

Eliyahu ~ Part 17

In my last post, we rejoined **Eliyahu** in **2 Kings 1:1-17** where once again **God Judges Sin**. In this post, continue in **2 Kings 2:1-6** where we learn what **God Wants Us to Remember**. This post is a little longer than usual because of the historical significance of the content. You may want to print out the PDF version below.

¹ The time came for Adonai to take Eliyahu up into heaven in a whirlwind. Eliyahu and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal, ² when Eliyahu said to Elisha, "Please wait here because Adonai has sent me all the way to Beit-El." But Elisha said, "As Adonai lives, and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Beit-El. ³ The guild prophets of Beit-El came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that Adonai is taking your master away from you today?" "Yes, I know," he answered; "say no more."

⁴ Eliyahu said to him, "Elisha, please wait here, because Adonai has sent me to Yericho." He replied, "As Adonai lives, and as you live, I will not leave you." So they came to Yericho. ⁵ The guild prophets of Yericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that Adonai is taking your master away from you today?" "Yes, I know," he answered; "say no more."

⁶ Eliyahu said to him, "Please wait here because Adonai has sent me to the Yarden." He replied, "As Adonai lives, and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on." ~ 2 Kings 2:1-6 (CJB)

God Wants Us to Remember

King Achazyah died, but **Eliyahu** won't die! He will be taken up into heaven in a whirlwind, accompanied by fiery horses drawing a chariot of fire. Like **Hanokh** (Enoch) of old, he walked with God and then suddenly went to be with God (Genesis 5:21-24). Both men illustrate the catching away of the saints when returns. But before **Eliyahu** left **Elisha** to carry on the work, he walked with his successor from **Gilgal** to beyond the **Yarden**, and what a walk that must have been!

Wow! Now that is an example of true discipleship. **Elisha** has been under **Eliyahu's** tutelage for some time, and he didn't want to miss out on any new revelation or experience.

The Lord had at least three purposes in mind when He led these two servants to walk together.

Taking Advantage of the Present

It appears that **Eliyahu** wanted **Elisha** to tarry behind and let him go on alone, but this was merely a test of **Elisha's** devotion. When **Eliyahu** threw his mantle on **Elisha** and made him his successor, the younger man promised, **I will follow you** (1 Kings 19:20), and he kept that promise.

We never know when a friend and fellow worker will be taken from us. God told **Elisha** that **Eliyahu** was leaving him, but we don't know when it is our time or a friend's time to go to heaven. What great opportunities we miss by wasting time on trifles when we could be learning from each other about the Lord and His Word!

These two men represented different generations and opposite personalities, yet they were able to walk together. Should we not emulate them in our walk?

Preparing for the future

At **Beit-el**, **Yericho**, and **Gilgal**, the two men visited the *guild prophets*, companies of dedicated men who were called of God to study the Scriptures and teach the people. **Sh'mu'el** led one of these *guilds* at Ramah. These groups would be similar to the discipling groups in our churches, or even like our Bible schools and colleges. The work of the Lord is always one generation short of extinction. We must be faithful to obey 2 Timothy 2:3: ***And the things you heard from me, which were supported by many witnesses, these things commit to faithful people, such as will be competent to teach others also.***

The Lord didn't record for us what **Eliyahu** said to his beloved students. Indeed he told them to obey **Elisha** just as they had obeyed him, to remain faithful to the Word of God and to do everything God told them to do as they battled against idolatry in the land. It was their responsibility to call the people back to obeying God's covenant (see Deuteronomy 27-30) so that He might be pleased to bless and heal their land.

God has different ways of training His servants, but He still expects the older generation (that's me) to pass along to the younger generation the treasures of truth that were given to them by those who went before. ***"Dear friends, I was busily at work writing to you about the salvation we share, when I found it necessary to write, urging you to keep contending earnestly for the faith which was once and for all passed on to God's people."*** Jude 1:3 (CJB)

Reviewing the Past

Gilgal, **Beit-el**, **Yericho**, and the **Yarden** were essential places in Jewish history, each of them carrying a significant message. Before he left the land and went to heaven, **Eliyahu** wanted to visit these sites one last time and take **Elisha** with him. Our eternal God doesn't reside in particular places, but we who are creatures of time and history need these visible reminders to help us remember and better understand what God has done for His people. The past is not an anchor to hold us back but a rudder to guide us, and the Lord can use these *tangible memories* to strengthen our faith. All throughout the **Torah**, God directs His people to erect memorials for the younger generation to learn how He worked in the older generation's time.

Gilgal was the first place the Israelites camped after they crossed the **Yarden** River and entered the Promised Land. It was there that the new generation of Jewish men submitted to circumcision and officially became *people of Israel* (Joshua 5:29). **Gilgal** was the place of new beginnings, and **Eliyahu** wanted his successor to remember that.

From **Gilgal**, the two men walked to **Beit-el**, about fifteen miles west of **Gilgal**. **Avraham** worshiped there, and so did **Ya'akov**. It was at **Beit-el** that **Ya'akov** saw the angels ascending and descending the ladder that reached to heaven. There he heard God promise to be with him and care for him. **Beit-el** means *"house of God,"* and there **Ya'akov** worshiped the Lord and vowed to obey Him. Years later, **Ya'akov** returned to **Beit-el** and, like **Avraham**, made a new beginning in his walk with the Lord.

At **Beit-el**, the students spoke to **Elisha** about his master's departure. Perhaps they thought they knew something that nobody else knew, an attitude not uncommon among some students. The same scene was repeated when **Eliyahu** and **Elisha** arrived at **Yericho**. In both cities, **Elisha** politely assured the students that he was aware of what was about to happen, but that their discussing it only added to the pain of his separation from his master. Their approach to what God was doing was purely cerebral, but to **Elisha**, the loss of his beloved master brought pain to his heart. *"The mark of a true student of the Scriptures is a burning heart, not a big head."*¹

The two men then went fifteen miles west to **Yericho**, the site of **Y'oshua's** first victory in the Promised Land. It was also the place where **'Akhah** disobeyed and took of the spoils that belonged to the Lord alone, a sin that led to Israel's defeat at Ai. The incredible victory at **Yericho** showed Israel how to conquer the land:

¹ Warren Wiersbe in Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament.

get your orders from the Lord; obey them by faith, no matter how foolish they may seem; give all the glory to Him alone. The two times **Yoshua** failed to follow this formula, he experienced defeat. **Yoshua** had put under a curse anybody who rebuilt **Yericho**, but during the reign of evil **King Ach'av**, the city was rebuilt (see 1 Kings 16:34). **Yericho** would remind **Elisha** of the victory of faith, the tragedy of sin and the majesty of the Lord who deserves all the glory.

Eliyahu and **Elisha** walked five miles east and came to the **Yarden** River, and surely the record in Joshua 1-4 came into their minds and their conversation. The Lord opened the Red Sea to let His people out of Egypt, and then He parted the **Yarden River** to let them into their inheritance. What good is freedom if you don't claim your inheritance? As the nation followed the Ark of the Covenant, the Lord opened the swollen waters of the river, and the people passed over on dry land! To commemorate this miracle, Joshua built a monument in the midst of the river and another one on the shore. Nothing is too hard for the Lord, for, with God, all things are possible! *And **Eliyahu** duplicated that great miracle!*

Eliyahu is a good model for Believers to imitate when it comes to the inevitability of one day leaving this earth, either through death or the rapture of the church. He didn't sit around and do nothing, but instead visited three of the prophetic schools and no doubt ministered to the students. He didn't say to his successor *"I'm going to leave you"* and thus dwell on the negative, but said, *"I'm going to **Gilgal**, **Beit-el**, to **Yericho**, and to the **Yarden**"* and kept busy until the very moment the Lord called him. Even more, he didn't ask his successor to give him anything, because we can't take anything in our hands from earth to heaven, but instead, he offered to provide **Elisha** with a gift before the end came. One of the best gifts we can leave is a prepared servant of God to take our place!

In my next post, we continue to explore the Biblical story of **Eliyahu**. We examine **2 Kings 2:7-12** as we see **Eliyahu** riding a fiery chariot into heaven as **God's Reward for Service**.