

BIBLE BRIEFING

“Jesus the Baptist”

Second Kings 2:1-14

2 Kings 2:1 And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

2 Kings 2:2 Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to Bethel.

2 Kings 2:3 Now the sons of the prophets who *were* at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent!"

2 Kings 2:4 Then Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they came to Jericho.

2 Kings 2:5 Now the sons of the prophets who *were* at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" So he answered, "Yes, I know; keep silent!"

2 Kings 2:6 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So the two of them went on.

2 Kings 2:7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing *them* at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan.

2 Kings 2:8 Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled *it* up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

2 Kings 2:9 And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."

2 Kings 2:10 So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. *Nevertheless*, if you see me *when I am* taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be *so*."

2 Kings 2:11 Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire *appeared* with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

2 Kings 2:12 And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces.

2 Kings 2:13 He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan.

2 Kings 2:14 Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where *is* the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.

We're studying *The Book of Acts* on Sunday mornings. We've been building-up to this coming Sunday's study on the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

You can call it the baptism with the Spirit, the gift of the Spirit, or the filling of the Spirit; the expression is not as important as the experience.

There is an experience taught in Scripture that goes by these several names. It is an experience with the Holy Spirit that is separate and distinct from salvation. It is one thing to be born of the Spirit; it is yet another to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. It is the experience with the Holy Spirit by which the Holy Spirit comes upon you to empower you for your witness and service. We want to understand something about this vital experience.

Illustrations are always helpful to illuminate spiritual truths. Our text in Second Kings provides a wonderful illustration for us of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Elijah was taken into heaven, leaving his disciple to carry on the work of the ministry. After he was taken into heaven, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciple to empower him to do the work of the ministry, and to actually do more than his master had done.

You probably already see the illustration! Jesus was taken into heaven, leaving His disciples to carry on the work of the ministry. After He was taken into heaven, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples - in Acts chapter two - empowering them to do the work of the ministry, and to actually do more than their Master had done.

The place to start is not with the baptism; **it is with the Baptizer!**

Elisha is typical of you and I, and notice what he says throughout this text: in verse two, in verse four, and in verse six he says "I will not leave you!" Elisha was a disciple who said "I will not leave you" to his master, even though he knew his master was being received into heaven.

You and I want to be disciples who say "I will not leave You" to our Master, even though Jesus has been received into heaven.

We're not talking about apostasy when we talk about leaving Jesus. We're not talking about backsliding into sin when we talk about leaving Jesus. Jesus, when He wrote to the church at Ephesus, said,

Revelation 2:2 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

Revelation 2:3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

Revelation 2:4 Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.

The disciples at Ephesus were not apostates or backsliders. They were sincere believers who were busy serving their Lord. Nevertheless, they had left their first love. It wasn't a matter of sin or service; it was a matter of singleness of heart. Jesus was not the single most important pursuit of their hearts as He once was. They were told to remember when He was, to return to that first love, and to remain there.

You and I are not apostates or backsliders... Nevertheless we can leave our first love. It isn't a matter of sin or service; it's a matter of singleness of heart. Jesus must be the single most important pursuit of our hearts.

In our text Elisha is a disciple whose master is the single most important pursuit of his heart. We can learn from him what it means to have singleness of heart towards Jesus by asking a series of questions based on Elisha's actions.

Is Your First Love Overwhelmed With Other Priorities?

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2 Kings 2:2 Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to Bethel.

One of the characteristics of first love is that it supersedes all of the other priorities in your life...

It was common knowledge that Elijah would be leaving earth. Elisha was to be his successor. Many preparations could have occupied Elisha's heart and time. Yet he considered the short time he had left to spend with his master superior to any other preparation or priority. How we prioritize says whether we are living in our first love for Jesus or have left it. We all have many important priorities... But none should overwhelm us. The short time we have each day to spend with Jesus ought to be superior to any other preparation or priority.

Why does Elijah continually suggest to Elisha that he stay behind? It is another characteristic of first love. First love is not forced love! It is free to choose its priorities. It shouldn't be forced. While I am all for discipline, spending time with Jesus is not the creation of a new habit pattern, but the expression of the heart's passion.

Is Your First Love Obscured By Other People?

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2 Kings 2:4 Then Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho." But he said, "*As* the LORD lives, and *as* your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they came to Jericho.

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Twice other believers addressed Elisha. They said the same thing on both occasions: "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?" Their focus is on Elijah's absence, while Elisha is seeking to focus on his master's presence.

You and I should be aware of the presence of our absent Lord. When He is understood to be present at all times your heart is set on knowing His will and fulfilling His purposes. Other people, even believers, can obscure the sense of His presence in your life. We should be encouraging one another to be looking at Jesus rather than at our circumstances and trials!

Is Your First Love Offended By Provings?

2 Kings 2:6 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and *as* your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So the two of them went on.

2 Kings 2:7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing *them* at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan.

2 Kings 2:8 Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled *it* up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

This is now the third time that Elijah sought to discourage his disciple from following him. It becomes clear in verse nine that Elijah wanted his disciple to follow him... Yet he acts like he is discouraging him. He was proving the perseverance of Elisha's love.

First love endures provings. It must be in the end as strong as it was in the beginning or else it isn't first love anymore.

Elijah kept asking Elisha to stay behind... Anyone who has ever been deeply in love knows that he was really asking him to **not** stay behind! As I said, first love is never forced love. It gives the opportunity to freely choose - hoping that the choice will be to stay.

Before we talk about the baptism with or the gift of the Holy Spirit, it's good that we talked about the Baptizer with or the Giver of the Holy Spirit! Jesus is, or should be, our all consuming passion. We don't study the baptism with the Spirit for what we can get; we study it because of the One who gives it.

Elisha's master was received into heaven. Elisha received from heaven God's Spirit and power to continue his master's ministry. Your Master, Jesus Christ, has been received into heaven. You are promised from heaven God's Spirit and power to continue your Master's ministry:

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

John 14:12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

Elisha asked for the Spirit in double measure upon his life. Jesus promised His Spirit in greater measure upon your life. He promised you who are born of His Spirit the baptism with His Spirit.

Prior to salvation God the Holy Spirit is with you as an unbeliever, seeking to lead you to saving faith in Jesus:

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—

John 14:17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

God the Holy Spirit was "with you." When You were born again of the Spirit, He came "in you." After the resurrection of Jesus the Spirit came into the disciples and they were born again:

John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The word "receive" is in the present tense. They were at this time receiving the indwelling Spirit of God. The obvious and correct meaning of these words is that the disciples received the Holy Spirit at this point - He came into them.

- being changed to bring change -

Yet it wasn't until *after* this event that Jesus promised His disciples the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:4-5, Jesus told those who were born of the Spirit to wait in Jerusalem for the baptism with the Spirit. They were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. That means the baptism with the Holy Spirit occurred *after* their being born again.

There are other passages that confirm the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a separate experience from salvation. Paul the Apostle, for example, was born of the Spirit on the road to Damascus, but didn't receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit until Ananias laid his hands on him. The people of Samaria, in Acts chapter eight, were born of the Spirit, but didn't receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit until Peter and John prayed for them. In Acts chapter nineteen the disciples of

John at Ephesus were born of the Spirit, then subsequently received the baptism with the Holy Spirit as Paul laid his hands on them.

What is this baptism with the Spirit, and what does it do? It is the experience of the Holy Spirit coming upon you to empower you for your witness and service. The Holy Spirit is with you before you are a believer, seeking to lead you to Jesus; He comes in you at the moment of salvation, and you are born of the Spirit. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is His coming upon you.

In his book, *Living Water*, Pastor Chuck uses the following wonderful illustration. He says,

"If I should place an empty glass next to a large pitcher of water, this pitcher would be... "with" the glass. If I start pouring the water from the pitcher into the glass, the water is now "in"... this glass. As the glass fills with water and I continue to pour water into it, the glass begins to overflow. The water is now "upon" or overflowing... the glass... you started out with... moved to [in]... and wound up with the [overflowing]."

So it is with the Holy Spirit in our lives. He is first "with" us, He begins to dwell "in" us, but as the Lord continues to pour out His Spirit "upon" us, He begins to overflow from us.

How is this baptism with the Holy Spirit received? **It is received by faith as you simply ask for it!**

In the Gospel of Luke, Chapter Eleven and verses nine through thirteen, Jesus says,

Luke 11:9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Luke 11:10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Luke 11:11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?

Luke 11:12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

Luke 11:13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Who are you to "ask...seek...[and] knock" for in these verses? God the Holy Spirit.

And who is it that "asks...seeks...[and] knocks" for God the Holy Spirit? A son, a child of God! Those who have already been born again and in whom God the Holy Spirit indwells are instructed and even urged to go on asking for God the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon their lives!

You are already a son or a daughter when you ask; God is already your Father in heaven. From heaven He desires to pour His Spirit upon you in greater measure.

Elisha asked for the Spirit to be given him in greater measure. He received by faith what he asked for.

2 Kings 2:11 Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire *appeared* with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

2 Kings 2:12 And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces.

Elijah had told his disciple that his request would be granted if he saw him taken into heaven. As Elijah is being received into heaven, Elisha claims that promise by faith, stating in effect "I see you being taken; I trust in your word. I am therefore expecting your Spirit to be poured out upon me." As you ask for God the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon you have faith that He will be!

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2 Kings 2:14 Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where *is* the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.

Returning to the uncrossable Jordan River, Elisha struck it by faith in the power of God's Spirit. He determined to walk by faith in the power of the Spirit, depending upon God to make his way clear.

"Receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit is like believing in Jesus for salvation. It is a gift of God to be received by faith. It is not something you deserve or earn, and it is not a reward for good works. It is God's gift to us, a gift of grace to be received by faith."

"No one begs for a gift; you simply receive it... What's the procedure? [The Father] gives the Spirit to His children who ask. You don't have to reach some exalted standard of holiness nor must you do something extraordinary. Just ask. It's a gift. Ask, and then receive by faith the promise of God" (Pastor Chuck).

What hinders your asking?

1. Many believers go to great lengths, even taking Scripture out of context, to prove that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is not an experience you should ever ask to receive.
2. Others are hindered in their asking because they expect or desire some supernatural sign that God has answered their prayer.

Don't let these things hinder your asking! Ask in faith that God would baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and then receive by faith His promise to you. It is His dynamic power falling upon you, then overflowing from you, that brings boldness and power to your witness and service for Jesus Christ.

- being changed to bring change -
If you're still struggling... Maybe it's a first-love issue.

