

## HERE I AM, LORD?

**Speaker:** Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

**Date:** 14-02-2021

**Scripture:** 2 Kings 2:1-15

### **2 Kings 2:1-15**

*And it came about when the Lord was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here please, for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; be still."*

*Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be still." Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." And he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.*

*Now fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.*

*When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." He said, "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." As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over.*

*Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho opposite him saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him.*

Shall we pray together?

Our loving heavenly Father, would You inspire us through the power of Your Holy Spirit that these words written so many years ago, and an event that happened so many years ago, will find relevance for us today. So take it Lord, and distill it, through our own understandings, our own culture, our own ideas, and our own situations and circumstances, so that this will be a relevant word for everybody who listens. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

What an incredible account of the closeness of a mentor and a mentee! Here were Elijah and Elisha – Elijah, that great man of God. James spoke about him in the New Testament that he was a man of

prayer. God did incredible things through him. You remember that great encounter with the priests of Baal, how he stood there and challenged Israel: "If the Lord is God, follow Him."

This is the Elijah that Elisha is following. But he's following because he knows that this is the end of his mentor's career and he's not going anywhere. He wants to stick close to him and it seems as if Elijah wants to stop him. Three times we see that. They are in Gilgal and Elijah says to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Bethel." And then he says, "No, I will not. As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they go on to Bethel and when they reach Bethel, Elijah says to him again, "Stay here for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." And again, Elisha will have none of it. He says, "No, I am going with you." They make their way to Jericho. They reach Jericho and then he turns to Elisha again and says, "Stay here for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." And again, Elisha says, "I will not leave you." And so they reach the Jordan.

But in the interim, in these two places at Bethel and then at Jericho, there are other prophets, and it seems like they also are keeping on, "Elisha, what's going to happen? Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today? From over you – meaning that till now, you've had his spiritual oversight. But from now on, you will not have it." What does Elisha say? "Yes I know; be still, be quiet. Don't talk about that." Twice this happens. It's an interesting journey – Elisha doggedly following after Elijah, Elijah telling Elisha, "Stop here. I've got to go from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and Jericho to the Jordan, and each time Elisha says, "No, I'm coming with you."

Then they finally reach the Jordan and Elijah turns to the Jordan and he takes his mantle and he strikes it. The Jordan opens and they walk through on dry ground. When they reach the other side, Elijah turns to Elisha and he says, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you?" And Elisha says, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." And Elijah immediately responds and says, "That's a very hard thing." Because he knows that it's not something that he can give. But I think he also knows that this is a pleasing request to God. And so he says, and I think this is prophetically, as he was a prophet, "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."

Then he does see Elijah being taken from him. Then we see the remorse, the sadness, the grief at this parting. He cries out and says, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen." That's the end of Elijah's time on the earth. But as he is taken up, his mantle falls back to the earth and Elisha picks up that mantle. It says in vs. 13, "He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the mantle of Elijah and struck the waters, and said, 'Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' and immediately the same thing happened, and he crossed back across the Jordan. And the sons of the prophets met him because they recognized that the anointing of God was now on Elisha."

What a beautiful handing off of the baton! There are many motifs that we can see from this story: the commitment of Elisha, the loyalty, the love that he had for his mentor, not willing to listen to the people who said, "From now on he won't be there. You'll be alone. you won't have his cover." And he hushed them saying, "This is not the moment for that. I'm going with him. This is my last journey with the one that I have learned so much from." Then picking up the mantle and knowing that the anointing of God is upon him, because the same thing that Elijah did, Elisha was able to do.

Well, lest we look at this narrative and lay it back there in the Old Testament and say: That's a great story and an inspiring one, we need to be able to look at it through our own lenses for the bible is relevant from the beginning to the end for each one of us in the situations that we are facing and across all ages. The bible stays relevant. So we must ask the question: What can we glean from these 15 verses that we ought to learn something from, that we can appropriate in our own lives?

I want to give you a few points and I'm hoping that as I put them out, that you begin to think about them and that the Holy Spirit will then come and do what only He can, in taking the Word and strategically making it fit our own situations and our own circumstances and our own lives.

### **1. Our days are numbered.**

Verse 1 – *and it came about when the Lord was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven.* God was saying to Elijah, "Your time on earth is over. I am taking you up to heaven." The point I'd like for us to land on is that our days are numbered. There is a fixed number of days that we have here on earth. There's a time when a person's life work will be done, and then it's over.

Job 14:5 *"A person's days are determined. You have decreed the number of his months and have set limits that he/she cannot exceed."*

Psalms 139:16 *"All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."*

We don't know how old Elijah was, whether he was ailing and so God was saying, "Okay, your time is up." No! It seems like he was quite well. He walked from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho and then to the Jordan. Nor did it seem that the Lord's anointing had gone from him because he was still able to do a miracle there. God's Spirit was upon him. And yet, though we would look at it and say, "He's quite fine to continue. I'm sure there's still work to do," God decreed that it was time to take Elijah up to heaven.

It came to me as I was preparing the sermon, that you and I too have a date when God will take us as well, when the days that God has ordained for us to be here will be done. It may not be when we are old and unable to do much; it could be when everybody looks at us and says, "My goodness! They were in their heyday!" God has a specific time when He says that's the time given to you and me.

Sometimes God takes people away at the height of their effectiveness. Look at the New Testament: James, the son of Zebedee – hardly had a ministry before he was beheaded. And he was one of the inner circle. You ask the question: How is it? Peter, James and John were the closest, and yet Peter survived for some more time, but James lost his head. Was that all? And it seems that it was. That was the only time that James was given. What about Stephen? The Bible tells us so much about Stephen – that he was a man filled with the Holy Spirit, that he had the ability to articulate and point people through scripture to Jesus, the Messiah. Nobody could argue with him. Yet, snuffed out, stoned to death.

All of us have a set time in this world and we must use it well and fruitfully. Jesus Himself said, "I must do the works of Him who sent Me while it is still day. The night cometh when no man can work." So, we have a start date and an end date that is already set. And during that time we need to be able to do all that God, in His infinite wisdom, knows and knew that we could do and become and speak and act and all those things to fit into that lifetime.

### **2. God invites us to ask things of Him boldly.**

When we think about Elijah asking Elisha, "Ask of me what can I do for you?" I think that was such an open-ended question. It didn't say: Ask of me all that I have, what you want from me." No. Ask what you will. That's the way God opens up His arms to us. He is God and he invites us to ask things of

Him boldly, without any boundaries; except He says, "Ask for the things that are in accordance with My will."

And so, as children of His, sons and daughters who follow after Him, we ought to be walking in His will and asking Him for the things that are huge, that we can ask with boldness to one who can give just as Elisha asked. We may think that Elisha was a greedy person, wanting more fame than Elijah by asking for a double portion. No! What Elisha was really asking was to be like a son of Elijah. Because the double portion was always given to the heir. It was given to the first-born. Elijah had no children. When Elisha was asking for a double portion, he was saying, "If I'm your heir, then I will get a double portion."

Beloved, as we look at the bible, we see people who have asked of God:

- Solomon asked of God for wisdom and God gave him incredible wisdom.
- Bartimæus – What do you want me to do for you? I want to regain my sight.

I wonder whether you and I have become a little careful in the things we ask of God, that we ask of Him things we know He can give, in the sense of giving according to our finite understanding. So maybe our asking of Him is safe. We ask for just a little – a little peace, or bless my life, instead of asking with boldness of our Heavenly Father.

### **3. What we cannot physically do, God can.**

We need to remember that what people around us cannot give or cannot do, God can. As Elisha asked for a double portion, Elijah knew that he couldn't give that, because the anointing of God's Spirit comes from God. What we cannot give ourselves or cannot do ourselves, we need to remember that God can.

What are things that we cannot do for ourselves?

- Maybe salvation for a loved one – I can't save somebody, but God can. So I go to Him and say, "Lord, would You bring salvation to this person?"
- Maybe freedom from an addiction or sin - you cannot in any help though you've tried, but God can.
- Maybe it's reconciliation in somebody's marriage
- Maybe a couple asking for a child – you and me to be able to go to God and say, "Lord, would You grant this wish?"
- Maybe looking for a spouse.

What we cannot physically do, God can. And so, not to limit the things that we can do by the things that are in our power, but realize that when we cannot do something ourselves, that an infinitely powerful God can do it. So to be able to take those things to Him as well.

### **4. Have you picked up the mantle?**

This may be a personal one for many. Have you picked up the mantle? Elisha picked up the mantle as Elijah was taken, and he assumed that now this was his role, the role he had to play. I don't know whether you are in a mentor-mentee relationship, whether you have somebody you are learning from, following somebody who is teaching you. I wonder whether it is time for you to step out, whether God is saying, "This is over. I now want you to start doing this part that is entirely yours."

It's a timing issue, isn't it? Just as Jesus, when He heard that John had been beheaded, began then to open up His ministry. Maybe you've been accumulating knowledge, studying and preparing and waiting for that time. I wonder whether the mantle has fallen and its right there. I wonder whether God is saying, "Pick it up. It's for you. It's time for you to start being your own person. You're coming

out of the shadow of your mentor, and you're going to be walking now under the anointing and power of My Spirit, by yourself."

But also, when we look at this passage, to recognize that there may be well-meaning people telling you that you're going to be alone, you won't have somebody to go to, and all kinds of things that may discourage you. It is time to tell or hush those voices and say, "Be still! I've heard the Lord. I'm picking up the mantle. It's time."

### **5. The moment of faith!**

We look at people whom God has used extensively; we see how God has used them in powerful ways. As Elisha stood there with the mantle in his hand, and he hit the Jordan again and said, "Where is the God of Elijah?" And the God of Elijah answered. And in that answer, and in doing what needed to happen, proved that He is also the God of Elisha. The same thing that happened to Elijah happened to Elijah with the parting of the Jordan for him to walk through.

When we pick up the mantle, there's a moment of concern: Is this right? Am I taking the right step? Is this the time? There's always doubt, but it's also a moment of faith. I believe it's that faith that puts God's stamp of approval on our lives as we take the mantle and go forth to do His will and His bidding.

What was that moment of faith? Verse 13, "He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, 'Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?'"

Notice that he first struck the waters. He was already committed to doing what he had to do, and then expecting God to come through. An integral part of faith is doubt. Faith is overcoming that doubt. As you and I stand on the edge, holding the mantle and saying, "Is this my time?" I wonder whether God is saying to you, "Take that first step of faith, and you will find that I am right there." Where is the God of Elijah? The God of Elijah will be right there with you and with me.

Beloved, what a time it is for more men and women to be picking up the mantle, saying, "Lord, here I am. I'm ready to do your bidding." For we know that today the world needs men and women who will go. The world needs ones who will respond to be pastors and teachers in the church. The world needs pastors. We need ones who will shepherd a flock, who will lead sheep. There is such a dire need. Somehow it seems that in the last ten or fifteen years, there's been a shift from saying: I answered the call of God on my life from the point of it being going into full-time ministry, into a seminary and coming out as a pastor, taking a church, or starting a church – but being willing to lead a group of people and shepherding those people, teaching them. The bible says that we need to make disciples – which is not just to save them but to continue to input into them until they are disciples. Somehow it seems that the focus has moved away from that kind of 'full-time ministry' to a belief that says that everybody is in ministry wherever you are, whatever you're doing. If you're in your work, you're in ministry. I agree, but I'm also saying that there is a need for men and women to follow into the church and be willing to pastor people, to be shepherds. The need is great. The mantle needs to be picked up. You need to take that step of faith to be able to realize that the God of Elijah and Elisha and all the saints who have gone through the ages is with you as well, willing to lead you, guide you, sustain you, anoint you, empower you to do everything that He wants you to do. Our time on earth is finite. There are bookends on either end, and in between now, there's a mantle that needs to be picked up because there is work that needs to be done. The question for you and me is: Will we pick up that mantle so that God's work continues to be done here on earth in the days that we have?

Shall we pray together?

Heavenly Father, help us to number our days, to know that we have a limited number of days on this earth and that you have placed us here for a noble mission Lord, in perfect accordance with Your will. Help us Lord, to walk in it. But even beyond that Master, if there's a stirring of people's hearts today, people who are looking at the ground and saying: The mantle is there before me. I'm scared. I'm not sure. Lord would You let faith arise. Lord, would You let them move under the power of Your Spirit? Would You let them know You will lead them? Help them to pick up the mantle Master, and to be able to follow You so that Your work continues to be done, to think big, to ask big and to allow every dream that You have for people here on earth to be fulfilled. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.