

Elijah ~ Part 18

In my last post, we continued in **2 Kings 2:1-6** where we learn what **God Wants Us to Remember**. In this post, we examine **2 Kings 2:7-12** as we see **Elijah** riding a fiery chariot into heaven as **God's Reward for Service**.

"7 Fifty of the guild prophets went and stood watching them from a distance, while they stood by the Yarden. 8 Then Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it; and the water divided itself to the left and to the right; so that they crossed on dry ground. 9 After they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away from you." Elisha said, "Please! Let a double share of your spirit be on me!" 10 He replied, "You have requested a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, you will get what you asked for; but if not, you won't."

11 Suddenly, as they were walking on and talking, there appeared a fiery chariot with horses of fire; and as it separated the two of them from each other, Elijah went up into heaven in a whirlwind. 12 Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Isra'el!" Then he lost sight of him. Seizing his clothes, he tore them in half." ~ 2 Kings 2:7-12 (CJB)

God's Reward for Service

As **Elijah** and **Elisha** stood by the **Yarden River**, they were watched by fifty of the **guild prophets**, men who stood afar off. They knew that **Elijah** was going to leave that day, but they didn't know how he would depart or when God would call him. It's likely that only **Elisha** saw **Elijah** go up into heaven, and after the prophet disappeared, the fifty students thought he hadn't left them. They saw **Elijah** open the waters of the **Yarden** and close them again, and they saw **Elisha** repeat the miracle, but they didn't see what **Elisha** saw when the whirlwind took **Elijah** to heaven. The fifty men were spectators that saw only part of what happened, but **Elisha** was a participant in the miracle and the heir to **Elijah's** ministry.

Elijah didn't give his successor three wishes; he merely asked him to name the one gift he wanted more than anything else. Every leader needs to be right in his priorities, and **Elisha** had a ready answer: he wanted a double portion of the spirit of his master. This was not a request for twice as much of the Holy Spirit, or for a ministry twice as great as that of **Elijah**, but for a greater degree of the inner spirit that motivated the great prophet. The request was based on Deuteronomy 21:17, the law of inheritance for the firstborn. Though there were many **guild prophets**, **Elisha** saw himself as **Elijah's firstborn son** who deserved the double inheritance that Moshe commanded. Like a firstborn son serving a father, **Elisha** had walked with **Elijah** and attended to his needs, but the only inheritance he desired was a double measure of his master's inner spirit of courage, faithfulness, faith in God, and obedience to God's will. In saying this, **Elisha** was accepting the prophetic ministry that **Elijah** had begun and declared that he would carry it on to completion, with God's help.

Up, Up and Away

Elijah was honest with his friend and told him that such a gift was not his to grant, for only the Lord could do it. However, if the Lord allowed **Elisha** to see his ascendance from earth to heaven, that would be proof that his request had been granted. Then it happened! As the two friends walked along talking, a fiery chariot drawn by fiery horses came between them, and a whirlwind lifted **Elijah** out of sight—and **Elisha** saw it happen! This meant his request had been granted and the Lord had equipped him to continue the ministry of **Elijah**. **Elijah** was undoubtedly the **prophet of fire**, for Scripture records at least three instances of his bringing fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:10 and 12), so it was right that God sends fiery horses and a chariot of fire to accompany His servant to glory.

Elisha's response was one of grief, like a son mourning over the loss of a beloved father. But he paid high tribute to **Eliyahu** when he called him *the chariots and horsemen of Isra'el*. This one man was the equivalent of a whole army! In His covenant with Israel, the Lord promised that, if the nation obeyed Him, He would enable a hundred Israelites to chase ten thousand enemy soldiers (see Leviticus 26:6-8), and Moshe promised that God would cause one man to pursue a thousand and two men to chase ten thousand (see Deuteronomy 32:30). One plus God is a majority.

To me, this is one of the most fascinating passages in scripture. While it is reminiscent of **Moshe** parting the **Red Sea** at the Lord's direction and the **Yarden** parting when the priest carried the **Ark of the Covenant** stepped into the river so that the Israelites could cross on a dry river bed into the promised land, the *fiery chariot with horses of fire* transporting **Eliyahu** into heaven ~ WOW!

Now, you may be thinking that we have completed our character study of **Eliyahu** since he has ascended into heaven, but scripture has more to say about him. In my next post, we continue to explore the Biblical story of **Eliyahu**. We will be looking at both the remainder of the **Tanakh** and the **Brit Hadashah** for references to this fascinating prophet of God.