

ELIJAH IN THE WHIRLWIND

Introduction

- 1) One of the great scenes in the Bible is the taking up of the prophet **Elijah** into heaven
- 2) Only two people are taken without experiencing death – Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah
- 3) Let us observe and learn from Elijah *in the whirlwind* – **2 Kings 1-2**

I) Final Confrontation with the Forces of Evil (2 Kings 1)

- A) **Ahaziah** – king of Israel [northern kingdom] – wicked son of Ahab and Jezebel, worshiped Baal (see 1 Kings 22:51-53)
 - 1) Falls through lattice in his upper room and is injured; desires inquiry of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron (Philistine city on Philistine-Judea border)
- B) Elijah intercepts messengers and sends them back with a question [“Is it because there is no God in Israel?”] and bad news for the king [“you shall surely die”] (vv. 3-4)
 - 1) When messengers return, Ahaziah figures out that it was Elijah (vv. 5-8; cf. Matt. 3:4)
- C) Ahaziah twice sends a captain with fifty men; demands Elijah to come down; Elijah calls down fire and burns them up (vv. 9-12); armies were sent to do harm to Elijah
 - 1) In NT, James and John’s appeal to this example was not correct, for the Samaritans did not seek to do harm to Jesus; not a parallel situation (Lk. 9:51-56)
 - a) Must be careful to apply Bible examples accurately to present-day situations
 - 2) In the third attempt, the captain pleads with Elijah to spare him and his men
 - a) Lord tells Elijah not to fear him and to go with him to the king (vv. 13-15)
- D) Elijah boldly tells Ahaziah that he will die for his error, and he does (vv. 16-18)

II) Elijah Taken to Heaven in a Whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1-12)

- A) Elijah and Elisha [chosen to succeed Elijah, 1 Kgs. 19:16, 19-21] travel from Gilgal, to Bethel, Jericho, and the Jordan river (vv. 1-7)
 - 1) Each time, Elijah tries to get Elisha to stay behind – testing Elisha’s devotion?
- B) Elijah rolls his mantle up and strikes the Jordan, dividing it; he and Elisha cross over on dry ground (v. 8)
- C) Elijah asks what Elisha will request of him before he leaves; Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit to be upon him; Elijah says it will happen if Elisha sees him taken away (vv. 9-10)
 - 1) “Double portion” – firstborn son portions (Deut. 21:15-17) from a father (cf. v. 12)
 - 2) Need preachers and brethren today who desire to have a double portion of Elijah’s spirit!
- D) While still talking, a chariot of fire with horses of fire separates them, and Elijah is taken into heaven by a whirlwind
 - 1) Fiery chariot and horses represent the power and presence of the spiritual realm (cf. 2 Kgs. 6:15-17); taken up into heaven by means of a whirlwind

III) The Enduring Legacy of Elijah

- A) Old Testament ends with a prophecy about sending Elijah the prophet (Mal. 4:5-6)
- B) Mentioned often in New Testament
 - 1) John the Baptist came in the “spirit and power of Elijah” (Lk. 1:17)
 - 2) Jesus identified John as “Elijah who is to come” (Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13)
 - a) Jews thought that Elijah would literally appear again (Jn. 1:21, 25; Matt. 16:14; Lk. 9:7-8)
 - 3) Those at the crucifixion misunderstand Jesus as calling for Elijah (Matt. 27:46-49)
 - 4) References to Elijah’s life recalled (Lk. 4:25-26; 9:54; Rom. 11:2-5; Jas. 5:17-18)
 - 5) Elijah himself appears with Moses at Jesus’ transfiguration (Lk. 9:28-36)
 - a) They spoke to Jesus about His coming death, and Jesus’ authority placed above them

Conclusion

Like **Elijah** we need to remain faithful to God in perilous times. If we walk with God we have the promise of meeting the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17)! Will you believe and obey today?