

Elijah and the Whirlwind



Scripture Reference: [2 Kings 2:1-18](#)

Suggested Theme: God is preparing a place where believers can live with Him after death. Be excited about life with God after death.

Memory Verse: “After I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back. Then I will take you to be with me so that you may be where I am.” [John 14:3 ICB](#)

Story Overview:

Elijah continued to be a prophet in Israel during the times of Kings Ahab, Ahaziah and Joram (7th, 8th, and 9th kings of Israel). Elisha became Elijah’s helper. When Elijah’s work as a prophet came to an end, a chariot and horses of fire appeared, and Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah’s special gifts were passed on to Elisha to continue the work of the prophets. Elijah was one of a handful of people in the bible that went straight to heaven without dying.

Background Study:

While King Jehoshaphat was still ruling the kingdom of Judah, the evil King Ahab of Israel died. His son Ahaziah became king, but he also chose to ignore the Lord and follow after false gods like his father had done. He reigned only two years and had no sons. At that time, another of Ahab’s sons, Joram, became the new king of Israel. Joram also carried on the family tradition of worshipping false gods.

Elijah continued to be a prophet for the Lord during the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah and Joram. The times continued to be dangerous for prophets, and Elijah often barely escaped death. Things got so bad at one point that Elijah thought he was the only prophet who had not been killed ([1 Kings 19:14](#)). The Lord told Elijah that there were other prophets. Elisha would be the prophet who would replace Elijah when his work was complete. At God’s command, Elijah invited Elisha to join up with him. Elisha was Elijah’s helper and student ([1 Kings 19:15- 21](#)).

The “company of the prophets” mentioned in today’s section of scripture were students who were taught by Elijah and others. There seem to have been classes of them in various places. Elijah probably travelled from place to place to teach them. In this chapter, he makes one last round of visits before being taken away.

Elijah’s cloak (or mantle) was a large cape that could be used as an overcoat by day and a blanket by night. He rolled it up and hit the surface of the water with it. Instantly, there was a dry path across the river.

It was customary for the oldest son to receive a double portion of a father’s estate. By asking for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, Elisha showed that he knew he would need much help to carry on Elijah’s work. Elijah knew that only the Lord could choose whether or not Elisha would carry on his work. The Spirit guided

Elijah to explain how Elisha could know whether his request was granted. If Elisha could see Elijah go, that would be a sign that he would have the Spirit as he had asked.

Many visual aids depict Elijah riding to heaven in the chariot, but verse 11 says that the chariot kept Elisha away while Elijah was taken up in the whirlwind.

Elisha did see Elijah as he was taken up – the sign that Elisha had received his request. After taking up Elijah's cloak, he went on to part the Jordan with it, showing that he did carry Elijah's special gift.

Children often seem to accept the idea of heaven more easily than adults do. Don't be afraid to discuss the fact that our soul lives forever. We don't know what heaven is like, but we know that God is there, and He has made it a wonderful place. Imagine any joy on earth and know that heaven is even better than that!

[Background Information on the Divided Kingdom.](#)

Way to Introduce the Story:

Use plain paper to wrap a nice treat like biscuits or lollies. Or you could place them in a paper bag and then tape it shut. On the paper wrapping, write hints about what is inside. You might write "yummy, chocolate, my favourite food, sweet ..." Try to give hints that let them know it's great, but try not to give the answer away. Tell the children you are the only one allowed to have what's inside that bag. After that sinks in, tell them your friends get to have what's inside that bag, too. Discuss the fact that this bag is like heaven. We don't know exactly what it will be like, but we know it is going to be great. God has told us enough about heaven to make us want to go there, but He is leaving the best surprises until after we arrive. Ask the children how we get to heaven. Chances are you will have all sorts of answers about being good. Remind the children that only you and your friends will get what's inside the bag. Only God and the people who love and obey Him will go to heaven. (Now, by all means, share the surprise!)

As the children eat, talk about the fact that people cannot go to heaven until after they die. Only three people in history have gone to heaven while they were still alive: Enoch ([Genesis 5:23-24](#)), Jesus ([Acts 1:9-11](#)) and the man in today's story.

The Story:

Elijah was a prophet of God. God would give Elijah messages for the people, and Elijah would tell them. Sometimes, people liked the messages from God, and sometimes, they did not. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel did not like the messages that Elijah had for them. God's message was that they were bad. If they did not stop worshipping idols, then bad things would happen to them.

Queen Jezebel was very angry that Elijah, the prophet, gave her God's message. She was so angry that she tried to get people to kill Elijah.

God always took care of Elijah. When Elijah was tired, the Lord would show Him where shade trees were. Once, when Elijah was very sad and tired, God sent an angel to take care of him while he rested. Once, God even showed Elijah a nice warm cave to hide in so he would be safe.

Elijah spent many years running away from Jezebel. It was lonely having to go from place to place all the time. God told Elijah to go to where Elisha was ploughing a field. Elisha would be Elijah's new helper. Elijah put his cloak on Elisha's shoulders to show that he had been chosen to follow Elijah and learn to be a prophet.

Elijah and Elisha travelled around the country together, giving people messages from the Lord. Elijah taught Elisha everything he needed to know to be a prophet, and Elijah knew that Elisha would be the prophet someday in Elijah's place.

Elijah knew that the time was coming when he would no longer be a prophet. He knew that the Lord had a special plan for him. Elijah took Elisha with him, and they travelled around to visit the other prophets one last time.

When it came time for Elijah and Elisha to cross the Jordan River, Elijah performed a miracle. He threw down his cloak and hit the river water. The river broke into two parts when he did this, and dry land appeared. Elijah and Elisha could walk across the river on dry land.

Elijah knew that the time had come for something special to happen. He told Elisha that he was going away. "Elisha, is there anything I can do for you before I leave?"

Elisha answered, "You could give me your special gifts from God. I want to be a prophet just like you. I want to be able to do miracles and great things for God."

Elijah knew that only God could give someone the power to do miracles. He told Elisha, "Here is how you will know if God wants you to have my powers: If you see me leaving, then you will know that God has given you the same gifts that I have."

After Elijah said this, something amazing happened! A chariot with horsemen appeared from nowhere. It was as if they were on fire, but they did not burn up. Elijah was on one side of the fire, and Elisha was on the other. As Elisha watched, a whirlwind came and took Elijah up into heaven. The only thing that was left of Elijah was his cloak.

Elisha took Elijah's cloak and hit the Jordan River with it. The water divided just like it had with Elijah. Now, Elisha knew that the Lord had passed Elijah's gift of miracles on to him. Elisha went on teaching people about God. He gave them messages from God, just like Elijah had done.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

[Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.](#)

View this slideshow and download it from the original source: <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/elijah-chariot/>

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

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Review:

- When Elijah was running away from evil Queen Jezebel, what did God do to take care of him? (Showed him where a shade tree was, sent an angel to take care of him, showed him a cave to hide in, etc.)
- Who was the man whom Elijah taught to be a prophet? (Elisha)
- What happened when Elijah hit the Jordan River with his cloak? (The river parted)
- What did Elisha ask Elijah for? (For a double portion of his spirit, and to be able to use God's power for miracles like Elijah had)
- How did Elijah get to heaven? (He was taken up in a whirlwind in the presence of a flaming chariot and horses)
- How did Elisha know that God was going to work through him like He worked through Elijah? (Elisha saw Elijah carried into heaven)
- What did Elisha do with Elijah's cloak, which he left behind? (He divided the Jordan River like Elijah had)
- What did this story show you about God?

Reflection:

- Elijah often had to travel alone and be in hiding, and he gave God's messages to people who didn't like them. What do you think was the hardest part about Elijah's life? How do you think Elijah felt during these hard times?
- God gave Elijah a new friend and helper named Elisha. Who is someone you are grateful to have as a friend?
- What do you think it looked or sounded like when Elijah got taken up to heaven in the whirlwind?
- Why do you think God took Elijah to heaven while he was still alive instead of waiting for Elijah to die?
- How do you think Elijah felt to be taken away to heaven in a whirlwind?
- What part of this story would you most like to have seen?
- What kind of miracles do you think Elisha will do now that God is with him and has given him the power to do miracles?
- Have you ever thought or wondered about heaven? What question do you have about heaven? (Note: we don't know the answer to many of children's questions about heaven. You can simply say, "I don't know, but that's a good question." You can also encourage them to pray and ask God their questions.)

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a lifelong friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [My God is So Big Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

Activities:

- If it is a clear day, go outside and look at the clouds as you tell the story. See if children can spot clouds that resemble things in the story (a whirlwind, chariot or robe)
- Purchase a helium balloon. After telling the story, discuss how Elisha felt when Elijah rose into the sky. Draw a simple stick figure or face on the balloon representing Elijah, then release the balloon. Watch until the balloon disappears.
- Look up and sing one of the many songs about heaven in the church songbook.
- Play a simple word game. [Bible Wordz Game](#) is an adaptable game in which children form words from letter tiles. The words relate to those in the Bible lesson.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Use finger paints or string painting to draw a whirlwind.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page with text \(Ministry Spark\)](#)

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