

Elijah has been a fierce warrior in the conflict between God and evil during the reign of Ahab. He has defeated that king and queen's attempt to establish Baal as Israel's national deity:

2 Kings 2:1a: "Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind"

- Grammatical Usage: "**heaven**" or in the Hebrew, "shamayim" meaning, "abode of God"; "**whirlwind**" or "Ca'ar" meaning, "storm-wind; funnel; power".
- Literal Interpretation: Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to the abode of God by a powerful funnel....
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word, God continually uses His Word.

1. THERE REALLY IS A LIFE TO COME

There is a life beyond this life – death does not end all! Even reason rejects the idea that man, created in the image of God, should live for a brief few years upon this earth, develop personality and powers of intellect and then snuff out like a candle. But revelation via God's Word, makes us sure. For the Christian, death is but the entrance into a higher, fuller, better life. For the non-Christian, too, death does not end all (**Hebrews 9:27**). Elijah was walking and talking with Elisha, when suddenly "**Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind....**" But, hundreds of years later, Elijah appeared and talked to the Lord Jesus (**Mark 9:2-4**); so Elijah was, and is, alive and well.

2. EVERY SERVANT OF GOD, WHOEVER AND HOWEVER IMPORTANT THE WORK, MUST EVENTUALLY REST FROM LABORS

Even Elijah came to the end of his earthly span of service. There were very few witnesses on the earth in those days; good men were scarce, yet Elijah had to go! We are apt only to look at the earthly service of believers and to forget that our earthly ministry is only a preparation for our service in the ages to come! (**Revelation 22:3**).

3. IN ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION WE HAVE AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE WAY IN WHICH A GENERATION OF BELIEVERS WILL BE RAPTURED INTO HEAVEN

V. 11 tells us exactly what took place: he went to Heaven without dying. And there are millions of people who will go to be with the Lord without ever passing through the grave. The two N.T. passages which deal with this are **1 Corinthians 15:51-54** and **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**. Like Elijah, we may not die; but even if we do our bodies will be raised and we shall be raptured, translated, with the living, and so we will be with the Lord forever. Many today are skeptical about this revealed truth, but even the college students of Elijah's day were skeptical about Elijah's translation into the presence of God! (**2 Kings 2:16-18**; compare **2 Peter 3:3-4**).

4. THE TIME, THE MANNER AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR HOME-GOING ARE IN THE HANDS OF OUR LOVING HEAVENLY FATHER

Why emphasize this? Because Elijah, some ten years previously, had actually prayed to die (**1 Kings 19:4**). It is a good thing that our prayers are not always answered in the way we

want! They are always answered, either with God's "Yes", "No" or "Wait", and when Elijah prayed to die the answer was "No", for God had ten more years of service for him. Have you ever prayed to die? Remember the glorious truth of the first six words of **Psalm 31:15**. God's way is always best! He knows, He loves, He cares, and He always gives the very best to His children. We shall go to be "**with Christ, which is better by far**" (**Phil. 1:23**), in God's time, not a moment before and not a moment after.

5. ALTHOUGH GOD TAKES AWAY HIS SERVANTS, HIS WORK GOES ON

Immediately Elijah laid down his mantle Elisha took it up and carried on the work. You see:

- The work we do is God's work, not ours.
- Not one of us is indispensable. We like to think we are, and we say, "What would happen if I were taken?" Well, what would happen? The Lord would choose someone else to carry on His work – indeed, He has that someone else already being prepared for the task.

6. SOMETIMES GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE CERTAIN INDICATIONS THAT THE END OF THEIR EARTHLY COURSE IS NEAR AT HAND

Elijah knew that shortly the Lord would take him. Elisha also knew; so did the college students of Bethel and Jericho and those who gathered on the banks of Jordan (**vv. 3-7**). As we grow older we must realize that our time on earth is getting shorter. Also, by the law of averages, some of us who are still comparatively young and energetic may soon have to leave this earth. Yet others among God's people know that their days are numbered because of bodily sickness or failing powers.

7. WE SHOULD ANTICIPATE OUR HOME-GOING AND PREPARE ACCORDINGLY

We must first put our whole trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His precious blood (**Ephesians 1:6-7**). Having done that, how should our last hours be occupied? Look at this story of Elijah for the answer:

- It seems that he had a great desire to be alone and in solitary communion with his Lord (**vv. 2-6**). How natural to want to be alone with his Lord!
- He carried on with his work just in the normal day-to-day way. He just went on, a step at a time, in communion with the Lord, seeking to do His will and ready when the call should come.
- He was determined to do all the good he could in the short time left to him. He visited the colleges and encouraged the students (**vv. 3, 5, 7**).
- His faith and trust in God were as vital and as powerful at the end as at any time previously. Why, just before he goes to Heaven he takes his mantle and divides Jordan and passes over – **v. 8**! Sometimes when God's people retire they get slack, but not this man!
- He longed to leave a blessing behind him. **V. 9** tells us this, the important words being, "**before I am taken from you...**" By God's grace we can all leave behind us a legacy of love, of virtue and of consistent Christian living.

➤ Conclusion: What legacy are you leaving behind?