

Lesson 66 - OUR MANTLE IS CHRIST *2 Kings 2:1-14*

(2 Kings 2:1-7) - Elijah has come to the end of his ministry as God's prophet. In *1 Kings 19:15-21* the Lord revealed to Elijah that He had chosen Elisha to take his place as the prophet of God to Israel. It is revealed here that "*the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind.*" It is revealed later that when Elijah and Elisha crossed over the Jordan River that "*there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven*" (*2 Kings 2:11*). There is much speculation about this miraculous event. Clearly it was God's power and work alone and not man's. Some believe that Elijah was taken by God directly into heaven without experiencing death and is waiting there to return to earth as predicted in *Malachi 4:5-6*. It is probably more likely that the Lord merely removed Elijah from one place to another on earth as He did with Enoch (*Gen. 5:24*) and Philip (*Acts 8:39-40*). Christ stated that the prophecy of *Malachi 4:5-6* was fulfilled by the coming of John the Baptist (*Matt. 11:13-14; 17:10-13; Mark 1:2-4; Luke 1:13-17; 7:24-27*).

Elijah was considered to be the prime example of the prophetic message of the Old Testament (*Luke 24:27,44-47*). John was the last of the Old Testament prophets and the prophet who was sent of God in the spirit of Elijah and all the true prophets of God to prepare the way of the Lord (*Mal. 3:1*). When the Lord took Peter, James, and John upon a mount to pray where He was transfigured, He appeared there with Moses and Elijah. They spoke of His death which He would "*accomplish at Jerusalem*" (*Luke 9:30-31*), showing that the spirit of Moses (the law) and Elijah (the prophets) was revealed in the message of the Gospel of salvation by God's grace based on the merits of Christ's obedience unto death, His righteousness accomplished and imputed to His people.

(2 Kings 2:8) - Elijah's mantle was a cloak, a covering, that symbolized his calling and authority from God to be God's appointed prophet to the nation. In biblical times, a mantle was typically a large, loosely fitting garment made of animal skin, probably sheepskin. Prophets were known for wearing mantles as a sign of their calling from God (*1 Kings 19:13*). The prophet Samuel wore a mantle (*1 Sam. 15:27*). When the Lord revealed that Elisha would follow Elijah as God's appointed prophet, Elijah "*cast his mantle upon*" Elisha (*1 Kings 19:19*), the mantle being an indication of his authority and responsibility as God's chosen spokesman. Elisha was not confused as to what Elijah was doing; the putting on of his mantle made his election of God clear.

Here we see Elijah taking the mantle and striking the waters of the Jordan River so that the waters divided and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. Unlike what we often find in the fables and myths of men, the mantle was not some kind of magical cloak. The mantle was a symbol of the power, authority, and truth of God which we find in fullness in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. As the power of God divided the waters of the Red Sea so that the people could cross upon dry land, the power of God symbolized in the mantle divided the waters of the Jordan so that Elijah and Elisha crossed on dry ground. These waters symbolize our sins that would drown us were it not for the power of God's grace in Christ and based on His righteousness (*Rom. 5:20-21*).

When we think of a cloak or covering, it reminds us of the righteousness of God that legally covers us so that we are justified before God and in right standing with Him. This is the imputed righteousness of Christ for every true believer. The mantle can also be seen as a symbol of the anointing of the Holy Spirit Whom God so graciously gives to all whom He brings to faith in Christ, the people of His choosing (*1 Thess. 1:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9*). Our mantle, which is Christ, is every true preacher's and every true believer's assurance of forgiveness of all our sins by the blood of Christ whereby God will not impute our sins to us (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-34*).

Our mantle, which is Christ, establishes the authority and power of the message of the Gospel which we witness to the world.

(2 Kings 2:9) - Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him before the Lord took him away. Knowing the difficulties that Elijah had faced, Elisha asked for a *“double portion”* of the grace and the gifts that God had given Elijah. This was not a request of pride and ambition, but one of humility. It was as if Elisha said, “Elijah, you are twice the man that I am. I will need a double portion of your spirit if I am to do this task.” In the ministry of God’s truth to a sin-cursed, hostile, and dying world, we ask with the apostle, *“Who is sufficient for these things?”* (2 Cor. 2:16). Moses said unto the Lord, *“If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence”* (Ex. 33:15). Paul wrote, *“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God”* (2 Cor. 3:5). No man naturally has the power and grace to stand firm and preach the Gospel truth that is so hated by the world (John 3:19-20; 15:18–16:3,33). The Gospel truth must be revealed to us and sealed upon our hearts.

(2 Kings 2:10-14) - When Elisha saw Elijah taken up by God into heaven, he took off his own clothes and tore them in two pieces and took up the mantle that fell from Elijah. This is a fitting symbol of true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance of dead works. When God gives His people spiritual life, a new heart, and knowledge of our sins and of the perfect righteousness of Christ, we throw off the garments of our own works and submit to Christ as the Lord our Righteousness (Rom. 10:1-4; Php. 3:7-9). Elisha took the same mantle that Elijah used to divide the Jordan, and he smote the waters and divided them. This illustrates the Gospel and the Word of God which is every true preacher’s authority, and it is the power of God unto salvation when the Holy Spirit empowers it to give life to dead sinners and bring them to Christ by God-given faith (Rom. 1:16-17). It is the same power (God’s), same Spirit (the Spirit of God), same message (Gospel of God’s grace in Christ). The same God who worked mightily through Elijah (raising the dead; standing against false preachers) must work mightily through Elisha and all of His prophets and preachers. We are just as helpless standing before dead sinners. We cannot give them life! The same God who was with Elijah all his life, who kept him faithful, must also be with us.

Notice that when Elisha smote the waters with the mantle, he asked, not “Where is Elijah?”, but “Where is the LORD GOD of Elijah?” As we thank God for His servants who were faithful to preach the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ to us, we acknowledge that it is the Lord God alone Who saves us and Whose presence in Christ we must have for all salvation - forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. Christ’s presence and power is our salvation, our life, our hope. His absence is death, vanity, and failure. Men will come and go at God’s appointing, but Christ is with us forever and ever. We will forever stand before God clothed in His righteousness imputed to us, and His Spirit will never depart from us. The psalmist cried, *“Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation”* (Psa. 27:9).

We know that the Lord God is omnipresent (Psa. 139:7-10; Acts 17:24-28), but His saving presence with His chosen, justified, adopted, and redeemed children is in Christ Who is *“Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, GOD WITH US”* (Matt. 1:23), by virtue of His righteousness imputed to us and His Spirit Who gives us spiritual life and brings us to God-given faith in Christ. He will never leave nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). *“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit”* (Psa. 34:18). His church is His holy temple (2 Cor. 6:16), as Christ is her Husband, her Head, her Foundation, Heart, and Chief Cornerstone. She is one with Him and is called by His name, *“the LORD our Righteousness”* (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16).