

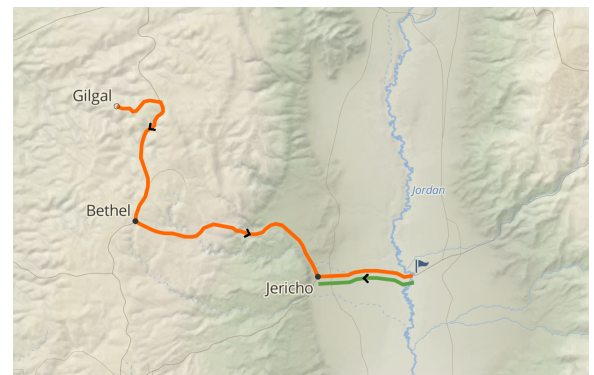
THE DAYS OF ELIJAH

LESSON 5: JEHOVAH PROVIDES FOR HIS PEOPLE (2KINGS 2)

We can't know for sure how long Elijah's prophetic work lasted. Ahab reigned over Israel for 22 years (1Kings 16.29) and his son Ahaziah reigned for 2 (1Kings 22.51). Assuming that Elijah began his ministry near the beginning of Ahab's reign and that his ministry concluded shortly after the death of Ahaziah, Elijah would have served as God's spokesman to the tribes of Israel for 20-25 years. We've already seen how the Lord provided for Elijah during his ministry (see 1Kings 17.4-9; 19.4-8), but how would Jehovah provide for His faithful servant once his ministry was concluded? And how would the Lord provide for Elijah's successor, Elisha?

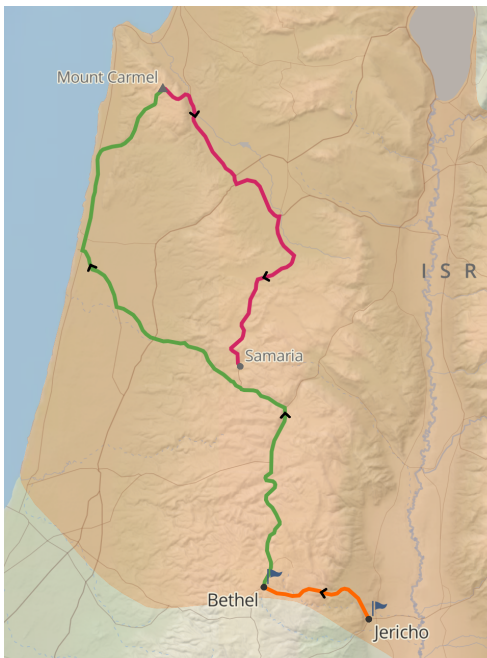
NOTES FROM THE TEXT...

- Vs. 1, while the best known Gilgal was located between Jericho and the Jordan River (Joshua 4.19-20), it would seem that this Gilgal was located north of Bethel.
- Vs. 2, the significance of Bethel, "house of God", went back to the days of the patriarchs (see Genesis 28.17-19). But more recently, it was the location for one of Jeroboam's calf shrines (1Kings 12.27-29). Bethel lay near the border of Israel and Judah.
- Vs. 3, we'd certainly like to know more about the "sons of the prophets" than we do. In fact, about all we know is that such groups existed (see also 2Kings 4.1,38; 5.22). The term "son" here likely doesn't refer to biological descent, but to membership in a guild. Thus, these men were apprentices in training to serve as God's messengers. It's clear from the text that they had received the same revelation (that Elijah would be taken up), that Elijah and Elisha had received.
- Vs. 6, the Jordan River lay about 5 miles to the east of Jericho. This would have been the same area where Joshua and Israel had crossed (see Joshua 3).
- Vs. 8, so far in our study we've seen several parallels between Elijah and Moses. Here we see another where Elijah takes the symbol of his office (his mantle) and uses it to part the waters of the Jordan, much as Moses had used his staff to part the waters of the Red Sea (see Exodus 14.21-22).
- Vs. 9, Elisha's request for a "double portion" does not mean he desired double the power of Elijah. Rather, this is the language of inheritance where the eldest son would receive a double portion of the inheritance (see Deuteronomy 21.15-17 and note Elisha's use of "father" in addressing Elijah in vs. 12.)
- Vs. 10, Elijah's response shows that Elisha's request was not within his power, for it is the Lord who gives the Spirit (see John 3.34). However, strong faith that the Lord would fulfill



the request is also demonstrated.

- Vs. 11
 - » Some speculate that Elijah and Elisha traveled as far as Mount Nebo where Moses died. This would have been 10 miles east of the Jordan. Of course, we cannot know for sure.
 - » Once again, God's power is demonstrated with a demonstration of fire, perhaps in mockery of the storm god Baal. These chariots of fire would later stand in protection of Elisha and his servant Gehazi (2Kings 6.17) and here they show the Lord's protection for His faithful servant even as he is being taken up into heaven.
- Vs. 12, note that king Joash will say the same when Elisha is about to die (2Kings 13.14).
- Vss. 13-15, Elisha had requested the inheritance of the spirit and his crossing back over on dry ground would seem to indicate that this request had been granted.



- Vss. 16-17, their insistence was likely born out of a concern over the dishonor of a corpse lying unburied and by the fact that Elijah had once before disappeared (see 1Kings 18.12).

- Vss. 19-22

- » This episode and the one following demonstrate that Elisha had received the spirit. This account is in connection with the ability to bless, the following with the ability to curse. "The first event confirming the anointing of Elisha demonstrates the power of prophetic blessing to those who affirm the prophet. The second event demonstrates the power of a curse that rests on all who deny him." (NIVAC)
- » We are not given a reason why the water was bad, but it could have been connected with the curse set on Jericho (see Joshua 6.26).
- » If the water was bad because of the curse associated with the city, then Elisha's use of salt would have symbolized the purification that the Lord could bring.

- » Elisha's ability to bring the Lord's blessing on the waters marks him as yet another type of Moses, who had also "healed" the waters at Marah (see Exodus 15.22-26).

- Vss. 23-24

- » The taunting at Bethel may have been because that city was now the center of pagan calf-worship.
- » Elijah was a hairy man (see 2Kings 1.8) so Elisha's baldness may have suggested to some that he didn't possess the same power as his predecessor.
- » It is significant that Elisha's curse was "in the name of the Lord". These youths had dishonored God's prophet, and thus had dishonored the Lord Himself (cf. Deuteronomy 18.19)

- Vs. 25, it was 12 miles from Jericho to Bethel; 75 miles from Bethel to Mount Carmel; 40 miles from Mount Carmel to Samaria.

TAKEAWAYS

In our last lesson we noted a real low point in the life of Elijah: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers." (1Kings 19.4). Surely there were many low points during Elijah's ministry, but he would faithfully continue doing the work of his Lord. But for what hope? This chapter answers that question, as Elijah is taken up to heaven. Perhaps that was why the event happened on the eastern side of the Jordan River, outside of the Promised Land. Israel had rejected her God and the Promised Land would soon be depopulated (see 2Kings 17). Thus, the Lord takes Elijah out of the Promised Land in order to take him to the true inheritance. "But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:16, NASB95)

We also noted in this lesson that Elisha requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit (vs. 9). In effect, Elisha was requesting the power necessary to fulfill the mission the Lord had laid on him (see 1Kings 19.15-17). The Lord provided Elisha with the power he needed, the power to both bless (vss. 19-22) and the power to curse (vss. 23-24). We serve a God who provides all we need to accomplish His work (see Ephesians 4.11-13; 6.10-11).