

A Chronicle of Legacy
2 Kings 2:1-14

Slide 1

We've followed Elijah through great and challenging times and some even greater miracles.

We've reflected on circumstances where life got the best of him, but, by God's grace, he was able to overcome those challenges and live the life to which God called him.

Were we to read the entire chronicle of Elijah's life, we'd see even more adventures, yet of all the adventures of his life, none comes close to this final one.

We might call it the art of dodging death, but even in this adventure, the chronicle of his life teaches us lessons about the necessity of, and power in, leaving a legacy.

Slide 2

Now, dodging death puts Elijah in a rare category. Only two people in all recorded history have ever exited earth without passing through the jaws of death.

Enoch was the first. Genesis 5: 21–24, "When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away."

Elijah was the second. Even Jesus didn't share this special means of grace with His Father.

Jesus tasted every dreg that death had to offer. He tasted its pain. He felt its abandonment and He experienced its loneliness.

But not Elijah. Elijah was whisked away on a chariot of fire. Yet, the remarkable part of Elijah's story is that he knew he was going to be taken away.

Now, this wasn't a secret. His protégé, Elisha, and all the prophets, in the places he traveled during the last days of his life knew, too.

2 Kings 2:3, "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."

Which makes me wonder: What would I do if I knew today was going to be my last day on earth? I know I certainly wouldn't wear a mask!

Even though they knew Elijah would be leaving them, the text doesn't say whether Elijah, Elisha, or any of the other prophets knew HOW God was going to take him.

Therefore, we must assume they all thought Elijah would die just like every other human.

Think about it. What would you do if you knew this was going to be your last day on earth? Would you want a big family reunion with all the kids and grandkids around?

Or would you want to spend the day in quiet reflection with those closest to you, not being bothered by the outside world.

Still others might busy themselves checking things off their bucket list, although I don't know how much one could really accomplish in twenty-four hours.

Yet, Elijah decided to take a tour of the countryside. And, in following Elijah's journey, we discover the significance of the people, the places, and the priorities that define our legacies.

Slide 3

First, we learn that relationships matter. Our lives are shaped by the people around us as we help shape their lives. For better or for worse, our lives make a significant difference.

When we left Elijah last week, he had run into the wilderness afraid of Queen Jezebel where he entered a period of deep depression. It was during this time that he had an encounter with God.

God refreshed Elijah and reminded him of his call and purpose. He then compelled Elijah to go and not only anoint a new king in Aram, but anoint a successor for himself, a young man named Elisha.

And upon being anointed, Elisha goes "all-in" with Elijah. He begins a ten-year enrollment in the Elijah School of Prophetic Ministry.

It was during this time that Elijah developed a special relationship with Elisha. And for ten plus years, Elijah pours himself into the young prophet.

Elisha witnesses as Elijah continues to confront the evil and the excesses of Israel's leaders. Facing down, yet again, King Ahab, and eventually Ahab's heir to the throne, Ahaziah.

Elisha watched as Elijah called down fire from the sky, confronted false prophets, and challenged the status quo. Elisha had a front-row seat for some of the most powerful mentoring in history.

We, too, have an opportunity to pour ourselves out into the lives of others. There are "heroes" among us, and you know them.

It may have been a teacher that opened your eyes and your mind in a way that no teacher had done before.

Or, perhaps it was a grandparent whose kindness and wisdom warmed you during the darkest of moments in your life.

Maybe it was a nameless stranger who reached out with compassion at a time when life seemed hopeless.

All of us have been influenced by others during our life's journey. Those who inspired us to achieve, to give back to others, and to live a life of significance are, who I call, Elijahs.

Some have touched the lives of millions with their commitment to the values of charity and empathy while others perhaps only a few. But it only takes one person to change the course of history for another human being.

Let me ask: Who is your Elisha? To whom are you pouring yourself out? Who is the person that's learning as you live your life, and more importantly, what are they learning?

But it extends beyond ministry. It matters at work. It matters in the community. It matters at home.

The people who poured themselves out for us, and those for whom we pour ourselves out are significant to the legacy we leave.

Slide 4

So, not only are people significant, but places are significant, too.

Elijah, rather than hiding himself away on this last day of his earthly life, found it imperative to visit four important places: Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and the Jordan River.

But, why these places? Let me tell you... Gilgal is where the Israelites camped just after they crossed the Jordan River. It was the beginning of their time in the Promised Land. It was a place of safety and security.

Then, Elijah went to Bethel. Bethel was the first place that Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, built an altar. It was to Bethel that Abraham often returned to encounter God. It was a place of prayer and worship.

Next, on the journey of this final day of his life, was Jericho. Jericho was for the nation of Israel what D-Day was to the Allied Forces in World War II.

Jericho was the place of battle, and perhaps Elijah relived the battles of his own life as he walked the streets.

Finally, he arrived at the Jordan River. The River Jordan was the place of crossing-over. It represented where the Hebrew people came from; it represented the fullness of God's promise.

It was at the Jordan that Elijah remembered the many times God faithfully delivered him. Those times of deliverance where he learned to walk, not in his own strength, but in God's.

We have those places in our own lives. We all have a Gilgal—the place where we began our faith journey.

For Elisha, it was a field outside his home where he encountered Elijah and committed his life to God.

Then came Bethel. For Elisha, Bethel was the years spent in training, learning how to be a prophet, carrying the prophet's coat and caring for his needs. He learned how to wait. He learned how to pray.

Remember your own Bethel? It was there you began to learn what it meant to sacrifice, to surrender things dear to you.

Perhaps it was the loss of a child. Maybe it was the loss of a spouse, or a job or business, or a lifelong dream never realized. It was in those moments you learned how to pray, how to commune with God.

Then, there's Jericho. We've all fought battles in our lives. Some of us are still fighting them. Battles with rebellion, with addiction, with our thought life, with doubt, with the flesh.

We've been to the battlefield. We've encountered the enemy. Sometimes, we've won. Sometimes, we've lost. But we battled, or we battle still, and in the midst of the battle, we're reminded that God's with us because we can remember.

Certainly, we'll all come to our own Jordan. It may be decades away, or it may be as close as the next breath. But, there's another kind of death, and that's death to self.

It's in this death that we find peace in this life. Yes, we'll cross the Jordan one day, but we're reminded that if we want to be Christ's disciple, we must take up our cross and follow Him.

Matthew 10:38, *"Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me."*

Where is the place you died to self? Was it at the cross of Christ where you first learned the cost of discipleship? Where you discovered the empty tomb and first encountered Jesus?

Slide 5

Conclusion

Just like Elijah, we have places that define our legacy as the body of Christ.

And the significance of our faith to our legacy can only be measured by how significant we make it a priority in our own life.

As Elisha made that final journey with Elijah, Elijah continually encouraged Elisha to stay put. All along the way, Elisha renewed his commitment that he was “all-in.”

I don't think Elijah was trying to get rid of his apprentice as much as he was testing him to see how committed he was to the call, and Elisha passed the test.

He stayed by the prophet's side, and even as he did, he caught a glimpse of the power of legacy.

We can't pass on the legacy of faith, if faith hasn't been the priority in our lives. Notice I didn't say “a” priority, I said “the” priority.

Elisha went all-in when Elijah came along. Elijah threw his mantle on the younger prophet 10 years earlier and Elisha wasn't going to be turned aside now.

There are many issues that can distract us from the main thing. There are those matters that we make the main thing, and there are those items that we put on a level plane with the main thing.

None of these are bad, mind you. Many of them are, in fact, good and healthy, but they're not the main thing.

Many of us build altars at AT&T Stadium or Globe Life Field, or we build an altar on the golf course, or at the deer camp, or the office, then we align all of those altars alongside the altar of our faith.

But, that's not an "all-in" faith. That may offend you, but my task is not to make you feel good or be comfortable.

My task is to help you grow in discipleship—to become more Christ-like, and THAT'S the legacy we're meant to pass on.