

ELIJAH TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 2 KINGS 2:1-15



Elisha took Elijah's place as God's prophet to carry on the work.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

God's plan was well known – God told Elijah to go to Bethel, Jericho, and Jordan. God also told Elijah that he would be taken from the earth (2 Kings 2:9). The students in the school of prophets ("sons of the prophets" is a title which bestows honor on God's prophets) somehow knew what was about to happen (2 Kings 2:3 and 5). Elisha also knew but (2 Kings 2:3) did not want Elijah to find out that he knew, so he told the younger prophets to remain quiet. It seemed that God was interested in witnesses and an audience for what He was about to do with Elijah. Similarly, God's plan to save us today is well known to all men because He has given it to us in His Word. The problem with many people is not that they are ignorant of God's plan, but that they reject it.

God's passed on His mantle – Elisha took advantage of Elijah's offer to grant a favor and requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elijah left the younger man's request up to the Lord, knowing that only God could do it. If God allowed Elisha to see Elijah leave, then the request would be granted. When the time came, Elisha did see Elijah leave. In a symbolic confirmation of the transfer of spirit, Elijah's cloak (or mantle) was left behind for Elisha. Though Elijah's cloak was left behind, Elisha knew there was no magic at work. He knew that it was God who moved the prophets as He chose. Elisha prayed to God and struck the Jordan with Elijah's cloak. He called out to God and asked Him to come. God confirmed the transfer of power to Elisha by pushing back the waters of the Jordan just as He did for Elijah.

God's mission continued even though Elijah left the earth – Though Elijah was caught up in the chariot, God's mission continued through the younger Elisha and through faithful men and women who followed. Elijah would be seen again. Malachi, an Old Testament prophet, foretold that Elijah would return before the day of the Lord. The teachers of the law in Jesus' day expected this to take place, (Mark 9:11). Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled when John the Baptist ministered and was compared to Elijah by Jesus who said, "he is the Elijah to come" (Matthew 11:14).

ELIJAH TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 2 KINGS 2:1-15

Where Is Jesus?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Elijah was taken up to heaven in a chariot on a whirlwind. That is not the last time we see him. He appears again in the New Testament with Jesus and Moses at Christ's transfiguration. One day, like Elijah, we will all be with the Lord.

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:28-31)

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Malachi 4:4-6

Connecting the passage to Christ:

The last verse of the Old Testament decisively pointed to the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus revealed that John the Baptist was the second Elijah foretold to come in Malachi, see Matthew 11:13-14 and 17:10. This second Elijah would prepare the way for the Lord.

Questions for reflection:

- How did the last verse of the Old Testament prepare Israel for the coming of the Savior? (This verse left Israel looking for a great prophet who would come prior to the day of the Lord. These would be the last words written for 400 years. Malachi became the last recorded prophet. The stage then was set for the coming of John the Baptist and the coming of the Lord.)
- How did Jesus connect the Old Testament with the New in Matthew 11:13-14? (Not only did Jesus reveal the identity of the second Elijah, Jesus also confirmed that all the prophets and the law pointed toward the coming of Jesus and thus pointed to John, who would announce Him.)

ELIJAH TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 2 KINGS 2:1-15

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

WHAT IS MORE POWERFUL?

Supplies

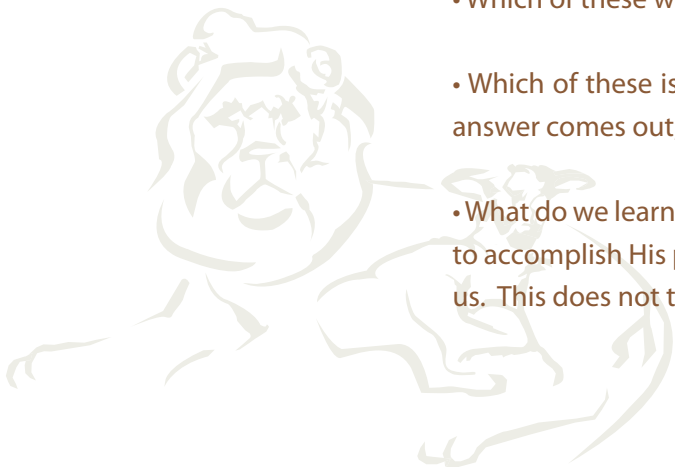
- a portion of a solid bed sheet or other piece of cloth to represent Elijah's cloak and a large tree branch with the bark peeled to represent the staff of Moses

This object lesson is to help make the point that it is God who is powerful, not the props He uses to bring His plan to fruition.

Show the two objects to the class. Tell them the cloth is the cloak of Elijah and the staff is that of Moses. Explain that you are considering which of these you would like to begin carrying with you. You have read the biblical accounts and were leaning toward the staff, as it is able to divide a larger body of water. The cloak can do a river but the staff can do a whole sea. Then again, tell them that a cloak can also keep you warm in the winter and would be easier to carry. You could simply drape it on your shoulders. That way if you ever needed to cross a river you could simply take it off and wham! Dry ground!

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Which of these would you rather have? (Draw out the class for their preferences.)
- Which of these is more powerful? (Keep drawing out the class until the obvious answer comes out, that neither one is powerful, but it is God that is powerful.)
- What do we learn about God from the story? (God is all-powerful and He uses man to accomplish His plan. God delegates His power to man so that He works through us. This does not thwart His plan for He controls everything we do as well.)



ELIJAH TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 2 KINGS 2:1-15

DIVIDING THE WATER

Supplies

- two 16-pound bags of ice
- a plastic drop cloth
- a clean trashcan

(Place the ice in the clean trashcan until you are ready to use it.)

This is simply a gag, an attention-getter, to prepare for the story.

Tell the children you that you have read the lesson for today and that once again the waters of the Jordan River were parted by God. In fact both Elijah and Elisha parted the waters of the Jordan. Remind them of the earlier crossing of the Jordan by the army of Israel when they carried the Ark before them. Also remind them of the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea.

Tell them that you never thought you could part water and walk across because you thought it was too difficult, but now you have figured out the secret.

Explain that when you read about the crossing of the Red Sea you thought it was unique but then when you read about the first crossing of the Jordan you started to wonder if we could do the same. Now, having read about Elijah and Elisha, you have it figured out.

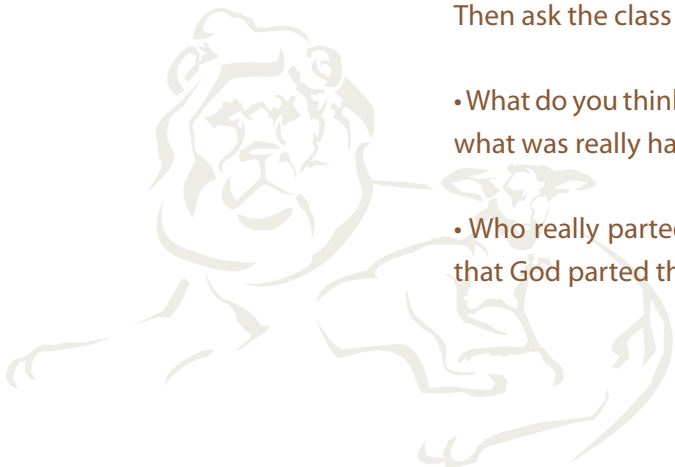
Spread out the tarp and explain that you are putting this down so as not to make a huge mess. Tell the class you are ready, and appear excited.

In a quick effort, cut open a bag of ice and throw it down on the tarp (make sure that prior to class you broke up the ice into cubes by dropping it on the pavement). Do the same for the second bag.

Announce that you are going to divide the waters (ice) and then using your foot to push aside the cubes take one step at a time. Make sure you really ham it up.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What do you think of my dividing the waters? (Draw out some good answers about what was really happening.)
- Who really parted the waters, Elijah and Elisha or God? (Obviously the answer is that God parted the waters.)



ELIJAH TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 2 KINGS 2:1-15

A CLASSROOM PROPHET

Supplies

- lollipops (enough for all students in the class)
- briefcase (bag)

This exercise is designed to take the mystery out of the operation of the prophet. It is not the prophet that is amazingly able to forecast the future, because the prophet really does a very simple thing. The prophet is simply repeating information that God provided.

Prior to class, enlist the help of one of your students. (Pick a student with a good memory. Do not talk with the volunteer where the students arriving for your class will see you.) Tell them to raise their hand just after you finish reading the passage and say the following: "You have a bag of lollipops in your briefcase. When you pass them out, I would like to be the volunteer to do the job. And if you could please give me a grape lollipop I would appreciate it".

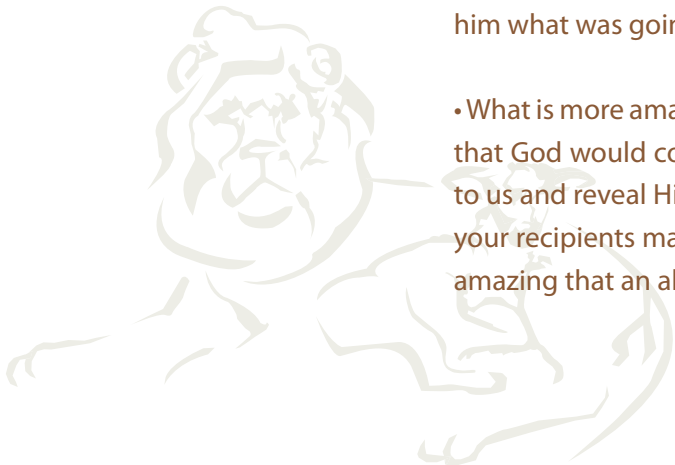
Look stunned, then go over to your briefcase and open it. Ask the volunteer the following questions:

- Did you see me buy these at the store? (No.)
- Did you go into my briefcase before class? (No.)

Then ask the class how the volunteer found out. Finally, explain to them that you told the volunteer and share with them what you told the volunteer prior to class

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Where you fooled or amazed by the volunteer's knowledge of the lollipops? (Yes, I wondered how he knew.)
- How is (volunteer's name) like a prophet? (Just like God gives a prophet a message to declare to the people, so you gave him a message to deliver to the class and told him what was going to happen ahead of time.)
- What is more amazing about prophecy, the prophet's ability to know God's plan or that God would come to man and tell a prophet His plan? (That God would come to us and reveal His plan is much more amazing. To be a prophet takes courage as your recipients may not like what you share and might even kill you, but it is more amazing that an all-powerful God would reach out to us with His Word.)



ELIJAH TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 2 KINGS 2:1-15

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

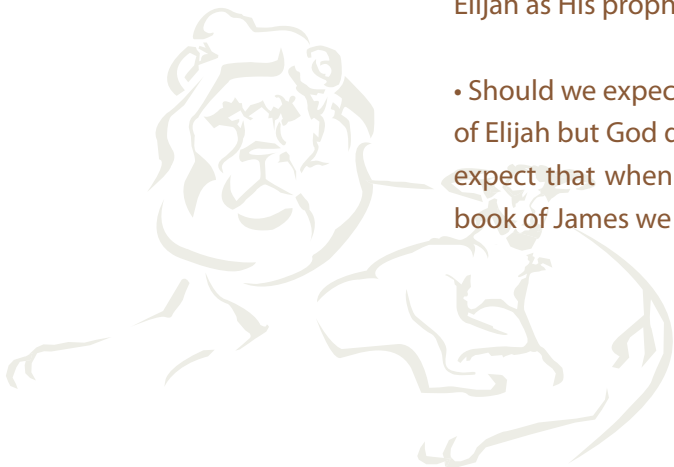
IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children draw a picture of either the Jordan River parting or Elijah being carried up to heaven.

FOR OLDER GRADES

Read James 5:14-18, then ask the class the following questions:

- What are some of the amazing things Elijah was used by God to do? (Have the children look in the books of 1 and 2 Kings to find the answers. Make a list on the board.)
- What does James say about Elijah that seems to contradict all these amazing acts? (James tells us that Elijah was an ordinary man like us.)
- If Elijah was an ordinary man, how was it that he did such extraordinary things? (Elijah did not do them by his own power, but it was God that did these things using Elijah as His prophet.)
- Should we expect to do things like these? (We will likely not perform the miracles of Elijah but God does instruct us to be like Elijah in the book of James. We should expect that when we pray for the sick, they would recover. But even here in the book of James we are told it is the Lord who will "raise them up".)



ELIJAH TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 2 KINGS 2:1-15

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Double portion – In Deuteronomy 21:17, a double portion of inheritance is reserved for the firstborn son. This extra measure is designed to make a statement. Elkanah gave a double portion of food to Hannah, the mother of Samuel, because he loved her and she was barren. God promises a double portion to His people in Isaiah. To give a double portion is to bestow honor. Elisha was very bold to request a double portion. In effect he was saying that he wanted special favor from God. Elijah was not free to grant Elisha's request but spelled out the conditions for God to either meet or deny.

