

Transfiguration of Our Lord

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2Elijah said to Elisha, "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. 3The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you." and he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent. 4Elijah said to him, "Elisha, say 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." 5The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent." 6Then Elijah said to him, "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. 7Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. 8Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground. 9When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." 10He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." 11As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. 12Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore

them in two pieces.

DIAGNOSIS: The Forgotten Promise

Step 1:Initial Diagnosis: (External Problem) : *Doing Evil in the Sight of the LORD*

During the time Elijah spoke the word of the LORD, King Ahaziah fell and was injured. He sent messengers to inquire if he would recover from his injury. However, he sent messengers to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to get his answer. Elijah the Tishbite stopped those messengers to ask if they went to Ekron because they thought there was no God in Israel (2 Kings 1:2-4). After Ahaziah died, Jehoram son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD (2 Kings 3:2).

Step 2:Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Worshipping the Wrong God*

The leaders of Israel in Samaria served Baal and worshiped him. They provoked the God of Israel to anger (1 Kings 22:53). So the leaders and the people needed a prophet, someone to speak God's word to them. Elijah was that prophet, and the greatest of the prophets.

Step 3:Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *God Has to Deal with Those Who Do Evil*

However, Elijah, like all people, came upon his time to die. He too did not always do what God commanded him to, or approve of what God did. So he also had dishonored God and had to die. But the people in their wandering needed someone to speak God's word of promise to them, or they too would remain lost from God, which is what death does to all who do not fear, love, and trust in God.

PROGNOSIS: Promise Fulfilled

Step 4: Initial Eternal Solution : *God Deals with Those Who Do Evil by Giving Us Jesus*

God's word of promise—to have the seed of Adam tread on the head of the devil, to have the descendant of Abraham be a blessing to all nations—needed to continue to be told, and the people preserved from God's judgment. That was Elijah's job but was now to be passed on to Elisha. Together they retraced backwards the journey of the people of Israel into the land of Canaan, from Gilead, their first encampment, to Bethel (the house of God), to Jericho, and then back across the river Jordan. Here Elijah made a promise to Elisha, though a promise with a condition. Elisha had to see Elijah taken up into heaven get the promise, namely, to inherit a double share of Elijah's spirit. That spirit was Elijah's energy and authority as a prophet (Walter Brueggemann). Elisha wanted to inherit what belonged to the first born son, as if he were Elijah's eldest son. Usually the father, if he had two sons, would divide his property into thirds. Each third was a portion. The first born son got two portions, the other son one portion. So the eldest son got a double portion. Elisha saw Elijah taken up by a fiery chariot in a whirlwind. He got his inheritance, as illustrated by the Moses-like act of hitting the Jordan with his rolled up mantle and having the waters part for him.

The last and final inheritor of God's promise made to Adam and Abraham was Jesus, who became the person who spoke God's promise of resurrection and mercy to all people. His death and resurrection are known as his crossing of the Jordan. Jesus brings us to God by conquering our death, by silencing the law that judges against us, and by giving us faith in him as our righteousness.

Step 5: The Internal Solution : *We Are Given the Spirit Who*

Creates Faith in Us, like Happened to Elisha

When we hear Jesus give us his promises, the Spirit, the same Spirit that Elisha inherited, is given to us so that faith in Jesus is created in us. It is trust in Jesus that overcomes our sin, the same evil that was done in the sight of God, namely, trust in some other god, something other than God the Father of Jesus to give us life and goodness in life. Jesus is the one who brings us to God by giving us mercy, by giving us his death and resurrection, and by giving us faith in him.

Step 6: The External Solution : *We Act in Faith in Love in the Sight of God*

Elisha's work was to get people to trust God's mercy, to trust God's forgiveness of them, all for the sake of the promise he made to Adam and Abraham. So Elijah appears with Moses, next to Jesus, as one who kept telling the promise of God to the people. Elijah is there as one who testified to Jesus as the one who fulfilled God's promise. He too is saying, "This is Jesus, the Son of God. Listen to him!" When we listen to Jesus, given faith by hearing his promises, we then act with love according to that faith. That is, we act with love towards others, doing things for their benefit, using what we have to serve them. We too become those who tell others God's promise of mercy in Jesus.