



DEAN WELCH – TEACHER

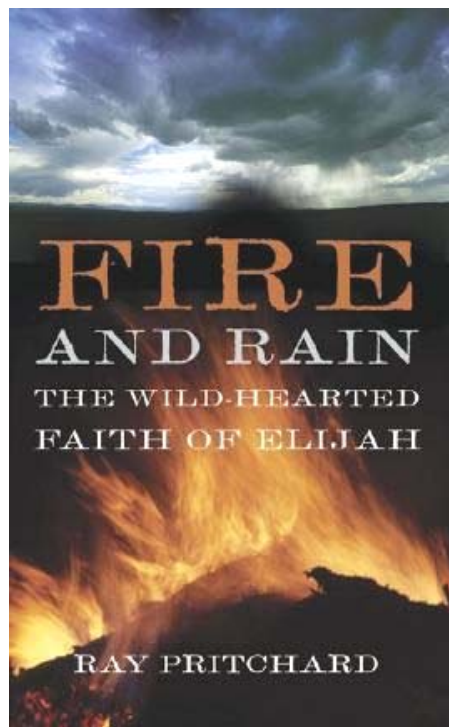
Sometimes you see...
and sometimes you SEE!

2 KINGS 2: 1-15

WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

JULY 25, 2010

LESSON #8 FROM THE *MASTERWORK* SERIES STUDY OF:



Sometimes you see... and sometimes you SEE!

2 KINGS 2: 1-15 (ELIJAH)

A seventy-year-old man walks down the aisle to receive his college degree. A fifty-five-year-old woman marries for the first time. A forty-year-old former housewife settles into a career. Even though it seems as though our lives follow similar patterns, everyone operates on a different schedule. Have you ever known someone who reached a milestone in life at a non-traditional age? Did you wonder what took so long or assume something must have been wrong with him or her?

Too often, we get caught up in traditions that tell us **when** certain things should be accomplished. Society says we should graduate, start a career, get married, buy a house, have a child, and retire—in that order, and each at a certain age. In following guidelines that our culture sets before us, we tend to rush into life-changing decisions without considering what God wants for us. Have you ever wondered why so many people are unhappy with their careers, why divorce is so rampant, or why people are often completely unprepared to raise a family?

Notice the title on the board: *Sometimes you see—and sometimes you SEE!* **What do you think that means?** Now, look at the triangle diagram on the board and, someone who has not seen this before, please tell me what words say?
[PARIS IN THE THE SPRING – 2 “THE’S”]



Sometimes you see—and sometimes you SEE! Today, we wrap up our 8-week series from Dr. Ray Pritchard's book *Fire and Rain* on the life of Elijah. This week you read about Elijah's last day on earth from **2 Kings 2** and saw **what** he did—even though he clearly knew in advance he was leaving earth. Did you think about what you would do if you knew this was going to be your

last day to live? Would you be here this morning? Watch this video where a similar question was asked to people on the street—except the question was based on having one month to live: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enCONEUCRy4&feature=related>

Now, what about you? Would you want to know if you were going to die? What would **YOU** do if you found out you had only one month to live? How would your relationships be different? What would you stop doing? What would you say to your family? To others? Don't miss what we're talking about this morning, please: sometimes we see—and sometimes we SEE! I put a 3-D stereograph on your table or in your chair to help you understand the idea we're dealing with a little better. Did anyone figure out what the hidden picture is? [**JESUS ON THE CROSS**] How clearly did you see Him the first time you looked at the picture? Why?

The remarkable part of our story this week is that Elijah **knew** he was going to be taken up to heaven without dying. There was only one other person who was ushered immediately from this earth into the presence of God and who was that? **Enoch** (Gen 5: 21-24). So, as we look at Elijah's last day and see how a true man of God leaves this earth well—even though it was going to be a **deathless departure**—Elijah leaves us a great example of how we TOO should each be living in anticipation of Christ's return.

Turn to **2 KINGS 2: 1-14 (NLT)** and follow along. Notice from the context here, it's obvious that God not only gave Elijah information about his ultimate departure ahead of time but gave him the HOW as well as the WHERE. That explains why we see him moving quickly toward the Jordan: ***¹When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. ²And Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to Bethel." But Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave***

you!" So they went down together to Bethel. ³The group of prophets from Bethel came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today?" "Of course I know," Elisha answered. "But be quiet about it." ⁴Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to Jericho." But Elisha replied again, "As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you." So they went on together to Jericho. ⁵Then the group of prophets from Jericho came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today?" "Of course I know," Elisha answered. "But be quiet about it." ⁶Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to the Jordan River." But again Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you." So they went on together.

Couldn't you just imagine the scene as I read? But, if Elijah knew the Jordan was to be the place of his departure, why was he wandering around the countryside? Why not go straight to the Jordan? Probably he wanted to meet one last time with the young prophets in training and give them some encouragement. But also, we see a deeper reason. Notice at both Bethel and Jericho that the sons of the prophets asked Elisha the same question about the LORD taking away his master that day? Both times Elisha gave the same answer: *"Yes, I know. Now be quiet."* Why did he tell them to be quiet? [MAYBE SO AS NOT TO DISTURB ELIJAH ON HIS LAST DAY WITH IRRELEVANT CONVERSATION]

Do you believe God sometimes gives his children a little advance notice that heaven is not far away? I do. I don't think he does it in every case. How many times have you heard it said that when a person dies, his or her whole life passes before them? How do people know that? Wouldn't you have to die to know that? And when you die you're no longer around to

tell anyone what it was like. Yet, those of us who have had a “close call” understand and maybe have had that experience.

We hear stories of angels singing, of bright lights, of the vision of the glory of Christ. While I don’t think we should be gullible and believe everything people say, I don’t think that we should discount all those stories. Before he died, Stephen had a vision of heaven in **ACTS 7: 55-56 (NIV)**: *⁵⁵But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”* I believe that sometimes God allows us to hear the sound of the chariot swinging low to carry us home. God in his grace sometimes allows his children to know that the day has arrived.

As Beverly and I were talking about the lesson this week and what we would do if we found out that we had only one day to live, she told me a story that she had never shared with me before. It must have happened around 2001-2002 because she said it was during my year and a half away (when my world collapsed). A friend had made worked it out for Beverly to get new make-up. As Beverly was getting the new make-up in a hands-on demonstration the woman showing her how to use it began telling her about an unbelievable near-death experience. Apparently the woman was run over by a car in the mall parking lot. Immediately, she said, a large man bolted out of nowhere and spread his entire body across the woman’s on the pavement. He covered her hands, legs, feet—everything—from head to toe and began shouting, “Do you know Jesus as your personal LORD and Savior. Do you know Jesus?” The woman, still in shock, told the man that she did know Jesus and he got up. The man disappeared and the woman has no clue who he was or where he came from or where he went. To this day, she does not know who he was! The doctors at the hospital said the man saved her life by putting pressure on her whole body after she was hit—

stopping the blood and preventing her from bleeding to death. Now, that's an unbelievable story about a real-life event where that UNKNOWN MAN knew what was important and took action. Is that you?

Have you ever known someone that was about to die and they knew it? How did it affect their lives? While many of them struggle through the stages of grief—shock, denial, bargaining, guilt, anger, depression, acceptance—most of them make radical changes as a result of their awareness of their terminal conditions. They take license to say what they really feel and do what they really want. They ask for forgiveness and forgive others. They no longer think only of themselves but reach out to those they love and let them know how much they mean. They take risks they would never have taken before and allow themselves to lay worry aside and gratefully accept each new day. They seem to gain a new clarity about their priorities, like their relationship with God and leaving legacies that will.

Wonder why we wait until we think we're dying to change?

Looking back at our lesson, notice HOW Elijah acted and responded on this last day of his earthly life. He spends his final day with Elisha, and he spends his time greeting and saying farewell to the young prophets who looked up to him as a hero and a mentor. There is no sense of panic here. Elijah is not afraid; Elisha is not afraid. There's no sense of fear or dread, just a sense of being completely in God's hands. After making the rounds, both Elijah and Elisha head to the final destination—the Jordan, the place of death.

All of us will one day face that final day—some sooner than others. Most of us, of course, don't know how soon we will reach our Jordan. It could be decades...or as near as the next breath. But there is also another kind of death—and that is the death of self, when we learn the necessity of self-denial. This death is a

part of what Christ tells us in **MATTHEW 10:38 (CEV)** when he says, *"And unless you are willing to take up your cross and come with me, you are not fit to be my disciples."* When we finally learn to do that—and it is such a difficult rite of passage—peace reigns!

As you studied your lesson this week about Elijah's last day, did YOU think of something that you wanted to do BEFORE you die? We've all heard many a story or sermon about living between the **DASH** of life. You get to choose how to spend that little dash of time between the two dates of your earthly existence—born on January 15, 19?? and died on July 25, 2010! So, what are you spending yours on? Are you living the dash, knowing fully who you are and why you're here? Or dashing to live, hurriedly spending precious time chasing things that really don't matter to you? Listen to this prayer of the psalmist from **PSALM 90:12 (TLB)**, *"Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should."* God wants us to realize that our time on earth is limited so we will spend it wisely. But He gives us the choice about how we spend this most valuable currency.

Notice in **2 KINGS 2: 6 (NASB)** the statement of Elisha to Elijah, after Elijah has told Elisha over and over to wait here while he goes on: *"...And he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on."* Don't you love that? We need a few Elishas in our lives, don't we? They bring us strength. And they are a rare breed indeed. They're our intimate friends. They are those who are there for us, with us, available for us—to hear us, to help us, to soften the blows of our critics, to support us in prayer, to stay in our corners, bringing us both encouragement and objectivity.

When the two men stopped at the Jordan, the scene suddenly changed. Let's finish reading the story slowly. Let your mind run free as you imagine this unusual dialogue and miraculous scene,

continuing with **2 KINGS 2:7-10 (NLT)**: *"⁷Fifty men from the group of prophets also went and watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha stopped beside the Jordan River. ⁸Then Elijah folded his cloak together and struck the water with it. The river divided, and the two of them went across on dry ground! ⁹When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away." And Elisha replied, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit and become your successor." ¹⁰"You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah replied. "If you see me when I am taken from you, then you will get your request. But if not, then you won't."*

Sounds very familiar, doesn't it? A lot like what happened at the Red Sea with Moses and the children of Israel. Here the waters of the Jordan parted, allowing Elijah and Elisha to cross the river on dry land. Then, look at what Elijah does in **verse 9** after they get across the river: Elijah turns to his friend and asks, *"What can I do for you before I go? Before the LORD takes me from this earth?"* And notice Elisha's immediate response. This is a man who thinks big, and he isn't hesitant to reveal it. He says, *"Elijah, you've done some great miracles in your life. But I'd like to have a double dose of your spirit so I might know twice the power!"* What an unbelievable and enormous request!

You find out what makes a man tick at a moment like this. Donald Trump comes in and says, "What can I do for you?" So you say "Give me a wheelbarrow full of your money." He'll never miss it, he's got so much. You might say to somebody else "Give me your contact list." You might say to somebody else "Give me your business." "Give me your company." "Give me your network." "Give me your car." "Give me your home." Give me your clothes." "Give me your stocks." "Give me your cattle." "Give me your farm." "Give me your family." "Give me your books."

Elisha asks **only** for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. In the Old Testament, remember that the oldest son received a double portion of his father's estate. Now Elisha was not literally the physical son of Elijah, but he was the spiritual son of Elijah. So he is asking as the oldest son spiritually, "*Oh my father, give me what belongs to me spiritually. Grant me a double portion of your spirit,*" **Why did he ask for that?** *Those were hard days in the nation of Israel, and soon matters would get worse.* Instead of getting better in the days of Elisha, the people continued to turn away from God. Elisha knew that in order for him to serve the Lord in the hard, difficult days ahead, he needed the same courage and the same resolve and the same fortitude and the same boldness that his master had had. He wanted the same spirit that Elijah had on top of Mount Carmel. He wanted the same spirit that caused him to go before Ahab in the first place. He wanted the same spirit that Elijah had had when he faced down Ahaziah. He wanted that, and he knew he needed it. God bless Elisha for realizing the need in his own life.

Look at what Elijah says back to him in **verse 10**, "*You have asked a difficult thing.*" It was a gift only God could give. Then he adds an important condition: "*If you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise not.*"

Now we come to the end of Elijah's earthly life. **Verse 11** says, "*As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared.*" Those are military images. The horses and the chariot were symbols of battle. ***Elijah was a warrior for God.*** It was a sign and a symbol that there was a battle raging for the hearts of people of Israel. It meant that a warrior is about to come home to God. It's a symbol of the kind of life Elijah has led. The end of **verse 11** says, "*Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.*" Elijah's life had been a whirlwind of activity. He had been so impetuous, so driven, so determined, thrusting himself into the palace of ungodly kings,

blowing through Israel like a tornado from God. He left the earth as he lived on the earth—in a whirlwind. Just like that! BAM— instantly he was gone! Amazing moment!

Now, look at what happens next with Elisha—standing there speechless and probably awe-struck. We tend to focus on that spectacular departure, but **verse 12** matters more, *“¹²Elisha SAW it and cried out, “My father! My father! I see the chariots and charioteers of Israel!” And as they disappeared from sight, Elisha tore his clothes in distress.*

Fifty prophets followed at a distance. They saw Elijah and Elisha together and suddenly Elijah disappeared. As Dr. Pritchard pointed out this week, I think it means that all they saw was Elijah disappear. They had no idea what had happened. It was only Elisha whose eyes were opened to see the flaming horses and the flaming chariot. It was only Elisha who saw his master being taken away in the whirlwind.

“If you see me,” Elijah said. There is the kind of seeing with the eyes, and there is the seeing with the eyes of the heart. It is possible to have 20/20 vision on the outside and be totally blind on the inside. You can live eighty years with perfect vision and be totally blind to spiritual reality. That’s why Paul prays in **EPHESIANS 1:17** that the *“eyes of your heart might be opened.”* You could go to Sunday School all your life, you could even attend a Christian college or go to seminary, and the eyes of your heart could be tightly shut. Just going through the motions doesn’t guarantee the eyes of your heart will be open.

Elijah’s no-death contract suddenly went into effect. Elijah, prophet of power...gone. Elisha, prophet of double-power here, ready, and about to be used greatly by God. Don’t you love it? Remember, though, that when a man or woman of God dies, **nothing** off God dies! We get so caught up in the lives of certain

individuals that we begin to think we cannot do without them. We even say, *"Life's just not going to be the same..."* Not true—what limited thinking. When even a mighty servant is gone, God has 7,000 who have never bowed the knee to Baal. He has them ready, waiting in the wings. Classic case in point—Elisha! God always has a back-up plan. We must have faith, however.

HEBREWS 11:27 (NLT) contains a phrase that helps us understand this principle. Speaking of Moses' willingness to leave the riches of Egypt to live in the wilderness with his own people, listen to what the writer says: *It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible.* That's one of the most remarkable and revealing statements in the entire Bible. It appears to be an impossibility. How do you "see" an invisible person? If you can be seen, you are not invisible. But God was invisible and yet Moses "saw" him. How? Two words. **"BY FAITH."** Moses had faith and his faith gave him sight. And he saw the God who is invisible. Faith sees what is really there even though others see nothing at all.

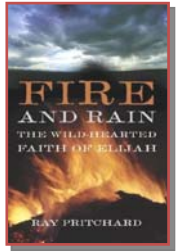
As we wrap up this series, I leave you with this question: **Where are the Elijah's of the Lord God in our own generation?** Are you one? Are you ready to step out in faith today? Not only was Elijah a man just like us—he was also a man just like Jesus! That's our example. Are you willing to follow today?

Let's Pray: *Father, we thank you for the joy of venturing with such a great man. I thank you for each person who reads these words. I pray that you would birth in us Elijah-like faith for the living of these days. Make us strong and bold to speak and to stand for you, for the Lord God of Elijah is still alive today. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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JULY 25, 2010

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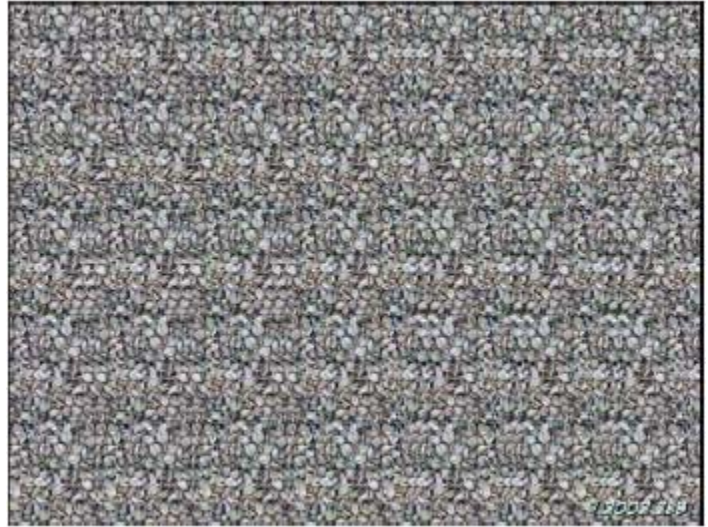
Sometimes you see... and sometimes you SEE!



1. In following _____ that our culture sets before us, we tend to rush into life-changing decisions without considering what _____ wants for us.

2. Sometimes you see—
And sometimes you **SEE!**

What is this *hidden* image?



3. Before he died, Stephen had a _____ of heaven in **ACTS 7: 55-56:** *But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see _____ open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

☀ God in his grace sometimes allows his children to _____ that the day has arrived!

4. When we finally learn to die to _____—which is such a difficult rite of passage—
_____ reigns! (Matt. 10:38)

5. **PSALM 90:12 (TLB)** says, "Teach us to _____ our days and recognize how few they are; help us to _____ them as we should."

6. There is the kind of seeing with the eyes, and there is the seeing with the eyes of the
_____. It is possible to have 20/20 vision on the outside and be totally
_____ on the inside. (Eph 1:17)