Research: Elijah Ascends

II Kings 2:1, 11, 12

“Elijah was the first great prophet of the northern Kingdom of Israel. He is identified with the period in Hebrew history in which the prophets began to appear as dominant figures to combat widespread apostasy [total departure from one’s faith or religion, a total desertion of faith] and raise the ethical standard of Israel’s religious worship.

“The social discontent generated under Solomon reached its climax at the accession of Solomon’s son Rehoboam to the throne. The kingdom was split when ten of the twelve tribes revolted against Rehoboam’s rule. This rift was an important event in Israel’s history. The United Kingdom was divided (933/32 B.C.E.): the tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the southern Kingdom of Judah, continuing to be loyal to the house of David; the remaining ten tribes formed the northern Kingdom of Israel. These two monarchies went on side by side for the next two centuries. . . .

“Ahab, seventh king of Israel, was one of its most apostate [one who has forsaken church to which he before had adhered; one who has abandoned his religion] rulers. Ahab’s wife Jezebel was a Phoenician princess of Tyre, a fanatic champion of her native deity Baal, and through her influence Tyrian Baal worship with its gross immoralities was introduced into Israel. It flourished widely and threatened to smother the faint monotheism which still remained.

“During this period of almost total apostasy the great prophet Elijah suddenly appeared to pronounce God’s judgment of Ahab’s sinful conduct” (Shotwell 118).

**“**PROPHET**.** A spiritual seer; disappearance of material sense before the conscious facts of spiritual Truth” (*S&H* 593).

“ELIJAH (Heb. "my God is Jehovah"; E-LI-jah)

The first of the great Healing Prophets, he is considered by many

as the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. Just as Jezebel is

world famous for her depravity, Elijah is renowned for his vivid,

courageous denunciation of the corrupt King and Queen of Israel.

He earned the title "The Scourge of Kings," but he could be kind

and gentle too; as for instance, when he helped the poor widow of

Zarephath through the famine and later raised her son when he died.

During a period of great fear when Jezebel threatened his life, Elijah

communed with God on Mount Horeb and learned that He is not

to be found in violent material phenomena such as earthquakes,

wind and fire, but His is "a still small voice." Like Enoch, and

perhaps Moses too, Elijah was translated to the next experience

without going through the portal we call death. His successor,

Elisha, saw him disappear, took up his mantle and carried on the

important work that Elijah had begun” (The Old Testament Made Easy, page 351).

1 And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

“Gilgal. Probably identical with the modern Jiljilia, a place between Bethel and Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim” (Dummelow 229).

“when the Lord would take up Elijah—A revelation of this event had been made to the prophet; but, unknown to him, it had also been revealed to his disciples, and to Elisha in particular, who kept constantly beside him.

Gilgal—This Gilgal was near Ebal and Gerizim; a school of the prophets was established there. At Beth-el there was also a school of the prophets, which Elijah had founded, notwithstanding that place was the headquarters of the calf-worship; and at Jericho there was another [2Ki 2:4]. In travelling to these places, which he had done through the impulse of the Spirit (2Ki 2:2, 4-6), Elijah wished to pay a farewell visit to these several institutions, which lay on his way to the place of ascension and, at the same time, from a feeling of humility and modesty, to be in solitude, where there would be no eye-witnesses of his glorification” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

“*a chariot of fire, and horses of fire*] Compare with this description the notice of the sight which Elisha’s servant ([2 Kings 6:17](http://biblehub.com/2_kings/6-17.htm)) was permitted to behold, when he was terrified by the king of Syria’s hosts. ‘The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.’ There it was in answer to Elisha’s prayer, ‘Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see’, that the encouraging enlightenment was vouchsafed. And here we may well think that it was of God’s grace and as an assurance that Elisha should receive his petition, that his eyes were opened to behold the glory which carried away his master. Henceforth he was sure that that power was constantly near God’s servants, and could say with firm assurance, ‘They that be with us are more than they which be with them’. The vision was a source of strength and encouragement in the labors which were before him with no master at his head. He learnt the source of his master’s spirit” (Cambridge Bible, www.biblehub.com).

12And Elisha saw *it,* and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

“The rending of garments is the traditional sign of grief” (AB.3.195).

“After at least five more years of faithful service this great prophet

was translated, taken up into heaven in “a chariot of fire,” an event

witnessed by his successor Elisha.

 “It was in the wicked Antediluvian Age that Enoch was translated, an

expression of God’s commendation of holiness. And now in the Prophetical

Age, so far away from God, is this repetition of this great truth. . . .

That this Elijah continued to exist was abundantly established by his

appearance, centuries afterwards, in the Mount of Transfiguration. There with

Moses, the great representative of the Law, and Elijah the representative of the

Prophets, is Jesus the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

“Elisha labored for approximately fifty years under four of the kings

of Israel: Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash. Like Elijah, he was the

mouthpiece of God’s will.

The many miracles of Elisha’s ministry, all of which took place after

he received the double portion of the Spirit, evidenced the grace, mercy,

and goodness of God, working blessings to men in the common walks of

life.

At Jericho he purified the waters of a spring;

He multiplied the widow’s oil to the saving of her house;

He comforted the Shunammite woman with the promise of a son;

He raised her son from the dead;

He rendered poisoned pottage harmless;

With twenty loaves he fed a hundred men;

He healed Naaman the Syrian of leprosy, but punished his own

servant Gehazi for abusing his master’s name;

He caused an iron axe head to float;

Elisha’s bones restored a dead man to life.

Elisha fulfilled two of the commissions given Elijah at Horeb: to

appoint Hazael king of Syria and to anoint Jehu king of Israel (II Ki.

8:7–13; 9:1–10). Through Hazael’s wars against Israel, Israel was

weakened; through Jehu the house of Ahab was totally destroyed, the

wickedness of Jezebel against God’s prophets was avenged, and Baal

worship was exterminated in the Kingdom of Israel”