

## **Lesson 58: ELIJAH AND THE WHIRLWIND (II Kings 2)**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Do you know what a prophet is? A prophet is someone who tells messages from God to the people. A true prophet is someone who is humble and worships the one True God. A false prophet is someone who might try to fool people into believing in an untrue god, or who might want to tell messages to the people that aren't really from God.

Have you heard of Elijah? Elijah was a great prophet, a good and true prophet. He lived in Israel during a time of trouble. People had begun to worship golden calves, instead of going to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, like they had been told. Elijah spent his life telling the people messages from the one true God, telling them that they must worship the Lord. The Lord often gave Elijah the power to do miracles. Elijah also had a special mantle, or cape that he always wore. Even his mantle was filled with power from the Lord.

### **STORY:**

Now Elijah was getting older, and he knew that he would soon be taken up into heaven by the Lord. He needed to travel from the city of Gilgal to the city of Bethel. Another man named Elisha was with him. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel." But Elisha answered, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they traveled toward Bethel together.

As they came near Bethel, some other prophets came out to meet them. These were not great prophets, like Elijah, but they knew enough to know that Elijah was going to be taken up into heaven that very day. They said to Elisha, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" Elisha answered, "Yes, I know; keep quiet!"

Then Elijah said, "Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho." But again Elisha answered, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they walked on together toward Jericho.

What can we tell about Elisha so far? He certainly is proving that he is very loyal to Elijah, and that he wants to follow him.

When the two of them got to Jericho, more prophets came out and said to Elisha, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And again Elisha answered, "Yes, I know; keep quiet!"

Then a third time, Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan river." And what do you think Elisha answered? "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they traveled on together.

When they came to the Jordan river, there on the other side were fifty prophets watching from a distance, and two prophets right near the river on the other side. But there was a river between them and no bridge. How were Elijah and Elisha to get across?

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Elijah took his mantle, and rolled it up. He struck the waters of the Jordan with this mantle, and suddenly the waters divided, like magic. Elijah and Elisha were able to walk across the river on the dry ground beneath the river. After they had crossed, the waters flowed back over the dry ground, and the river was as it had been before.

Now when they had crossed over, Elijah knew he would be leaving this earth very soon. He said to Elisha, his faithful follower, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?"

Elisha answered, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." What did this mean? Elisha wanted to be Elijah's follower, even though Elijah would be gone soon. He wanted to serve as a true prophet of the Lord, and to do it as well as Elijah had done. He wanted a double portion of Elijah's strength and wisdom and power so that he could also serve the Lord, the one True God, in great ways.

Elijah said to him, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so."

So this would be the sign: if Elisha saw Elijah being taken into heaven, that would be a sign from the Lord that Elisha would be come the next great prophet, and would be given power and wisdom from God.

Then, as Elijah and Elisha walked on together talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared out of nowhere, pulled by horses of fire! The chariots and horses came between Elijah and Elisha, because it was time for Elijah to go. He got into the chariot, and then a great whirlwind started to blow, and it lifted him up and up, out of sight and into heaven!

Elisha was amazed at this sight. He cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" He even tore his own robe, to show how sad he was that Elijah was gone.

But as Elijah had been lifted up to heaven, his special mantle had fallen down to the ground. Elisha now went and picked it up.

Elisha had seen Elijah carried up into heaven. What was this a sign of? That a double portion of Elijah's power and wisdom would be given to Elisha. Elisha took that mantle and went back to the River Jordan. He cried out, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" and then struck the river with the mantle. And what do you think happened? The waters parted, and Elisha could cross over on dry ground.

When the other prophets who were watching saw this, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha!" and they bowed down in front of him. Then they asked if they could send fifty men to go and look for Elijah's body, to see if it had fallen somewhere near by. Elisha said no, "You shall not send anyone." He knew that the Lord had taken Elijah in a miraculous way, and that they would find no body. But the other prophets insisted so strongly that finally he agreed to let them look.

Do you think they found Elijah's body? No. They searched for three days and found nothing. Elisha said to them, "Didn't I say to you, 'Do not go'?"

From then on, Elisha became the great prophet in Israel, speaking messages from the one True God, and doing the Lord's miracles. They worked to tell the people what it was they must do to be close to the Lord.

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Elijah and Elisha both represent the Lord's Word, because that's what we must listen to, to learn to be close to the Lord. Sometimes, it might seem like the Word isn't that special, like Elijah must have often just looked like an ordinary man. But then, sometime in life, you'll realize the power and wonder that exists in the Word, and that will be like when Elisha saw the power and wonder of Elijah carried up into heaven by the Lord. Then the power of the Lord's Word will grow greater in you, just as the power of the Lord became even greater in Elisha than it had been in Elijah.

**PROJECT**

**Supplies:** White paper  
Crayons, including white crayons  
Watercolor paints

**Procedure:**

Have the children create a picture, in which the whirlwind will "appear" when the paint over it with watercolors.

They should color a fiery chariot first. It could be a detailed fiery chariot, with a fiery horse and Elijah in it, or it could be as simple as a mass of flames representing the chariot. They could also make Elisha on the ground, if they wish, and the mantle coming down to him.

They, with white crayon, they should color the spirals of the whirlwind. After that, they may paint over it all with watercolors and make the whirlwind "appear."