

ELIJAH'S SUCCESSOR

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. Faithful to the Call (2 Kings 2:1-6)
2. Power for the Call (2 Kings 2:7-8)
3. Equipped for the Call (2 Kings 2:9-15)

Background Passages: 1 Kings 19; 2 Kings 2

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

Those who seek to be faithful to God's call do so empowered and equipped by His Spirit.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

When Elisha succeeded the prophet Elijah, he asked for the same Spirit that was in Elijah to be given to him. God granted Elisha's request and revealed His presence through a miracle. Years later when Jesus prepared His followers to begin their ministry, He instructed them to wait for the Holy Spirit, who came upon them and confirmed His presence in miraculous ways.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we have been given the Holy Spirit, we fulfill the mission Christ has given to us and share the gospel with the world, knowing that our strength comes from God's Spirit.

GROUP TIME

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

SETTING: Elijah had been a faithful prophet, obedient to God and consistent in calling Israel to repentance and their own obedience to God. He spoke directly about the sins of the people and performed miracles that demonstrated the Spirit of God was with him. Now the end of Elijah's time on earth was near. He was still following the Lord faithfully, and his protégé, Elisha, was right by his side. The nation of Israel still needed a prophet, still needed someone to declare God's truth to them. God had said it would be Elisha, but how would Elisha fill Elijah's rather large shoes?

EXPLAIN: Obeying the call of God is a weighty task. Sometimes God calls us to tasks or roles we do not feel ready to take on. Imagine you are being asked to fill the role of president. You are the only person being asked to do this, and you must take on that responsibility—you do not have a choice.

DISCUSS: How would you feel if you were asked to be president?
(wait for a group member to respond first; only share your response as a conclusion to the discussion)

TRANSITION: Being asked to fill a role you are not ready for or think you are not equipped for is a terrifying thing. Even on days when you have the most confidence, taking on a task you have little to no skills or experience for is not an easy job. This is similar to the position Elisha found himself in. Elijah had demonstrated magnificent power that obviously came from God. Now, Elisha stood to take on the role of prophet for Israel. Did he have what it would take to fill this role? Only God could empower Elisha to step forward as prophet, and only evidence of God's power in Elisha would give the people confidence to heed his words.

POINT 1

FAITHFUL TO THE CALL (2 KINGS 2:1-6)

NOTES

1 Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. **2** And Elijah said to Elisha, “Please stay here, 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. **3** And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?” And he said, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.” **4** 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. **5** The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.” **6** Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **2 Kings 2:1-6** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 1-3** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the Daily Discipleship Guide [DDG]):

Faithfulness involves remaining **true** to your calling. Elisha was called to be a **disciple** of Elijah and eventually to take his place, so he refused to leave his mentor’s side.

DISCUSS: What are some ways disciples of Jesus should demonstrate their faithfulness to Him? (read God’s Word and pray regularly; obey Jesus’s commands, which are God’s commands; resist and repent of sin and find forgiveness in Jesus alone; tell others about Him; love His church)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 4-6** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

The mark of faithfulness is not a one-time event but a **pattern** of **obedience** over time.

TRANSITION: Elisha followed Elijah on a long journey and refused to leave his side. This faithfulness to his mentor, and ultimately to God, revealed God chose the right man for the job. But as they journeyed, more signs would be revealed.

COMMENTARY

VERSES 1-3 / At the beginning of this chapter, the reader learns where the story will end. Elijah would leave the earth in “a whirlwind”—that was certain. What would happen next was less so. The lingering question was who would take up the mantle that Elijah would leave behind? Who would be equipped to lead the people and proclaim the word of God from this point forward? Whoever would take on the role of prophet needed to be a worthy leader to serve God and the people in this way.

Elisha was already mentioned as Elijah’s successor in 1 Kings 19:14 as God’s comfort to Elijah. The weary prophet felt lonely and burdened because the Israelites did not seem to be turning around to the true God, even after the events at Mount Carmel. Elisha had been following Elijah since his calling (1 Kings 19:21). But here at the end of Elijah’s time on earth, we see Elijah and Elisha traveling from Gilgal to Bethel and Jericho, possibly to say last words of encouragement to the people and “**the sons of the prophets**” there. The mention of “the sons of the prophets” demonstrates that Israel still had a remnant that wasn’t controlled by prophets of idols. Instead, these prophets served God and followed Elijah and would serve as witnesses for what was to come. They knew Elijah was to be taken away and were anticipating whom God would choose to lead next.

At each place they passed on their journey, Elijah told Elisha to stay, but Elisha proved his faithfulness to Elijah and to God’s call by declaring he would not leave Elijah. If the story of Elisha following Elijah sounds familiar, it may be because there is an element of typology for what was to come.¹

There are several similarities between the journey of Elijah and Elisha with the story of Jesus and His disciples. Elisha was like a disciple to Elijah. Elisha followed Elijah and served him. Elisha would see Elijah taken up to heaven. Elisha would know that he had a purpose to fulfill Elijah’s mission, ultimately God’s mission, to bring his

people and the nations to repentance and worship. Elisha is an example of a faithful disciple to Elijah, just as we are called to be faithful disciples to Jesus.

VERSES 4-6 / Repetition in the Bible is always something to pay close attention to. It is commonly used as a literary device to show emphasis or to show completeness or perfection. The remaining verses of this passage of Scripture show the previous traveling event repeated two more times, going to Jericho and the Jordan River.

First, as seen in verse 2, verses 4 and 6 have the same response from Elisha: “**As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.**” Elisha repeated this three times in total, demonstrating his commitment to remain by Elijah’s side. Three times Elijah tested Elisha to see if he would follow through on the journey, and all three times Elisha remained by his side and passed.

Second, as seen in verse 3 and verse 5, the sons of the prophets in two locations asked the same question and received the same response from Elisha. The prophets seemed to reinforce the purpose of the journey the two men are on. It is unclear what Elisha meant when he told the sons of the prophets to be quiet. It’s possible he recognized this as a solemn life event, or maybe he felt the burden of taking over. Regardless, his acknowledgment of what would happen to Elijah was what was important. Elisha knew the time had come for Elijah to leave.

“**The two of them went on,**” walking along, side by side, mentor and disciple, faithful to God and His work as God directed them forward. This pilgrimage, this long journey from place to place, ended at the Jordan River, and that was no coincidence. At this significant spot, God would again demonstrate His power and point out His chosen one to lead and serve Him and His people.

POINT 2

POWER FOR THE CALL (2 KINGS 2:7-8)

NOTES

7 Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. **8** Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **2 Kings 2:7-8** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 7** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Elijah and Elisha's journey brought them to the edge of the Jordan River, a place remembered for a display of **God's** power to provide for His people and to affirm **Joshua** as His chosen leader after Moses.

DISCUSS: What are some physical places that hold spiritual meaning for you? (wait for a group member to respond first; only share your response as a conclusion to the discussion)

EXPLAIN: Use **PACK ITEM 7: CONNECTIONS** and the **VERSE 8** commentary to emphasize the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Elijah, in the pattern of Joshua and Moses, struck the water so that it parted for Elisha and him to pass through, but the power for the miracle came not from Elijah but from God, the **Creator** and **Sustainer** of the world.

TRANSITION: Elijah again demonstrated he was a man of God by using God's power to cross the Jordan as witnesses watched from afar. But now the time had come for Elijah to be taken away and his successor to be empowered for the role of prophet to Israel.

VERSE 7	VERSE 8	VERSE 9
God's power	God's power	God's power
Joshua	Joshua	Joshua
Moses	Moses	Moses
Creator	Creator	Creator
Sustainer	Sustainer	Sustainer
...

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Except the Lord endow us with power from on high, our labour must be in vain, and our hopes must end in disappointment."²

-Charles Spurgeon
(1834-1892)

COMMENTARY

VERSE 7 / When Elijah and Elisha arrived at their destination, **“fifty men”** from among the sons of the prophets at nearby Jericho stood close enough to be able to observe and see what would happen next. They remained at a distance as only Elisha was privileged to walk with Elijah on these final journeys. These people, however, would act as witnesses to what was about to happen. They would corroborate the story of God’s demonstration of power once Elijah was gone and affirm who was the next prophet.

The place where Elijah and Elisha stood was of great significance. They were not in an unknown desert or at an unremarkable shore by the sea but by **“the Jordan”** River. Any Israelite would have remembered what happened there with Joshua and their ancestors one generation removed from the exodus from Egypt.

As seen in Joshua 3–4, at the conclusion of their forty years of wandering in the wilderness on account of unbelief, Joshua led the Israelites into the land that God had promised them. Moses had passed away and Joshua was now the leader, affirmed by God’s calling and soon to be affirmed by God’s power (Josh. 3:7). Joshua listened to the Lord and commanded the priests carrying the ark of the covenant to step into and stand in the raging waters of the Jordan. When they did this, the water was cut off and the entire nation of Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground.

Joshua set up a memorial for the people of Israel to remember that day “so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever” (Josh. 4:24). This historic demonstration of power by God built trust and confidence in those who witnessed it so that they would follow the Lord and His newly appointed leader—Joshua.

VERSE 8 / Next, standing on the Jordan riverbank, Elijah followed in the footsteps of Joshua, and the memory of Moses, as he

took his mantle, or cloak, rolled it up, and struck the river. The flowing water then parted like it did for Joshua, and like the Red Sea did for Moses, as God provided a way for His prophets Elijah and Elisha to cross over **“on dry ground.”** But take note that Elijah didn’t just follow the footsteps of Joshua; he reversed them. Coming from Jericho to the Jordan, Elijah and Elisha passed through the water and exited the promised land. This set up the significance for the parallel event in the next few verses when one of the two crossed back into the promised land.

The men who saw this miracle knew only the Lord God could do such a thing. Yes, Elijah struck the river and it parted, but only the Lord God Almighty has the power to control the land and the seas since He is the Creator and Sustainer of the world. The Lord worked through Elijah, and that same God gives all His people the power needed to accomplish His purposes and mission.

God uses and demonstrates His power to provide a way for His people. For Moses, the provision was not just a passing through but a rescue from slavery, a rescue from death, and hope for a new life. For Joshua, the provision of passing through was for receiving a promised land, a new home, security, and place to flourish. For Elijah and Elisha, the provision of passing through was evidence of God’s mercy to His people that would result in a continued voice to call His people back to repentance and to give hope for tomorrow in God’s presence.

Similarly, God provides a way for us sinners to pass through. Believers enter the promise of eternal life through Christ, who’s death on the cross tore in two the temple veil that separated holy God from sinful humanity. In Jesus we find rescue from our slavery to sin and death, opportunities for repentance and grace, and our eternal home with God in heaven.

POINT 3

EQUIPPED FOR THE CALL (2 KINGS 2:9-15)

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.” **10** And he said, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.” **11** And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. **12** And Elisha saw it and he cried, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. **13** And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. **14** Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over. **15** Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **2 Kings 2:9-15** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 9-12A** commentary to highlight the following doctrine (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

If Elisha was to succeed Elijah as the Lord’s prophet, he knew he would **need** what Elijah had with **God**, perhaps more, so he asked for a double portion as an inheritance.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 12B-15** commentary to explain the transition of leadership between Elijah and Elisha and to emphasize how God equips His people with His Spirit for His mission (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #85: *Mission of the Church:* The church is a sign and **instrument** of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the **crucified** and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the **Spirit** and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the **glory** of God and the **good** of the world.

DISCUSS: **Why do we need the Holy Spirit to fulfill our gospel mission in the world?** (for courage and strength; for seeing opportunities to serve and share the gospel; for wisdom to speak truth in love; for a life that imitates Christ; so the glory of fruitfulness rightly goes to God and not to us)

NOTES

INHERITANCE OF THE FIRSTBORN

In ancient Middle Eastern culture, the firstborn son was to have two shares of the estate of his father. That was his birthright as the firstborn. Moses confirmed these rights for Israel in saying that a father must not show favoritism toward another son in terms of this inheritance because of his love for one wife over another—only the firstborn has the rights of a double portion (Deut. 21:15-17).

COMMENTARY

VERSES 9-12A / Elijah was about to ascend into the heavens, and he allowed Elisha to make a final request. Elisha asked to inherit **“a double portion”** of Elijah’s spirit, two portions of the power Elijah had through God. A firstborn son in ancient times normally received two shares, a double portion, of inheritance from his father (Deut. 21:15-17). As a firstborn son, then, you were the successor of your father. At first glance, there could be a misunderstanding that Elisha was merely seeking power. Some commentators, however, say that Elisha was humble enough to recognize that the role of prophet was a significant responsibility and that he needed as much power and spirit as he could get before he stepped forward into this role.³ Others suggest Elisha was simply asking to be Elijah’s successor.

To this, Elijah responded that Elisha would receive what he asked for if he saw Elijah be taken up into heaven. In other words, God would be the One to make that decision.

Finally, the moment came for Elijah to be taken up. **“Chariots of fire and horses of fire”** came, and Elijah went up to heaven in a **“whirlwind.”** Elisha watched and kept calling Elijah **“my father,”** likely an indication of his love and adoration toward Elijah for the mentoring relationship they had.

VERSES 12B-15 / It was no small task to follow a leader such as Elijah: he prayed and caused the drought upon the land; he brought a widow’s son back to life; he prayed and called down the fire of the Lord to defeat the prophets of Baal; and he parted the Jordan. But Elijah was now gone, and Elisha knew what he had to do—continue the work of a prophet for the Lord.

Faithful to the end of Elijah’s life on earth, Elisha was now left alone with Elijah’s **“cloak,”** a recent symbol of God’s power that resided in Elijah. What would he do? First, Elisha took hold of his own clothes and **“tore them in two pieces.”** He had to leave behind the past to put on what was

new. Then he went back to the Jordan and struck the water with the cloak, just as Elijah had done.

Elisha asked, **“Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?”** This was significant in showing that Elisha desired to rely on Yahweh, the God of Elijah and the God of Israel. He also wanted to know and be assured that God’s power now resided in him. Any doubts he may have had were quickly laid to rest. After striking the water, it parted just as it did for Elijah, confirming that God was with him and for him, and Elisha crossed the Jordan on dry ground, once again entering the promised land.

God answered Elisha’s question in the most clear way possible—God showed Elisha that He was with him in the same way He was with Elijah and their forefathers Moses and Joshua. The God of Israel had indeed given Elisha the inheritance he needed to fulfill his call as prophet.

This was also affirmed by the sons of the prophets. They saw Elijah part the waters so he and Elisha could cross over. The whirlwind must have been too far out of sight, but they understood what they needed to when Elisha parted the waters and crossed back over alone. They stated, **“The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.”** They confirmed as witnesses the passing of leadership from Elijah to Elisha as the man of God.

Remember that the power Elijah wielded was not his own but from God through a connection called his **“spirit.”** This **“spirit”** of power was then passed on to Elisha to continue the Lord’s mission in Israel. It isn’t hard to see a parallel between this **“spirit”** and the Holy Spirit. After Jesus’s ascension, His disciples likely thought, **“Where is the Lord?”** But they—and we—received more than a covering. We received in ourselves the very presence of our Savior in His Spirit. He is our strength and confirmation both individually and as the church for our mission in the world to make disciples of all nations.

MY RESPONSE

Because we have been given the Holy Spirit, we fulfill the mission Christ has given to us and share the gospel with the world, knowing that our strength comes from God's Spirit.

NOTES

HEAD:

We do not always understand God's plan and His purpose. We also cannot see all that He is doing, and this can sometimes cause us to doubt. Yet the Lord is mysterious and wise, He is patient and right on time, He is faithful and loving toward us. When the diagnosis seems grim, the relationship seems like it is fading, the job seems like it will never happen, or that there is no hope on the other side, we have an opportunity to walk faithfully in obedience to the Lord, or we can despair and doubt. Thankfully, we serve a God who knows all things and holds all things together.

In the areas of life where you are struggling to believe God has a plan, what is the next faithful step you should take?

HEART:

God's power can seem foreign to us. We don't see rivers part; we don't see fire fall from the sky; we don't see rods turn to snakes. Sometimes we can minimize God's power without even realizing it. The temptation can be to think, "God doesn't really work that way anymore." There is danger in this kind of thinking, however, because you might start viewing God as a less-than-powerful, slightly moody genie who only answers you when He feels like it. But that is not our God. Our God has the power to raise the dead to life, to change hearts of stone to hearts of flesh, to crush addiction and lust and hatred with the power of the gospel. But He does things in His own timing, with His all-knowing wisdom, for His ultimate glory.

How should knowing God is just as powerful today as He was in Elijah's day change the way you pray, speak, and act?

HANDS:

The Spirit of God is the most magnificent gift believers can have in this life. We can have all the confidence in the world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus to those who do not know Him. If you have ever shared the gospel with someone, you know that it can be a scary task. You don't know how they are going to respond, and you may not be sure what to say. But the same Spirit that raised Jesus to life and that empowered Elijah and Elisha to do miracles lives inside of you. Even if someone hates you for sharing the gospel, you still have the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and He will give you all that you need. Jesus is always with us because His Spirit is always with us, and that is the greatest comfort and power we could ever need.

Who will you share the gospel with this week, knowing you have the power and comfort of the Holy Spirit?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"As Elisha had his request granted on condition that he see Elijah at his ascension, so the faithful who see, that is, believe not only the incarnation and passion but also the resurrection and ascension of Christ into heaven, obtain their request to do greater things in the Spirit than Christ did, as he promised they would."⁴

—John Mayer (1583-1664)

POINT 1: FAITHFUL TO THE CALL (2 KINGS 2:1-6)

+ COMMENTARY

“The overall pattern of the chapter thus displays the form of the journey from Bethel to and back from the Jordan River. It also contains strong elements of a quest motif, for Elisha is aware of Elijah’s impending passing and is determined not only to be with him when it happens but also to receive Elijah’s final blessing. He also desires empowerment as Elijah’s successor. Having accomplished that goal, he retraces his steps and on the way performs miraculous deeds both in Jericho and Bethel. He then moves on to Samaria via Mount Carmel.”⁵

+ COMMENTARY

“That the writer of the story of the ascension of Elijah wished to emphasize the element of the succession of Elisha is made apparent by the role he assigns the ‘sons of the prophets’ in the narrative. They act as witnesses to Elisha’s receiving the mantle of Elijah (v 15) and, by their questioning of the departure of Elijah and the outcome of that incident (vv 16–18), they add confirmation to the fact that Elijah has departed and that his successor’s word is true.”⁶

+ ILLUSTRATION

The quest is one of the most common storylines used in entertainment, gaming, and literature. You can probably name several quest stories off the top of your head. Maybe the characters are looking for a treasure. Maybe they are trying to find the bad guy to stop him. Or maybe they are on a quest to find their one true love. However it unfolds and whatever perilous or challenging things come their way, the goal is the same: to go on a journey to find something.

Imagine what it would take for you to go on a quest. What would the prize need to be to convince you to pack up and head toward this goal? Money, love, discovery, freedom, or something else? It may take a lot of convincing to leave your comforts in search of something potentially greater.

Yet Elisha, as he set out on his quest with Elijah, sought something different than anyone would expect—he sought to share in another’s spiritual experience and power. The hope of receiving this gift was enough for Elisha to follow Elijah wherever he went.

EXTRA

+ ILLUSTRATION

In the movie adaptation of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), Frodo makes a difficult decision to leave the fellowship and travel on to Mordor alone in order to destroy the ring and give Middle-earth a fighting chance against the evil of Sauron. So he climbs in a boat and casts off from the shore, paddling for the other side. Just then, his faithful servant, Samwise Gamgee, comes bursting out of the forest, calling for his master. Sam has put it together that Frodo aims to head off alone, but he won't let him, so he begins wading into the water, even though he can't swim. Frodo says: "Go back, Sam. I'm going to Mordor alone." Sam replies: "Of course, you are, and I'm coming with you." After Frodo saves Sam from drowning and pulls him into the boat, Sam declares: "I made a promise, Mr. Frodo. A promise! 'Don't you leave him, Samwise Gamgee.' And I don't mean to. I don't mean to."

The fictional faithfulness of Sam to Frodo mirrors the real life faithfulness of Elisha to his master, Elijah. Though told three times to stay behind while Elijah went on to his next destination, Elisha declared his intent to remain faithful to Elijah wherever he went. "Go back, Elisha, I'm going on to Bethel, Jericho, and the Jordan alone." "Of course, you are, Elijah, and I'm coming with you."

POINT 2: POWER FOR THE CALL (2 KINGS 2:7-8)

+ COMMENTARY

"God's power was demonstrated again, in a very historic and traditional way, as Elijah miraculously made a path through the Jordan River, reminiscent of God opening the Red Sea when his people left Egypt (Ex 14:21-31) and opening the Jordan as Israel prepared to take the promised land (Jos 3:14-17). An audience of prophets was there to report this miracle to the people."⁷

+ COMMENTARY

"Fifty prophets serve as witnesses as Elijah and Elisha stop at the Jordan. Elijah strikes the Jordan, the river parts, and the two men walk over on dry land. The fact that this group of prophets has seen this miracle becomes important later, for Elisha's repetition of the act will confirm in their minds that Elisha is truly Elijah's successor (cf. 2 Kgs 2:13-15)."⁸

+ ILLUSTRATION

What would you think if someone got on national TV and announced that he or she were President of the United States, but no one actually voted for this person, no one knows who this person is, and there are no witnesses to this person being elected? It would be a laughable thing, wouldn't it? No one can just claim the presidency without going through the constitutional requirements to fill the office. Authority and power are best respected when there are witnesses and affirmations that a person has received the role they are taking on.

The sons of the prophets witnessing what happened with Elijah and Elisha were able to act as witnesses to the rest of Israel that Elisha was the next rightful prophet in Israel. God used them to confirm for Israel and for Elisha that he was indeed Elijah's successor.

POINT 3: EQUIPPED FOR THE CALL (2 KINGS 2:9-15)

+ COMMENTARY

“Elisha then requests what an eldest son would expect of a father (cf. v. 12) as his inheritance: a double portion (cf. Deut. 21:15–17). In this case it is not land that he has in mind, but spirit, for Elisha has already left normal life and normal rules of inheritance behind (cf. 1 Kgs. 19:19–21). Elijah promises that Elisha will indeed receive this gift if he sees his departure—which Elisha duly does (vv. 11–12).”⁹

+ COMMENTARY

“Elijah introduced the cloak as a symbol of succession (2:13) when he first anointed Elisha as his successor (1 Kings 19:19). In the return crossing of the Jordan Elisha calls for the same demonstration of divine provision as was given Elijah (2 Kings 2:14). The same miraculous crossing assures Elisha that he is indeed the true successor to Elijah. The prophetic band in Jericho confirms that Elisha will continue the work of Elijah (2:15–18).”¹⁰

+ ILLUSTRATION

The concept of inheritance is one most of the world is familiar with. In America, we do not often have inheritances based on birth orders, but we do typically have wills. When a parent, grandparent, or someone else who loves you passes away, there is a reading of a will, and the possessions of the deceased are distributed. Most Americans do not necessarily rely on the inheritance that they will receive to ensure they will have a prosperous life.

But this was not the case in the days of Elijah and Elisha. Inheritance was a matter of survival. In a father’s last days, he would often give a blessing to his eldest son. The oldest son would get a double portion, and this would be his binding inheritance in terms of the material given as well as the status as head of the family. As Elijah saw his end draw near, he asked Elisha what he desired, as a father would his son. Elisha’s answer was that of a humble son—he wanted the spirit and status that Elijah had inside of him. This request showed a deep respect and admiration of his spiritual father. It was also Elisha’s way of asking for confirmation that he would be Elijah’s successor. And appropriately, Elijah acknowledged that was for God to answer.

References

1. Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, in *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006) [Logos].
2. Charles Spurgeon, in *Charles Spurgeon’s Classics* (Charles River Editors, 2016) [eBook].
3. Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, *1 Samuel–2 Kings*, vol. 3 in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, eds. Tremper E. Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009) [Logos].
4. John Mayer, *Commentary on 2 Kings*, in *1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles*, eds. Derek Cooper and Martin J. Lohrmann, vol. V in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016) [Logos].
5. Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, *1 Samuel–2 Kings*, vol. 3 in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, eds. Tremper E. Longman III and David E. Garland [Logos].
6. T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, vol. 13 in *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1985), 27.
7. Andrew C. Bowling, “1,2 Kings,” in *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2017), 555, n. 2:7-8.
8. Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, vol. 8 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 1995), 257-58.
9. Iain W. Provan, *1 & 2 Kings*, in *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995) [Logos].
10. August H. Konkel, *1 & 2 Kings*, in *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 380-81.