

THE LIFE & TIMES OF ELIJAH (Part 6)

“No Death: What a Way to Go!” (2 Kings 2:1-12)

INTRO: It has been quite a journey (20 yrs.) with Elijah. Ahab and Jezebel are dead. Son reigns 2 yrs. (evil). We have gone with him from the heights of Mt. Carmel to the depths of despair in the desert under a broom tree. Learned some valuable LESSONS. . .

Today we bid Elijah farewell. His work on earth is finished (John 17:4; 19:30). Ultimately, an end comes to everything. But Elijah’s end is hardly an end - more like a beginning, as he is taken into God’s presence by a whirlwind (Heb. - “gust”). He disappears as quickly as he appeared. Unsurprisingly, this fiery man of God doesn’t age gracefully and quietly die - he doesn’t even die at all (like my cousin Enoch!). In 2:1 God reveals to Elijah that today is your last day on earth. Also rich fool (Lk. 12). “*What would you do if you knew today was your last day on earth?*” Elijah did two things:

I. (vv. 1-8) HE PONDERED THE PAST

Memory can be great. Elijah reviews the past by returning to places and events of DEFINING MOMENTS. MAP ... Less of a geography or history lesson. Each significant in Israel’s history, but also symbolic of stages in every Christian’s journey with God. Going to examine each historically and then spiritually.

A. (v.1) GILGAL was the place of *beginnings*. Pic – stones

1. *Historically*, it was at Gilgal some 500 years past that the infant nation Israel took its first steps into the Promised Land (Josh. 4:19ff). Joshua built a monument of stones (PIC).
2. *Spiritually*, Gilgal is the place of our beginnings with our walk with Christ. It is the place of our spiritual roots. It is important to know you’ve had a Gilgal before you leave this earth. 2 Cor. 5:17. 4 ways to heaven ...

B. (vv.2-3) BETHEL was the place of *surrender*. Pic – altars (worship)

1. *Historically*, Remember Jacob, Father of nation Israel? He deceived his brother and he met God in a dream there (Gen. 28:10-22). Later, he’d return to Bethel (Gen. 35:1-7). What was so special about this place? It was the place of the altar to *surrender*. Bethel = house of God
2. *Spiritually*, Bethel represents the places and times where we come face to face with God and are challenged to surrender the things that come between us and God. Our Bethels remind us of sacrifice and cost. Ex: loss of loved one, loss of job, broken dreams, etc. Bethel is where we resolve to trust God no matter what (Rom. 12:1; Pro. 3:5-6).

C. (vv.4-5) JERICHO was a *battleground*. Pic – Ancient City

1. *Historically*, the first battle as moved into Promised Land (Josh. 5:13-6:23). God doesn’t want to take sides, but to take over! No doubt Elijah recalled his own battles with Ahab, Jezebel, Baal’s prophets, etc. Jericho

marked those trials and difficult times that God uses most to grow us. It is our *battleground*. Places and times of struggle.

2. *Spiritually*, Jerichos are where we wage our spiritual battles with the world, flesh & demons. 1 Tim. 1:18

- D. (vv.6-8) RIVER JORDAN was the place of *separation*. Pics. . . Elijah crossed the Jordan to never return. Often think of Jordan symbolizing physical death, but Elijah, unlike us didn’t die. Crossing Jordan stands for those places where we die to self. Here we are willing to become vulnerable and willing to be spent. John 12:24; Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17

II. (vv.9-12) HE (was glad he had) PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE - This is where Elisha came in. Remember 1 Kings 19:16, 19-21)? Some ten years have gone by. These two men are dear friends.

- A. ELIJAH’S INVESTMENT - He spent time establishing schools for prophets and time discipling Elisha, who’d replace him. Elijah often struggled with failure. God wanted to show him you only need a successor if started something that needs to continue! Though he was going to leave, God’s work would go on. Explain “double portion” request (v.9) ...

ILLUS: Picture of Bro. Jim passing mantel (3/26/06).

ILLUS: Gordon & Bob Talton, Andy Yaros, Tom Gurney, etc. Elijah had invested these ten years to prepare his successor and disciple. IMAGE—Chariot of fire. . .

- B. OUR IMPERATIVE - Paul discipled Timothy (2 Tim. 2:2). Jesus had his twelve. Jesus gave us an imperative in Matt. 28:19-20 to make disciples. Who are you investing in? Who is your successor? Where is your disciple? To whom are you passing the baton? Elijah was so glad he had prepared for the future. vv. 11-12 Suddenly, the end. No death - what a way to go!

LESSONS:

1. Keep serving to the end
2. Face death with faith not fear
3. When a person of God dies, nothing of God dies
4. We all leave a legacy; make it a good one

CONC: Only one day to live. What would you do? Gratefully, ponder the past, and be glad you left an investment in others behind. Ask yourself, “How do you want to be remembered?” Then live that way.