jesus and speak the truth in love! Because we are in Christ- we too share in this double portion of the Spirit!

To conclude, the passing of the mantle from Elijah to Elisha is a picture of the Spirit falling from the master to his servant. As the dove fell upon Jesus- and flames of fire fell on the heads of the saints on Pentecost- so God's people have this same Spirit upon them today. As our theme stated, Jesus Christ reveals the power and presence of the Spirit as Elisha takes up Elijah's mantle. Power to part waters and bring life to dead bones. Elisha will continue Elijah's work- because it is the LORD'S work being done! The Spirit is speaking through them! But not only do we have the fulfillment of this anointing and equipping with the Spirit at baptism of Jesus, we also find a picture of Jesus's ascension and return as well. Just as Elijah was brought up into heaven on a fiery cloud and whirlwind, so also Jesus ascended into heaven and was enveloped by this glory cloud. Added to this, as Acts 1 says, in the same way Jesus will return! When Jesus comes back, He will descend on this glory cloud and whirlwind-with fire and wind at the head of his angelic hosts who will be driving flaming horses and riding flaming chariots! The armies of heaven in Rev. 19 will ride on their white horses- following the Word of God into battle on that last day! So the flaming horses and chariots will return once again! Until then, let God's people pray for the presence and power of the Spirit in our hearts and in our communities today. So that all may know the truth of God's Word- and be set free!