

2 Kings 2:1-25**Elijah Taken Up to Heaven**

2 When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So, they went down to Bethel.

³ The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "so be quiet."

⁴ Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho."

And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So, they went to Jericho.

⁵ The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," he replied, "so be quiet."

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan."

And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So, the two of them walked on.

⁷ Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah

took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"

"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

¹⁰ "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not."

¹¹ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

¹³ Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

¹⁵ The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. ¹⁶ "Look," they said, "we your servants have fifty able men. Let them go and look for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley."

"No," Elisha replied, "do not send them."

¹⁷ But they persisted until he was too embarrassed to refuse. So, he said, "Send them." And they sent fifty men, who searched for three days but did

not find him. ¹⁸ When they returned to Elisha, who was staying in Jericho, he said to them, "Didn't I tell you not to go?"

Healing of the Water

¹⁹ The people of the city said to Elisha, "Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive."

²⁰ "Bring me a new bowl," he said, "and put salt in it." So, they brought it to him.

²¹ Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, "This is what the LORD says: 'I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.'" ²² And the water has remained pure to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.

Elisha Is Jeered

²³ From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. "Get out of here, baldy!" they said. "Get out of here, baldy!" ²⁴ He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. ²⁵ And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria.

2 Timothy 2:1-2

The Appeal Renewed

2 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

Intro

We're continuing our **series** on the Old Testament **Book of 2 Kings**.

It would be good to have your **Bibles open** at **chapter 2 of 2 Kings**.

You can follow the **outline** in your bulletin and take notes if you wish.

Let me pray first. Let's pray...

A Question without notice to begin with...

"What if you knew when your last day on Earth was; let's say it is next Sunday; how would you spend your last day?"

[Open for answers]

[Praying; spend time with family; or something else?]

In our Old Testament reading from **2 Kings Chapter 2** – it's the prophet's **Elijah's last day on Earth** – and some **amazing things happen** in that last day

Not least – He passes his mantle on to his protégé, Elisha.

So, we'd better **explain** what a mantle is...

Slide-Mantle Definition

*A **mantle** is literally a **cloak or robe** worn as an outer garment, especially in ancient and medieval times. The word mantle is now used figuratively to represent - **responsibility, duty or authority that is passed on** or bestowed upon someone, often in the context of leadership succession!*

So that's what is happening in this chapter – **Elijah's prophetic office and authority** is being passed on to Elisha

But before we get to that – let's just get the right **context**

Slide-Context

Context

- When we looked at the book of **1 Kings** – last year
- Remember after **Elijah defeated 450 false prophets on Mount Carmel** (1 Kings 18) – he ran away and wanted to die (1 Kings 19:3-5)
- Thankfully - **God had other plans for Elijah** – and God **told Elijah to go back** and **anoint Elisha** as a prophet (1 Kings 19:16)
- And **Elijah did anoint Elisha** (1 Kings 19:19-21) – 865BC
- Now it's been over 10 years – since Elijah called Elisha [Ahab died 853BC - Ahaziah died 852BC – and Joram becomes king in 852BC – and Elijah taken to Heaven in 859BC]
- So, what's been happening **with Elijah and Elisha during that time?**
- As we hit this chapter – **we find out** – **Elijah's has built up some prophet schools** – a bit like seminaries
- And he's been **preparing to pass on the mantle** to Elisha
- So, I want to look at this chapter under **3 headings:**

Slide-Headings

1. Preparing to pass the mantle on (vv1-10)
2. The mantle passed on (vv11-13)
3. The mantle taken up (vv14-25)

Preparing to Pass the Mantle on (vv1-10)

So, our first heading – *preparing to pass the mantle on* – vv1-10

We pick up the story in v1 where **Elijah and Elisha** are on their way from the city of **Gilgal**.

Slide-Map



All the places that Elijah and Elisha travel to in this chapter are significant.

Gilgal was the first place that the **ancient Israelites encamped** when they crossed the River Jordan and entered the Promised Land (Joshua 4:19-20)

It's like the **writer is reminding us of the historical and spiritual significance** of each of these places – before Elijah is taken up to Heaven.

Then in v2 Elijah announces to Elisha that the **Lord has sent him to Bethel** and Elisha is to stay put.

Again, **Bethel** is significant. It means “House of God” and it was where Jacob (Genesis 28:10-22) **had a dream of a ladder/staircase reaching from earth to Heaven.**

But **Elisha** (v2) **refuses to stay put** – he won’t leave his mentor, Elijah’s side and **accompanies Elijah to Bethel.**

And it seems the **prophets at Bethel** know all about God’s plan to take Elijah on this very day (v3)

And Elisha doesn’t want to dwell on that – v3 – so he **tells the prophets to shush!**

Next the **Lord sends Elijah to Jericho** – v4

And again, **Jericho** is a significant place in history.

Jericho is **famous for the miraculous conquest by Joshua** where the **walls of the city fell down** (Joshua 6)

And again, Elisha is told to stay put – but he refuses to leave Elijah’s side (v4)

And again, it seems the **prophets in Jericho** also know all about God’s plan to take Elijah on this very day (v5)

And again, Elisha doesn’t want to dwell on that – v5 – so **he tells the prophets to shush!**

Next stop the **Jordan** (v6)

The **River Jordan** also has profound spiritual significance – the **river was crossed by the Israelites** when they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 3) and the **water was miraculously parted for them to cross.**

And we shouldn't miss the symbolism of the River Jordan here either. When the Israelites came to the Promised Land of Canaan after 40 years of wandering – the **River Jordan was a barrier to entering Canaan**. By the water parting it showed a transition from death in the wilderness for many of the older generation - to life in the new land.

In the same way – **death is a barrier to us** – preventing us from entering our Promised Land of Heaven – but thanks to Jesus – **that barrier of death has been removed. Jesus parts the waters – so we can enter our Promised Land!**

In our hymn today “*Guide me O my Great Jehovah*” – we will sing in the last verse...

“When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside. Death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side”

(pause)

Just like the Israelites – **Elijah and Elisha are faced with crossing the Jordan (v7)** – how will they cross?

It's no problem for God's prophet Elijah – v8 – **he takes his cloak** (his mantle) – rolls it up and strikes the water. And just like in Joshua's day - the **River Jordan parts and they cross over on dry land!**

Then Elijah asked Elisha what he can do for him before he is taken (v9)

Elisha asks that he inherit a double portion of Elijah's spirit (v9)

Now we shouldn't see this as Elisha being greedy and wanting more than Elijah had?

In biblical times, when a father passed away, his inheritance was typically divided among his sons. The **firstborn son** usually received a **double portion** of the inheritance compared to the other sons (Deuteronomy 21:17). It seems Elisha saw Elijah as a father figure (see v12!)

By asking for a double portion, Elisha was basically requesting to be recognized as Elijah's spiritual heir and successor. He wanted to carry on Elijah's prophetic ministry with the same power and authority.

It's also commendable that Elisha asked for a spiritual inheritance not a worldly material inheritance!

Elijah tells Elisha that it's a difficult thing he asks for – Elisha would need to be a faithful and devoted disciple until the very end, witnessing Elijah's departure and continuing to walk in the same spiritual path.

What we have here in these first 10 verses is Elijah preparing and testing Elisha to pass on the mantle to him.

In the last 10 years of Elijah's life – he's not only been mentoring Elisha – but we see there are companies of prophets that Elijah has been mentoring too! These prophets are in Bethel, Jericho and at the River Jordan!

Slide-Preparing to pass the mantle

Application:

For us – How are we preparing to pass on our mantle?

We need to - **understand the spiritual significance of the Bible so we can pass it on to the next generation**

We need to - **recognize the importance of mentoring and discipling others** in their Christian walk – **so that we can pass our mantle on to them?**

Who are we discipling?

Has God put someone in our life to mentor and disciple – but we're keeping our wisdom and experience to ourselves?

What will we do with our last days on Earth?

(pause)

The Mantle Passed On (vv11-13)

Our second heading then – ***the mantle passed on*** – that's vv11-13

Look at v11 – **As Elijah and Elisah are walking along – chariots of fire and horses appear and separate them – and Elijah is carried up into Heaven in a whirlwind.**

There's **no death** for Elijah – He is **rewarded for his faithful ministry** by being taken up to Heaven!

Slide-Elijah Heaven bound



We can imagine God saying to him – ***“well done, good and faithful servant, join in your master’s happiness!”*** (Matthew 25:23)

As much as it’s a joyous occasion for Elijah – it’s a **bitter-sweet moment for Elisha**
 V12 – on the one hand – Elisha cries out to Elijah as he’s taken up ***“Father! Father!”*** – and tears his garments – both in grief at losing his spiritual father and mentor – and in stark reality of the weight of his sin and unworthiness in taking on the role of master prophet!

Yet on the other hand in v13 – **Elisha picks up Elijah’s cloak (mantle)**

Elijah’s mantle has passed on to Elisha!

And Elisha stands on the banks of the River Jordan and **takes on the reality of his new role.**

Application

Slide-Mantle passed on

For us we need to understand that those who were influential in our Christian walk – have passed on the mantle to us!

In my 10 years at St. David's – many faithful Christians have gone to Heaven – and they have passed their mantle on to us.

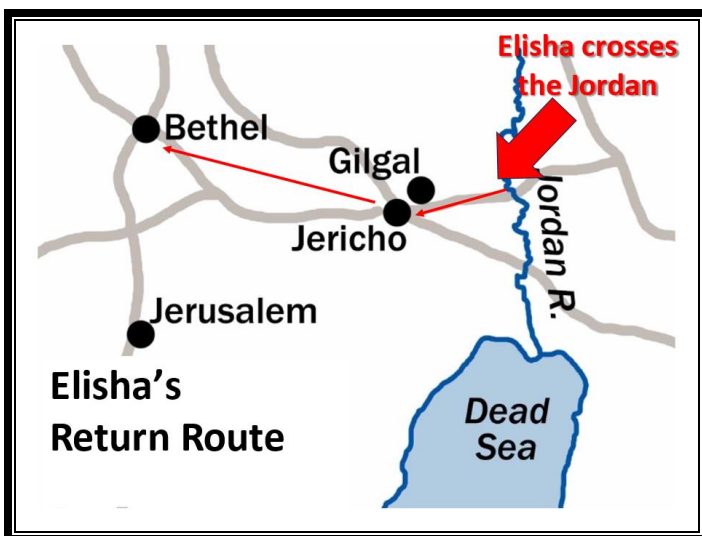
Have we realized that? Have we picked up their mantle?

The Mantle Taken Up (vv14-25)

Our third heading – ***the mantle taken up*** – that's vv14-25

Look at v14 – Elisha takes up the mantle

Slide-Elisha Map



Elisha's standing on the banks of the River Jordan – and he strikes the water with Elijah's cloak (mantle) and he calls out "***Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?***"

And just as they did when both Elijah and Elisha were crossing the Jordan – the waters part again.

This shows that God's power is **not limited to one person** and **not limited to one period of time**. God's power continues with Elisha and continues today!

This miracle is important for Elisha's credibility as Elijah's successor – so God arranges in v15 – for the **company of prophets from Jericho to be there witnessing** – and they have no doubt “the spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha”
And yet those same prophets who have no doubt about Elisha – **also have doubt** – they want to go and check if Elijah has somehow been picked up by God and dropped on some mountain or in some valley.

Application

Aren't we a bit like the prophets of Jericho – **we pray earnestly for someone's health concern and the results comes back “no sign of cancer”** – it's a miracle - and we rejoice – even us Presbyterians! But then we face a decision about our job or finances – **and we doubt God knows what to do?**

(pause)

Elisha has taken up Elijah's mantle

The rest of the chapter **proves this to be the case.**

Elisha **returns the same route** that he and Elijah came to the Jordan

From the Jordan **Elisha goes to Jericho**

Jericho is in a bit of bother – see v19

The water supply is bad and as a result the **land is unproductive**

Jericho has been under a cloud since the Israelites led by Joshua conquered and captured Jericho (500 years earlier) and Joshua declared a curse upon any man who would dare to rebuild Jericho (Joshua 6:26)

Then in the dark days of King Ahab, when everyone was ignoring God's Word, a contractor decided to have a go at rebuilding Jericho (1 Kings 16:34). It cost the contractor (Hiel) his firstborn son and his youngest son.

Now here we are as Elisha enters Jericho – and the water supply is cactus!

But God's Word through God's Prophet – Elisha – brings God's Grace to Jericho!

Look at v21 – **Elisha threw salt into the water and said that God now heals the water!**

The salt is a symbol of cleansing and healing!

Jericho has gone from Curseville to Graceburgh

Application

Isn't that a picture of our great God – and His Grace – in sending Jesus – **who turns our sin into forgiveness – who turns our death into resurrection and eternal life!**

(pause)

And so, to **Bethel** – vv23-25 – **And we have the other side of the coin.**

God's Word - wounds - as well as heals!

What a bizarre little story

As **Elisha walks past Bethel**

Some boys come out of town and **jeer Elisha**

V23 – they say “***Get out of here Badly!***”

Elisha calls down a curse on the boys in the name of God

And God obliges with two bears who maul 42 of the boys.

Some may see this as harsh?

But before we think that way – here's some things we can say:

- a. In the context of Jewish culture – God's prophets represent God and were meant to be respected – not disrespected
- b. God had warned the Israelites back in Leviticus 26:21-22 – if they remained hostile to Him – He would send wild animals against them.
- c. **Bethel** where the incident occurred – was the start of Israel's downward spiral of false worship which began with King Jeroboam 80 years earlier!
- d. God answered Elisha's call for a curse – so God must have thought it warranted it – so we shouldn't question God!
- e. This incident is a demonstration that even though the great prophet Elijah has gone, **God is with his successor, Elisha, in an equally powerful way!**

The two stories of healing the water at Jericho and the bears mauling the boys at Bethel – go together!

God's Word can bring both **healing** (v21) and **harm** (v24); God's Word can bring **deliverance** (vv19-22) or **disaster** (vv23-34). God's Word is a doubled edge sword – it brings grace or judgment – it wounds or heals!

Application **Slide-Mantle Taken Up**

For us today – these two incidents at Jericho and Bethel – show the two sides to the message of the Good News of Jesus

On the one side – there’s the grace of our Lord Jesus – in offering a place in Heaven for all who care to believe in Him – where we bathe in His cleansing living waters – welling up into eternal life

And on the other side – it shows the consequence of rejecting Jesus – like those boys jeering at Elisha – the consequences of jeering at Jesus – is a judgement far worse than being mauled by bears – eternal fire in Hell!

I’m not trying to scare us this morning – but at the same time – we can’t gloss over this – and not talk about the alternative to Heaven – if people reject Jesus! When we take up the mantle like Elisha did – we need to disclose this truth too!

Response and Challenge (2 Tim 2:1-2)

Back to my question from the beginning:

What if next Sunday was your last day on Earth?

What would you do in those final days?

Slide-Response

Well first and foremost – we want to be certain – we’re going to Heaven like Elijah

And to be certain of that – we need to have faith in Jesus’ death on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins – and have faith in Jesus’ resurrection for the promise of eternal life in Heaven

That’s great for us!

But doesn’t the story of Elijah passing his mantle on to Elisha – and the teaching of the Apostle Paul to Timothy in our NT reading from 2 Timothy 2 - to pass on what he is has learnt to reliable people - mean we should do more than just make sure WE’RE going to Heaven?

Isn’t the challenge from Prophet Elijah and the Apostle Paul that we need to passing our mantle on to others.

We’re in our last days on Earth right now

We’ve be in those last days since we were born

We don’t know if we will die today, tomorrow, next week or in 10 years

Isn’t the challenge for us to tell everyone who doesn’t believe in Jesus – what they are missing out on before it’s too late.

Slide-Challenge

Who is our Timothy? Who is our Tina?

There are plenty of Timothys and Tinas in our families who don’t know Jesus

There are plenty of Timothys and Tinas **in our circle of friends.**

There are plenty of Timothys and Tinas **down Canton Beach on the first Saturday of the month when we evangelise.**

AND – there are plenty of Timothys and Tinas – **in Toukley PS, Budgewoi PS, Woongarrah PS, Warnervale PS and Kanwal PS. There's training available.**

Is God – showing us these Timothys and Tinas – and **we're ignoring them?**

Let's pray...

As we reflect on this incredible chapter – where Elijah's mantle is passed on to Elisha. Helps us to be thinking through how we pass on our mantle to the next generation. Thank you for the incredible message of the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ – and His gift of forgiveness and eternal life. Help us to be passing that incredible message on to others, in these last days of our lives... AMEN.