

LET THE MANTLE FALL ON YOU (2 KINGS 2)

Many positions in life have special symbols of identification and authority. The policeman has his uniform and badge. The ambulance driver has a vehicle with flashing lights and a wailing siren. Others have name tags that say, "Manager."

Elijah had his mantle. When God called Elijah out of the cave, the prophet "wrapped his face in his mantle" (1 Kings 19:13). When Elijah followed God's instructions and called Elisha, he "threw his mantle on him" (1 Kings 19:19) as a sign that he had been chosen to be Elijah's replacement. On Elijah's last day on the earth, he rolled up his mantle and used it as a staff to strike and divide the waters of the Jordan (2 Kings 2:8).

What is a mantle? A similar word, "mantel," refers to a shelf over a fireplace,¹ but "mantle" (with "l-e" at the end) is not an everyday word.² The English word "mantle" comes from the Latin word for "cloak." It means "a loose garment without sleeves, usually worn over the other garments."³ The Hebrew word translated "mantle," *addereth*, means basically the same. Usually this was a simple garment, such as the shepherd's cloak or something thrown casually around the shoulders. Occasionally, the word was used for something as magnificent as the robe of a king.⁴ The mantle was comparable to a cowboy's poncho, an Indian's blanket, a Mex-

ican's serape, or an older woman's shawl.

Elijah's mantle was a simple garment made of skin, hair, or other rough material. The messengers of Ahaziah described Elijah as "a hairy man" (2 Kings 1:8), which could refer either to his person or to his garments. In 2 Kings 2:8, which tells of Elijah's folding his mantle and striking the Jordan, the Septuagint has "sheepskin" instead of "mantle." Following Elijah's lead, many prophets made the rough mantle their badge. Zechariah referred to false prophets who put on "a hairy robe [*addereth*, mantle] in order to deceive" (Zechariah 13:4). When John the Baptizer came "in the spirit . . . of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), he came as a prophet (Luke 7:26), wearing "a garment of camel's hair" (Matthew 3:3, 4). We may think of Elijah's mantle, therefore, as being a loose garment of animal hair or other rough material thrown about his shoulders.⁵

In our last lesson, we saw the mantle fall on Elisha⁶ as Elijah was caught up in a whirlwind. We will close our series with this challenge: Let the mantle fall on *you*.

GOD STILL NEEDS HIS MEN AND WOMEN IN ISRAEL

¹Both "mantle" and "mantel" come from the same Latin word.

²The only use that comes readily to mind is the poetic phrase "the mantle of darkness." This refers to a "cloak" or "covering" of darkness.

³*Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary*, Vol. 1, (1951), s.v. "mantle."

⁴Jonah 3:6. Another example is the Babylonian garment coveted by Achan (Joshua 7:21, 24); this mantle was probably a striking-looking garment.

⁵If you use a mantle as a visual aid (see "Visual-aid Notes"), display it as you discuss what a mantle is. Now place it around your shoulders.

⁶As far as we know, the mantle did not literally fall on Elisha's person as Elijah left, but the authority and responsibility signified by the mantle fell on him at that time. The common phrase of "the mantle falling" on someone may be taken from Elijah's throwing his mantle on Elisha at Elisha's call to be a prophet.

Elijah accomplished much. Before Elijah came on the scene, it would have been unthinkable for prophets of Jehovah to speak boldly to Ahab (1 Kings 20). Jezebel would not have bothered to consider the laws of Jehovah (as she did in 1 Kings 21, although she was perverting them for her own purposes). Ahab's four hundred court prophets would never have spoken in the name of Jehovah (1 Kings 22:11, 12), even hypocritically. The schools of the prophets (see 2 Kings 2:3, 5) could not have existed. As a result of Elijah's efforts, significant progress had been made. When Ahab's son Jehoram came to the throne, "he put away the sacred pillar of Baal which his father had made" (2 Kings 3:2).

This did not mean that everything had been done or that God no longer needed a special representative. Baal worship continued until 2 Kings 10:18-27, when Jehu trapped the worshipers of Baal and "eradicated Baal out of Israel" (v. 28). Other evils prevailed, including a reversion to the idolatry of Jeroboam. God still needed His man in Israel.

Today God still needs His men and women in Israel. We thank the Lord for those who came before us, those who spent a lifetime preaching and teaching the truth, facing the error and ungodliness of their day. They accomplished much. Congregations of the Lord's people can be found around the world. We are witnessing exciting things, such as the evangelism of Eastern Europe. Each congregation is proof that Jehovah has had men and women dedicated to Him.

We should not, however, think that the job is finished. Souls are still in darkness, all around us and around the world, and opportunities may be slipping away. Friends of mine working in Russia and Eastern Europe tell me that Communism is very much alive and is still working to close the doors of evangelism.

In America and many other countries, it is obvious that "the worship of Baal" is still with us. We do not bow to idols made of stone, but we worship prosperity, power, and possessions. The writer of Hebrews said to be "content with what you have" (Hebrews 13:5); but every ad, every commercial screams, "Do not be content with what you have. You need more, more, more!"

We no longer go to the temples of Baal to engage in degrading acts of temple prostitution.

Now such acts are done in the best hotels and the "nicest" homes. The Bible still says those who engage in sexual immorality "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21), but immorality has become a way of life for many. In the providence of God, the AIDS epidemic has awakened us as a nation. However, instead of hearing that abstinence from immorality is the solution, we are hearing that handing out birth control devices to children and teaching them about "safe sex" is the solution.

The result of all this is that our nation and others are filled with heartache, pain, and degradation. One of the saddest results of all has been the deterioration of thousands of families!

God needs His men, women, boys, and girls in Israel as never before. God still needs people who will stand up for Him and His way. God still needs people who will let their voices be heard. Hardly a week passes without our hearing of other great soldiers of the cross and other faithful "mothers in Israel" who have died. Who will replace them? Who?

GOD CAN USE A SPECIAL KIND OF MEN AND WOMEN

What kind of men and women can God use? "Ready, willing, and able" are words we use to describe individuals who are eager to make a start. Let us use those words to discuss the kind of person God can use:

First, God can use someone who is *ready* to be used by Him. When Elijah was discouraged, God said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, . . . Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place" (1 Kings 19:15, 16). God had someone waiting: Elisha. I do not know exactly why or how God chose Elisha. I do not know if Elisha knew he had been chosen before Elijah threw his mantle on him. I do know that God's choosing and Elijah's mantle-tossing would have meant nothing if Elisha had not been *ready* to be used by God.

"So he [Elijah] departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat" (1 Kings 19:19a). Elijah searched until he found the one whom God told him to appoint. He did not find him in the rugged country he himself had been raised in,

but in the fertile Jordan Valley. He did not find him preaching or studying a scroll. Rather, when Elijah first looked at Elisha from a distance, he saw him “plowing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth” (1 Kings 19:19b). Elisha was a farmer. Many preachers during the U.S. Restoration Movement were farmers, supporting themselves by the sweat of the brow, while they used every opportunity to preach the gospel. God can use anyone who is *ready* to be used.

“Elijah passed over to him and threw his mantle on him”⁷ (1 Kings 19:20a). This had to be a strange occasion to Elisha. Elisha had no doubt heard of Elijah, but there is no reason to believe that they had met each other. One day while Elisha was plowing, there appeared from nowhere a barbaric creature with eyes like fire. The man looked at him, then pulled off his mantle—a rough cloak around his shoulders, soaked with sweat from his body, dusty from the trails he had traveled, worn from its use as a pillow at night. He pulled off his mantle and, without a word, put it around Elisha’s shoulders.

Apparently, Elisha knew what this meant. Perhaps God had given Elisha a vision. More likely, Elisha knew about Elijah and his mantle and instinctively knew the significance of Elijah’s gesture.

What would Elisha’s response be? God never forces us to do His will. He made us free moral agents; we can decide to be used by Him or not. Elisha’s response was positive and immediate. “And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, ‘Please let me kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow you’” (1 Kings 19:20a). No doubt his own soul had been grieved at the spiritual cancer that had been eating at the country. “I am ready to go!” he was saying. “Just give me a minute to tell my parents good-by.”

Someone may say, “I remember when a potential disciple said, ‘I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-by to those at home.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God’ (Luke 9:61, 62). After Elisha said he wanted to kiss his parents, Elijah replied, ‘Go back again, for what have I done to you?’

⁷If you use a mantle as a visual aid, pantomime Elijah’s actions.

(1 Kings 19:20b). The two cases sound the same to me. I’m not sure Elisha was that ready to go!”

The difference in the cases is in the hearts of those involved. When Jesus looked into the hearts of the three would-be disciples in Luke 9:57-62, He knew they were making excuses; they had no desire to commit themselves to all that was involved in being a full-time disciple. Specifically, two of the three had no plans to follow Jesus at once, but rather at some undefined point in the future. On the other hand, subsequent events show that Elisha was not making an excuse, but that he was ready immediately to follow Elijah.

The subsequent events also help us to understand that Elijah’s words were not necessarily a rebuke.⁸ Elijah was probably giving him permission to return briefly to tell everyone good-by. In asking, “What have I done to you?” Elijah may be implying, “I’ve called you to be a prophet, but that does not mean you have to break all ties with your family.”⁹ Tell them what you will be doing; *then* come with me.”¹⁰

So he [Elisha] returned from following him [Elijah], and took the pair of oxen [he had been plowing with] and sacrificed them [as Elijah had sacrificed an ox on Mount Carmel]¹¹ and boiled their flesh [that which was left after the sacrifice had been made]¹² with the implements of the oxen [the wooden yoke, the bridles], and gave it to the people and they ate (1 Kings 19:21a).

Elisha gave a banquet of celebration, a farewell banquet, for his family and friends, providing everything himself. The main course was his means of livelihood. Elisha was burning his bridges behind him. We are reminded of the converted magicians in Ephesus who burned their books of sorcery (Acts 19:19).

“Then he arose and followed Elijah and ministered to him” (1 Kings 19:21b). Elisha did not

⁸Some think they were a test of whether Elisha was serious about being a prophet. This would make the words similar to the words Jesus spoke to the men in Luke 9.

⁹This is an important point for any full-time servant of the Lord to ponder.

¹⁰There are other possibilities on the meaning of Elijah’s cryptic words. See standard commentaries and “How God Cured a Case of the Blues,” *Truth for Today* (August 1993), “Elijah (1 Kings 17–19),” by David Roper.

¹¹The word translated “sacrificed” can simply mean “slaughtered.” Perhaps that is all Elisha did.

¹²In most sacrifices, only a portion of the animal was sacrificed. The edible part that was left was eaten by the priests.

hesitate. He said “good-by” and then followed Elijah like the fishermen who left their nets without hesitation and followed Jesus (Matthew 4:20).

As God chose Elisha, so God has chosen *you*—in a different but special way. In giving you life, talents, and time, He has equipped you to do a work no one else can do.

I can hear objections: “But I have no special talents”; “I’m too young”; “I’m too old”; “I’m too busy raising my family”; “There is nothing I can do for the Lord.”

My oldest daughter, Cindy, and her husband, Richard, are raising their children (my grandchildren!) in Brasov, Romania, where they serve as missionaries. The work there was started by older members of the body of Christ who were retired from their jobs but not from the Lord’s work. Another worker there is a young, unmarried woman, who has done mission work in several countries. Young or old, married or unmarried, with or without children—God’s work has a place for all.

Objectors may protest, “That is too drastic for us! We were not talking about tearing up roots! We meant that there is nothing for us to do around here.” Before me is a letter from a dear friend¹³ in his seventies and in poor health. He recently returned to the Lord after a lifetime of unfaithfulness. One Sunday, after I challenged each member of the congregation to find a special ministry, this friend spoke to me sadly. “I squandered my years and my talents,” he said. He wanted help in finding his ministry; he was not sure there was one. His mind is still sharp, though, and he has a fine command of the English language. I had seen his letters to the editor in the local paper. I asked him to write articles for our church bulletin and encouraged him to think of other ways of using his special talent. Enclosed with the note I just received was his latest letter to the editor, headed “Church leaders need to fight filthy, degrading, vulgar [TV] shows.” The last paragraph begins, “Are we, as concerned people, going to sit back and watch the destruction [of our nation], or are we going to fight back, deciding enough is enough?” The article sounds as if it were written for this lesson!

The question is not, Can God use me? The answer to that is a resounding “Yes!” The ques-

tion is, Are you *ready* to be used by Him?

Second, God can use someone who is *willing* to prepare himself. After Elisha received his commission, he traveled with Elijah, apparently for many years, preparing himself for the work ahead. He did not travel as “the associate minister,” “the vice-president in charge of sheepskins,” or “the heir apparent.” He traveled as a servant. “Then he . . . followed Elijah and *ministered* to [served] him.” (1 Kings 19:21; emphasis mine). Second Kings 3:11 says that he poured water on Elijah’s hands; he did the most menial of tasks. If God is to use us, we must be willing servants.

As Elisha served, he was getting on-the-job training. Elijah was saying to him, in effect, “Watch me as I do this; then you try.” This is the kind of training America depended on for many years. This is the way animals and birds train their young. Often it is the best training.

In 2 Kings 2, after the sons of the prophets saw the waters of the river part for Elisha, they cried, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha” (v. 15). Elisha, however, started imbibing the spirit of Elijah long before he picked up Elijah’s mantle and struck the river. He had partaken of Elijah’s spirit day by day as he walked with the prophet of fire over the dusty trails of the northern kingdom and climbed the mountains. He had learned what it was to be a prophet as he spent long, cold winter nights with Elijah in the open. Hiking and camping with our families or the Boy Scouts may be a fun adventure, but hiking with the wild man from Gilead would have been another story. Elijah did not believe in frills. Elisha persevered, however. When the time came for him to take up the mantle, he was prepared.

God has a work for you to do; He has given you talents and abilities to use to His glory (Matthew 25). This does not mean that the use of them is automatic. Chances are, it will take preparation—maybe years of preparation—to use them fully for the Master.

I interviewed a masterful comedy magician for an article I was writing. During the interview, his wife leaned over and said confidentially, “He loves to do shows, but he doesn’t like the ‘p’ words.” Hesitantly, I asked what the ‘p’ words were. She replied, “Preparation and practice.”

Most preparation is not fun, but little is accomplished in life without preparation and prac-

¹³Allen Morris of Cleburne, Texas.

tice. I loved to play football, but I did not look forward to the grueling days of practice under the Oklahoma sun. I remember the sweat, the pain, and my lungs feeling as if they would burst. I disliked the preparation, but if I wanted to play football, I had to prepare. I love to preach. I am not excited about the preparation and practice necessary (especially the memory work), but I do it because I want to do my best for the Lord.

One of the best ways to prepare is to do as Elisha did: Spend as much time as possible with a true servant of the Lord, doing all you can to help him or her. You will learn by doing. You will learn what serving the Lord is all about.

Third, God can use someone who is *able* to endure to the end. Elijah spent his last day on the earth with Elisha. After traveling from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho, they came to the Jordan River. Elijah took off his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water.¹⁴ The water parted, and they crossed on dry ground (2 Kings 2:8).

When they were on the other side, Elijah said, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you" (v. 9a). He desired to leave his faithful follower a parting gift, an expression of love. Elisha replied, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me" (v. 9b). Elisha wanted to be Elijah's spiritual heir (Deuteronomy 21).¹⁵ Elijah told Elisha that his request would be granted if he saw Elijah taken away (v. 10).

Verse 11 begins, "Then it came about as they were going along and talking, . . ." Wouldn't you like to know what they talked about? Did they talk about the great days of the life of Elijah? Did they talk about the contest on Mount Carmel and other spectacular events? Perhaps they laughed together as they remembered humorous things that had happened when they were together.

As they were walking and talking, "there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire" which came between Elisha and Elijah. Through the whirling dust, however, Elisha could still see Elijah. As he watched, Elijah went up, up, up, out of sight (v. 11b)!

As Elijah vanished, Elisha grabbed the top edge of his outer garment with both hands and

¹⁴If you use a mantle as a visual aid, duplicate Elijah's actions.

¹⁵There were other prophets (1 Kings 20, 22; 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7; etc.).

¹⁶Genesis 37:29; 2 Samuel 13:19; Job 1:20; 2:12, etc.

ripped the garment in two, a sign of great sorrow.¹⁶ At that point, Elisha was more full of sorrow than rejoicing, just as we are when a loved one is taken from us. If the deceased was a faithful Christian, it is a time of victory for him or her, but for us it is a time of loss. We weep (but not as those "who have no hope").¹⁷

As the dust settled, Elisha walked to the spot from which Elijah had been taken. Elijah's mantle was lying on the ground.¹⁸ Apparently, everything else pertaining to Elijah, even the rest of his clothing, was taken up with him. The mantle, however, was left behind. Elisha looked at the mantle, then back at the Jordan River.¹⁹ Conflicting emotions must have chased each other through his mind: excitement over what might be, concern over what might not be.

He picked up the mantle and headed to the Jordan (v. 13). When he reached the muddy stream, he rolled up the mantle and struck the water,²⁰ shouting, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" (v. 14a). No doubt is seen in Elisha's words concerning God's existence. He was asking, "Are you *here*, Lord? Did I receive the double portion? Will the water part for me as it did for Elijah?" It did (v. 14b)!

The sons of the prophets had been watching all that happened (v. 7), probably from an elevated spot near Jericho, some distance from Elijah and Elisha. They could tell something had happened, but they were not sure what. However, they could see that the Jordan River parted for Elijah as he went east, and now it parted for Elisha as he came west toward them. The conclusion seemed clear.

Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho opposite him saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him (v. 15).

The sons of the prophets, who had shown great respect for Elijah,²¹ now respected Elisha.

¹⁷1 Thessalonians 4:13ff.

¹⁸If you use a mantle as a visual aid, toss it to the floor.

¹⁹Pick up the mantle, look at it, and look over your shoulder.

²⁰If you use a mantle as a visual aid, pantomime Elijah's action.

²¹One evidence is the fact that they had hesitated earlier to speak directly to Elijah, but rather had spoken to his servant (2 Kings 2:3, 5).

The sons of the prophets were not sure what had happened to Elijah. Since there had only been one case before this time of someone caught up to heaven without dying, they found it hard to believe this had happened to Elijah. Elijah had a reputation for being mysteriously carried here and there by “the Spirit of the Lord” (1 Kings 18:12). They thought perhaps God had merely levitated him to another location.²²

And they said to him [Elisha], “Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men, please let them go and search for your master; perhaps the Spirit of the Lord has taken him up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley” (v. 16a).

Note the sons of the prophets called themselves Elisha’s “servants,” and they asked his permission to search. Elisha knew searching for Elijah would be a waste of time. At first he said, “No” (v. 16b). The sons of the prophets continued to ask until Elisha “was ashamed” (v. 17a)—until he was ashamed to persist in his denial. The NEB has “had not the heart to refuse.” Elisha finally said, “Send” (v. 17a). They searched for three days and could not find Elijah (v. 17b).

Elisha waited for them at Jericho. When they returned, he said, “Did I not say to you, ‘Do not go?’” (v. 18). There seems to be the implication, “If you consider me your leader, you must learn to accept my word.”

Two stories immediately follow in the chapter. These are apparently told to show that Elisha had the same power Elijah had, a twofold power to bless and to punish. First is the story about the healing of the water at Jericho. Before Elisha could leave Jericho, the people wanted something from him. The water was bad, which caused the land to be “unfruitful” (v. 19). Using a new jar and salt, Elijah purified (literally, “healed”) the water (vv. 20-22).

Chapter 2 closes with the controversial story about two female bears attacking forty-two disrespectful young men—a large “street gang” that made fun of God’s prophet. Apparently, the purpose of the story is to show that Elisha had the same sort of power Elijah used when he called down fire from heaven. The lesson is not that we should keep a bear or two in the backyard, ready to turn loose on anyone who makes fun of the gospel.²³ Rather, it is

²²Philip was “snatched away” by the Spirit to Azotus (Acts 8:39, 40).

²³See the lesson entitled “Who Says I’m Too Old?”

given to teach us to respect God and His Word.

As the chapter closes, we read of Elisha’s going to Mount Carmel—perhaps to renew his spirit²⁴ (all of us need to do that from time to time). Then he returned to Samaria (v. 25), where he apparently had a home (2 Kings 5:3).

As we read these verses and survey the chapters that follow, we are impressed with two facts: (1) Elisha was blessed by having “the mantle fall on him,” and (2) he received a heavy responsibility by having the mantle fall on him.

He was blessed in that he was afforded honor. We have seen that the sons of the prophets called themselves his servants and asked his permission to search. This pattern continues in the chapters that follow. In 2 Kings 4:1 the son of a prophet is called the “servant” of Elisha. In 6:1, 2, the sons of the prophets ask Elisha’s permission to build. Apparently, Elijah had authority over these prophets and that authority was transferred to Elisha.

Elisha also took on heavy responsibilities. The next eleven chapters tell of the great work Elisha did. In those chapters we read much more about Elisha than we do about the kings of Judah and Israel. For instance, in chapter 4, we read of the miracle of the oil, the miracle of a son born to one who provided a “prophet’s chamber,” the story of “death in the pot,” and the miracle of the multiplying of food. Chapter 5 tells of the healing of Naaman. In chapter 6 we see the miracle of the floating axe head and the story of the blinding of the Syrian army. In chapters 6 and 7, we read about the miraculous defeat of Syria after the terrible famine in Samaria.

Thus the story continues until Elisha’s death in chapter 13. Elisha was a person God could use: one who was *able* to endure to the end.

When you make yourself available to God, you will be blessed. You will also have heavier responsibilities.²⁵ I cannot imagine more awesome responsibilities than those of being an elder in the Lord’s church²⁶—or of being a deacon, or a teacher or preacher, or another servant of the Lord. If you wish to serve God for a lifetime, you must not only be ready to appreciate your blessings, but you must also be ready to accept responsibility.

The question is, Will we be *able* to endure to the

²⁴This seems to have been a favorite resort of Elisha (note 2 Kings 4:25).

²⁵This is the point James makes in James 3:1.

²⁶Hebrews 13:17.

end? Jesus said, "It is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). Remember, He also said, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

It is not easy to endure to the end. God has promised to be with us and strengthen us (Hebrews 13:6), but He has not promised us an easy life. I can give you a few guarantees if you decide to be God's man, woman, boy, or girl in Israel. I can guarantee that you will have responsibilities and great challenges. I can guarantee that at times it will be hard. Paul said, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). I have tried to be as frank as I could in this series; I have tried not to sugar-coat what is involved in committing your life to the Lord. It is not easy to stand alone. It can get lonely.

That is only one side of the picture. I can also guarantee you blessings—both here and in eternity. You will have God's presence and strength now, and someday you will hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21, 23, KJV)!

CONCLUSION

It is a special thing to be God's man or woman in Israel. "To be such a person, you must be ready, willing, and able." The kind of person God can use is *ready* to be used by Him, *willing* to prepare himself, and *able* to endure to the end. The question is, *Are you ready, willing, and able? Are you willing for the mantle to fall on you?*

Elijah's mantle²⁷ was not fancy. It would have been dirty, sweat-soaked, and worn—but it was still the symbol of the work God sent Elijah to do. Ask yourself what you would have done if Elijah had thrown that mantle on you. Would you have said, "Get that foul-smelling thing off of me"? Or would you have said, "I am ready to go! I am ready to burn my bridges. I am ready to be whatever God wants me to be"?

God wants you. He first wants you to be a Christian.²⁸ Then He wants you to be an active,

²⁷If you use a mantle as a visual aid, hold it as you close.

²⁸To become a Christian, you need to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess with your lips your faith in Jesus, and be baptized (immersed in water) for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 22:16).

courageous voice for Him. I hope and pray that you will wrap God's mantle around you²⁹ and go forward to serve!

VISUAL-AID NOTES

Make or secure something that will serve as the type of thing Elijah might have thrown around his shoulders. I have a sheepskin rug from Australia. Perhaps someone would make a large shawl for you out of rough, brown material. Use this throughout the lesson to emphasize various points (see footnotes in lesson).

LESSON OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- A. Many positions in life have their special symbols of identification and authority. For Elijah, it was his mantle (1 Kings 19:13, 19; 2 Kings 2:8), which was made of skin, hair, or other rough material (2 Kings 1:8; 2:8; Zechariah 13:4; Matthew 3:3, 4).
- B. In our last lesson, the mantle fell on Elisha as Elijah was caught up in a whirlwind. We want to close our series with this challenge: Let the mantle fall on *you*.

I. GOD STILL NEEDS HIS MAN IN ISRAEL.

- A. God still needed His man in Israel after Elijah was translated.
 1. Elijah had done an outstanding job.
 - a. Before Elijah came on the scene, even lip-service given to Jehovah would have been unthinkable; but after he came, we see prophets of Jehovah speaking boldly, the name of Jehovah invoked, and the schools of the prophets established.
 - b. One of Ahab's sons put away the sacred pillar of Baal (2 Kings 3:2).
 2. This did not mean everything had been done. Baal worship continued (2 Kings 10:18ff.), and other evils prevailed.
- B. God needs His people in Israel today.
 1. Much has been done in the past.
 - a. Congregations of the Lord's church exist around the world.
 - b. The gospel is going into much of the

²⁹If you use a mantle as a visual aid, wrap it around your shoulders.

- world.
2. We should not think that the job is finished.
 - a. Souls are still in darkness.
 - b. "The worship of Baal" is still with us: the worship of prosperity, power, and possessions (Hebrews 13:5).
 - c. Degrading acts of sexual immorality abound (Galatians 5:19-21).
 - d. Our nation is filled with heartache, pain, and degradation. Thousands of homes are disintegrating.

II. GOD CAN USE A SPECIAL KIND OF MEN AND WOMEN

- A. God can use someone who is *ready* to be used by Him.
 1. When Elijah threw his mantle on Elisha, Elisha was ready to respond (1 Kings 19:15, 16, 19-22).
 2. In a sense, God has also chosen you to be His man or woman in Israel. He wants you to commit your time, your talents, and your life to Him. Are you *ready* to be used by Him?
- B. God can use someone who is *willing* to prepare himself.
 1. After Elisha received his divine commission, for years he was a prophet-in-training as he traveled with Elijah (1 Kings 18:21; 2 Kings 3:11). Thus, when Elijah was translated and the mantle fell on Elisha, he was prepared to carry on Elijah's work.
 2. God has given you a work to do and the ability to do it, but preparation is necessary to do the work.
- C. God can use someone who is *able* to endure to the end.
 1. Elisha was a persistent individual. When Elijah tried to get him to stay at each location on the last day of his life, Elisha persistently stayed with Elijah. As a result, Elisha was rewarded by the "spirit of Elijah" resting upon him (2 Kings 2:8-18). It was necessary after this, however, for Elisha to continue their work, remaining faithful to the end.
 - a. Elisha received blessings as the mantle of Elijah fell on him. The respect shown to Elijah was now shown to him (2

- Kings 2:15, 16; cf. 4:1; 6:1, 2).
 - b. He also received heavy responsibilities to help those in need and to punish those who were disrespectful of God (vv. 19-25).
2. If God is to use us, we, too, must be persistent.
 - a. We will be blessed as God's men and women in Israel—both here (Hebrews 13:6) and eternally (Matthew 25:21, 23). We will, however, also have greater responsibilities (James 3:1; Hebrews 13:17; Acts 14:22; etc.).
 - b. God can use us if we endure to the end (Matthew 10:22; Luke 9:62).

CONCLUSION

- A. "Ready, willing, and able" are words we use to describe the individual who is eager to make a start. Those words are also used to describe the kind of individual God can use.
- B. What would you have done if Elijah had thrown that mantle on you? I hope you would have said, "I am ready to go!" Wrap His mantle around you, and go forward to serve!

