

Elijah's and Elisha's Mantle (Cloak)



SABBATH—APRIL 30

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Kings 19:1–19; 2 Samuel 10:3, 4; Ezekiel 16:15, 16; 1 Kings 21:21–29; 2 Kings 2:1–18.

MEMORY VERSE: “Godly sadness causes us to turn away from our sins and be saved. And we are certainly not sorry about that! But worldly sadness brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:10, NIV).

FEW BIBLE CHARACTERS HAVE HAD A MORE COLORFUL (INTERESTING) LIFE THAN THE PROPHET¹ ELIJAH. What a wonderful story of faith, of patience, and of God's great power in this world.

Today, in the Jewish faith, Elijah is still a giant. He has been honored more than any other Bible leader.

For example, each Passover,² a special cup of wine is filled and put on the Passover table. During the Passover itself, the door of the house is opened. Everyone stands in order to let Elijah the prophet enter and drink. At a circumcision,³ a chair (“the chair of Elijah”) is set aside as part of the ceremony. Also, as the Sabbath ends, Jews sing about Elijah. They hope he will come “speedily, in our days . . . along with the Messiah, Son of David, to save us.”

An example of how important Elijah is to Jewish thinking is found in the book of Matthew. Peter says that some had thought Jesus Himself was Elijah (Matthew 16:14).

This week we will read about Elijah and the mantle (cloak) he wore. We will learn the spiritual lessons that Elijah and the mantle can teach us.

1. prophet—a man or woman who is a spokesperson for God. God gives a prophet special messages to give to His people. A prophet also speaks to God on behalf of His people. God may also give a prophet warnings about what will happen in the future.

2. Passover—Jewish holiday celebrating the freedom of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

3. circumcision—the ritual in which the foreskin of the male sex organ is removed.

SUNDAY—MAY 1**“A STILL SMALL VOICE”
(1 Kings 19:1–4)**

Elijah's life is described in 1 and 2 Kings. These books show how Elijah bravely faced kings and their threats on his life. But there is one special example when a wicked queen scared him, and he ran for his life.

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah called down fire from heaven onto Mount Carmel. He had the prophets of Baal⁴ killed. And he warned Ahab that rain was coming. The power of the Lord came upon Elijah. He tucked (put) his cloak into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab for the 20 miles to Jezreel.

But in the next chapter, this same man of God shows a different side.

What lessons can we learn from 1 Kings 19:1–4 about how we can still have deep spiritual lows no matter how close to God we have been?

But the Lord was not finished with Elijah, not even after his hopeless prayer. God still gave Elijah powerful proof of His love for him and His interest in Elijah's life.

In 1 Kings 19:5–19, we read that Elijah wrapped his face in the mantle. What does this action really mean?

It is interesting to learn that Elijah

saw a great wind, an earthquake, and a fire. But none of these things caused Elijah to wrap his face in his mantle. It was only the presence of the Lord in “a still, small voice” that caused him to do this. This shows Elijah's fear, respect, and self-protection.



The still, small voice of God caused Elijah to wrap his face in his mantle.

What Elijah needed to learn was that the mighty and moving wind, in itself, does not show a true picture of the Spirit of God. Elijah heard the voice of the Lord in a quiet way telling him what to do. And it was this voice that Elijah obeyed.

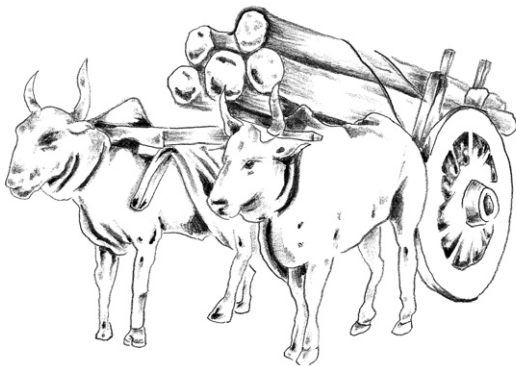
How can we learn to recognize (know) the voice of the Lord speaking to us? More important is this question: do we obey what we hear, or do we refuse to listen to that “still, small voice” speaking to our souls? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

4. Baal—worshiped by the Canaanites as the god of storms and thunder; in some places, Baal was worshiped as the god of the sun.

MONDAY—MAY 2**THE CHANGE OF GARMENTS
(1 Kings 19:19)**

After the wonderful showing of God's power at Mount Carmel, Elijah complained that he was the only one left who loved the Lord. The Lord seemed to ignore Elijah's complaints. But when Elijah finished his speech, the Lord gave him instructions. Elijah was to anoint (put oil on) two kings and Elisha.

Elijah decided to follow the Lord's directions to find a successor.⁵ He went to the farm of Shaphat, Elisha's father. And he found Elisha plowing with oxen. Maybe Elijah waved to Elisha to get his attention. Then Elisha stopped his work and waited to hear Elijah's message.



Elijah found Elisha in the field, plowing with the oxen.

In 1 Kings 19:19, how was the call of Elisha shown in the field?

We do not have the exact words of Elijah, or Elisha's answer to the call of Elijah. But we do know that Elisha accepted the call. Elijah now put his mantle, a symbol of his responsibilities as a servant of God, on Elisha's shoulders (read Numbers 20:28). The symbol is very clear. Elisha was now given a holy calling.

In other events of the Bible, a mantle (or cloak or some similar garment) was not always used as an example of God's call to serve Him. How is the idea of a "mantle" used in these verses: Job 1:20; Psalm 109:29; Jude 22, 23; 2 Samuel 10:3, 4; Ezekiel 16:15, 16?

Elijah's mantle here meant faithfulness and responsibility. "God led Elijah to look for a successor. Elijah passed the field in which Elisha was plowing. Elijah then put upon Elisha's shoulders the mantle of holiness. During the famine (food shortage) the family of Shaphat got to know the work and mission of Elijah. And now the Spirit of God led Elisha to understand the meaning of Elijah's act. To Elisha it was the signal that God had called him to be the successor of Elijah."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pages 219, 220.

⁵ successor—a person who has a job, position, or title after someone else; someone who succeeds (comes after) another person.

Think about how a single object (thing) can have both good and bad sides to it. It depends on how it is used. What are you doing with the things in your own life? What kind of meanings are you, by your actions, giving them? What have they come to symbolize (to stand for) to you, and why?



Elijah put his mantle, a symbol of his responsibilities, on Elisha's shoulders.

TUESDAY—MAY 3

THE WEARING OF SACKCLOTH (MOURNING CLOTHES) (1 Kings 21:21–29)

In the Elijah stories, clothing is an important symbol in the lives of other characters (people) too.

Ahab, the king of Israel, wished to buy a vineyard that was next to the palace. It belonged to Naboth, a Jezreelite. Naboth refused to sell it, and Jezebel heard about it. So Jezebel got mad and thought of a

plan to murder Naboth and take his field. After Naboth's death, Ahab took over the vineyard, but he did not know that God had told Elijah to meet him there.

“ ‘Tell him, “The Lord says, ‘Haven't [have not] you murdered a man? Haven't [have not] you taken over his property?’ ” Then tell him, “The Lord says, ‘Dogs licked up Naboth's blood. In that same place dogs will lick up your blood. Yes, I said your blood!’ ” ” (1 Kings 21:19, NIV).

Elijah's mission was to face Ahab on several serious issues. This should have caused some stress for Elijah. But he seemed strong and willing to follow the Lord's orders. He seemed brave even though he knew his life could be in danger. Now Elijah had to tell Ahab what punishments the Lord would give to Ahab, especially the one about the dogs licking his blood.

How do we explain Ahab's answer in 1 Kings 21:21–29, especially after what those verses say about the kind of man Ahab was?

When Ahab heard these words, he presented (showed) himself to the Lord in a very humble way (1 Kings 21:27). He tore his clothes. He put on sackcloth. He even refused to eat. The rest of the chapter suggests that Ahab's repentance⁶ must have been true. The tearing of his robe represented horror and sorrow. It showed that Ahab truly accepted the truth of what Elijah had said to him. The verse does not say

6. repentance—the act of feeling sorry for your sins and turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.

how deep that repentance was or how long it lasted. It does say the tearing of his robe showed how sincere Ahab's heart was at that time.

“Godly sadness causes us to turn away from our sins and be saved. And we are certainly not sorry about that! But worldly sadness brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:10, NIV). What does this verse mean? And how can we use this warning in our own lives?



Ahab tore his robe, a symbol of true sorrow for his sin, and put on sackcloth.

WEDNESDAY—MAY 4

THE TAKING OF ELIJAH (2 Kings 2:1–18)

Whatever a person can say about Elijah, he certainly had an interesting life. (No doubt, he is having more fun now.) Second Kings 1 tells an interesting story that leads into an even more

interesting story in the next chapter. If it could be said that anyone, to use the old saying, “went out in a blaze of [with great] glory,” it was Elijah.

Read 2 Kings 2:1–18 and answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think Elisha refused to separate from Elijah, even though the older man (Elijah) asked him (Elisha) to do so three times?

2. Why did Elisha tear his clothes here? Was it for mourning⁷ or something else? If so, what?

No doubt Elisha's answer showed that he was very excited and thankful. Yes, Elisha did see the chariot and the horses. Yes, he would have a double share of Elijah's power. The tearing of clothes usually meant mourning. But this time Elisha may have been so overcome with feeling that he tore his clothes in the spirit of thanksgiving. Elisha had in his hands Elijah's cloak. Elisha's tearing of his clothes also could have been a symbol of his getting rid of his own mantle and putting on Elijah's.

When Elijah first put his mantle on farmer Elisha, both men knew that this act symbolized (meant) a calling to work for God. (But Elisha must have given it back to Elijah.) Elisha now had this special garment as his own. This shows that Elisha must carry on the responsibilities of leadership as Elijah had done.

7. mourning—an open display of sadness.

Notice what Elisha asked of Elijah. (What does this remind you of?) Elisha's words tell something of his character.⁸ They show that Elisha was a worthy successor to wear the mantle of the great prophet (Elijah) who was about "to be taken" from this world.

What broader picture of life does this story show us? For example, how often do we hold a narrow view of the world and forget about God, Jesus, and angels, who are close to us?

THURSDAY—MAY 5

ELISHA'S CLOAK (2 Kings 2:13, 14)

Second Kings 2:13, 14 makes us think of what story? What important symbol do we find there?

Read 2 Kings 2:15–18. Try to put yourself in the place of these prophets from Jericho. Why were they trying to find Elijah, even though they knew he had been taken to heaven?

We know from earlier verses that the prophets knew Elijah was going to be taken to heaven. The verse does not say if the prophets saw him being taken to heaven. But it does not really matter because they knew that the "Spirit of the Lord" had taken Elijah. But they did not know where the Spirit had taken him. For some reason the prophets believed that

Elijah still could be found "on some mountain or in some valley" (verse 15, NIV). Maybe they were not ready for the idea of someone being taken to heaven like that. They guessed the Lord did something else with him. Elisha told the prophets not to bother trying to find Elijah. But they were stubborn. They tried to find him anyway. Maybe the prophets began to understand what happened when they could not find Elijah. Still, they showed some doubt. They thought that maybe the Lord had set him down on some mountain or valley where they had not checked.

It does not matter what we have experienced or what miracles we have seen. In the end, we still need to use and show faith. If not, sooner or later doubt will creep in and seriously challenge our Christian experience.

Think about some powerful experience you have had with the Lord. There is no question that at the time and right after, your faith was strong. But the experience itself might start to fade in the stream of time. Why is it important to do things to keep your faith strong on a daily basis?

FRIDAY—MAY 6

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, "Seth and Enoch," page 88, in *Patriarchs [Forefathers] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*; "From Jezreel to Horeb," "What Doest Thou Here?" and "In the Spirit and Power of Elias,"

8. character—the way someone thinks, feels, and behaves; someone's personality.

pages 155–189, in *Prophets and Kings*.

“Elijah had gone to heaven without seeing death. He was the one who would represent those who will be living upon the earth at Christ’s second coming. He also would represent those who will be ‘changed. It will happen suddenly, quicker than the blink of an eye. At the sound of the last trumpet the dead will be raised. . . . Our dead and decaying bodies will be changed into bodies that won’t [will not] die or decay.’ 1 Corinthians 15:51–53, CEV. Jesus was clothed with the light of heaven. He will appear when He shall come ‘a second time. At that time He will not suffer for sin. Instead, He will come to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.’ He will come ‘in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.’ Hebrews 9:28; Mark 8:38, NIV.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 422.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ What can we do that will help us to hear “the still, small voice”? What things do we do that make this difficult, if not impossible? How does willful (stubborn) sin make us “hard of hearing”?
- ❷ Suppose you are experiencing discouragement that is almost more than you can stand. How can you know, as Elijah did, that the Lord is near and watching over you?
- ❸ The passing on of the mantle of Elijah symbolized the passing on of his ministry (work) to Elisha. This brings up the question of changing leaders in the church today. How does the method of changing leaders work? How can we be sure that the right leaders are chosen? Or can we?
- ❹ “Godly sadness causes us to turn away from our sins and be saved. And we are certainly not sorry about that! But worldly sadness brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:10, NIV). Talk about this verse in class. What does this verse mean? What can it teach us about the difference between true repentance and false repentance?
- ❺ In this quarter’s Bible study guide on clothing and garments, we are dealing with a lot of symbols. What are symbols? How are they interpreted (explained)? What meanings do we give to symbols? What do those meanings tell us about ourselves?