

Study Guide for  
ELIJAH & ELISHA:  
CONSCIENCE OF THE KINGDOM

By Stephen K. Ray

Based on the Ignatius Bible, RSV, 2<sup>nd</sup> Catholic edition and  
the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

[Pages are formatted at 8" x 5" with a type font size of 9 points]

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## CHAPTER 1: OF GODS & MEN

After Joshua conquered the land of Canaan, the Israelites settled into an agrarian lifestyle. They learned farming from the local Canaanites and they also flirted with their pagan gods. The northern tribes broke from Jerusalem and set up their own new temples and worshiped golden calves. They also bowed down to the Canaanite deities Baal and Asherah. They even sacrificed infants to the foreign gods. There are several reasons they fell for these gods and their hideous worship practices. God sent prophets to be his voice and to demonstrate his power. Elijah, the Father of the Prophets, and his protégé Elisha, stepped up to confront the king, the people and all their false gods and to advance the worship of YHWH, the God of Israel.

### Questions for further discussion and study:

1. What work did the Israelites do before entering the Promised Land (Ex 1:11-14)? Who lived in Canaan before God gave it to Israel (Josh 24:11)? What did God give to the Israelites (Josh 24:13)? What was the predominant occupation in Israel (Ex 34:21)? The Israelites had been nomadic shepherds, then makers of bricks for buildings in Egypt (Ex 1:14; 5:8-14). From whom do you think they learned the new agrarian lifestyle? What gods did the Canaanites serve (Deut 7:1-5; Judg 2:11-13; 2 Kings 17:16)?
2. How many Gods are there (Deut 4:35, 39; 6:4; CCC 228, 2083)? What did King Solomon do to anger God and bring about the unfortunate split of the kingdom (1 Kgs 11:1-3)? Due to Solomon's idolatry, how did the great schism take place in Israel (1 Kings 11:30)? When Jeroboam took the ten northern tribes of Israel and broke away from Solomon's son Rehoboam, what did he do (1 King 12:26-31)? Who else had made golden calves to worship (Exodus 32:1-8; Psalm 106:19-21)?
3. To the south of Jerusalem is the Valley of Hinnom (Josh 15:8) which was the city dump. Jesus pointed to Gehenna (Hebrew for "Valley of Hinnom") as he described Hell (Matt 5:22; Mk 9:43, Greek word for "hell" is *Gehenna*)? How does Jesus refer to hell (CCC 1034)? What did the Israelites do in this valley (Jer 32:35)?
4. We will now look briefly at the gods Molech (of the Ammonites and Canaanites) and Chemosh (of the Moabites) and their evil practices (1 Kings 11:7). What gods did Israel worship in their idolatry (2 Kings 23:13; Jer 48:7; Acts 7:43)? What did these gods require and where was it practiced even in Israel ( 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 2 Chron 28:3; Isa 57:5; Jer 7:31; Ezek 16:20, 21; 20:26, 31; 23:37, 39; see Lev 18:21; 20:2-5)? How is the wicked practice of infant sacrifice very much like the common practice of abortion?
5. What other gods did the Israelites worship (Judg 2:11-13; 2 Kings 17:16; 21:3; Hos 13:1)? Where is one place they worshipped the foreign god Baal

(Hosea 2:8; 4:12-13; 5:1)? Baal was represented as a bull which was a symbol of fertility. Hosea mentions Baal five times. What form did Baal take (Tobit 1:5; Hos 13:2; 1 Kings 19:8)? “The young bull was the animal that symbolized the Canaanite god Baal.”<sup>1</sup> Since fertility was at the heart of the cultic practices of Baal and Asherah, what evil practices ensued (Deut 23:17; 1 Kin 14:24; 15:12 2 Kings 23:7; Hos 4:14)? Besides sexual perversion, what other atrocities were associated with Baal (Jer 32:35)?

*“Ba’al, the supreme male divinity of the Phoenician and Canaanitish nations, as Ashtoreth was their supreme female divinity. ... There can be no doubt of the very high antiquity of the worship of Baal. It prevailed in the time of Moses among the Moabites and Midianites, Num. 22:41, and through them spread to the Israelites. Num. 25:3–18; Deut. 4:3. In the times of the kings it became the religion of the court and people of the ten tribes, 1 Kings 16:31–33; 18:19, 22, and appears never to have been permanently abolished among them. 2 Kings 17:16. Temples were erected to Baal in Judah, 1 Kings 16:32, and he was worshipped with much ceremony. 1 Kings 18:19, 26–28; 2 Kings 10:22. The attractiveness of this worship to the Jews undoubtedly grew out of its licentious character.”<sup>2</sup>*

6. What are behind all these foreign gods and idols (Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; Psa. 106:35-38; 1 Cor. 10:20)?

7. People of different ages and cultures set up their own gods. What gods do people worship today in place of the living God (Matt 16:26; Phil 3:19; Rom 16:18; 2 Tim 2:1-5; CCC 2113, 2289)?

## **CHAPTER 2: ELIJAH AND THE DUELING DEITIES**

Elijah the Tishbite was a rugged man who tended to be a loner. He was fearless in the face of danger but at other times fearful and despondent when he thought his efforts for God had failed. His prophetic ministry was to the separated northern Ten Tribes of Israel who were committing gross idolatry. He confronted King Ahab and Queen Jezebel resulting in a contest between the gods. Elijah, living up to the meaning of his name “the Lord is God” proved with mighty deeds that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was the only true God. Baal was supposedly the god of rain and fire yet Elijah proved Baal he was a false god by stopping the rain for three and half years and then calling down fire from heaven. After his efforts failed to convince evil King Ahab, he fled to Mount Sinai where he met God on the mountain.

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Edward Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland Edmund Murphy, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 191.

<sup>2</sup> William Smith, *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986).

### Questions for further discussion and study:

1. To confront the evils practiced by Israel who did God send (CCC 64, 2595)? What was the mission of the prophets (CCC 201, 2581, 2584)? The prophets are men sent from God to warn people of sin and to prepare God's covenant people for the coming salvation through Jesus Christ—they are God's mouthpieces (E.g., Num 12:6, 8; Ex 7:1; Jer 1:9; Isa 51:16; CCC 702).

2. Who was the Father of the Prophets and what was his mission; what does his name mean (CCC 2582)? Where was Elijah from and what was his appearance (1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 1:8)?

3. Who were Elijah's main adversaries (1 Kings 16:29–33; 17:1)? Where did King Ahab and Jezebel live (1 Kings 16:29; 22:39)? Where was Queen Jezebel from and what was her father's name (1 Kings 16:31)? What did Jezebel do (1 Kings 18:4, 13, 19; 2 Kings 3:2, 13; 9:7, 22)? What did Ahab do that angered the Lord (1 Kings 16:32-33; 21:25-26)?

4. Where do we first meet Elijah and what does he proclaim to Ahab? (1 Kings 17:1)? Knowing this is an agrarian society that depends upon the rain, why is this a powerful challenge? Since Baal is supposedly the god of fertility, and thus of storms and rain, who is Elijah really challenging?

*“[Baal] the name of the most important Canaanite deity, the god of rain, storms, and fertility.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“Beside the Lord, the people worshipped Baal, the reassuring idol from which it was believed that the gift of rain came, and to which, was therefore attributed the power of making fields fertile and giving life to people and animals.”<sup>4</sup>*

5. Having risked his life by chastising the king, what does God tell Elijah to do and how did Elijah survive (1 Kings 17:2-7)? Following this where does Elijah go (1 Kings 17:8-9)? What miracle did he perform for the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:10-16; CCC 2583)? What other powerful miracle does he perform, again to prove the power of Yahweh, the God of Israel, over Baal in his own land (1 Kings 17:17-23)? What was the foreign woman's response (1 Kings 17:24)? Since Sidon was not within the boundaries of Israel why might it be significant that Elijah is sent there? Why does Jesus mention this episode in Elijah's life (Lu 4:24-26)?

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<sup>3</sup> Scott Hahn, ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 2009), 84.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, *General Audiences of Benedict XVI (English)* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013).

6. Now we come to the dueling deities. We have Elijah at one altar serving Yahweh the God of Israel. At the other altar we have the 450 prophets of Baal, the false god of the Phoenicians and the Canaanites. How long had there been no rain (1 Kings 18:1; Luke 4:25; James 5:17)? How does the battle begin (1 Kings 18:16-19)? How does Ahab respond to Elijah's challenge (1 Kings 18:20)? Imagine the electricity atop Mount Muhraka in the Carmel Mountain range with all the people watching on with the king present.

7. Elijah does not address the king but the people. What does he say (1 Kings 18:20-24)? The odds are not in his favor—he a lone prophet against 450 prophets of Baal. He then addresses these false prophets. What is the challenge and what do the prophets of Baal do (1 Kings 18:25-29)? Seeing no results all day, how does Elijah mock them (1 Kings 18:27)? It is humorous how he taunts them. In one case he says, “maybe he has gone aside.” What does Elijah mean by this? According to many Hebrew lexicons and commentaries this means “bowel movement, defecation, i.e., the act of relieving oneself from the bowels (1Ki 18:27)”.<sup>5</sup>

8. After the embarrassing failure of the false prophets to call down fire from heaven through Baal, what did Elijah do (1 Kings 18:30-37)? Why is it significant that Elijah demands they pour so much water on his altar? What happened when Elijah prayed to Yahweh to send fire down from heaven and what was the people's response (1 Kings 18:38-39; CCC 696)? What did Elijah do to the false prophets (1 Kings 18:40)? How do other writers of the Bible respond to this courageous act of the prophet (Sirach 48:3)? How is he an example of faith and prayer for us (James 5:16-18; CCC 2582)?

9. Now that Elijah has defeated Baal with fire he now demonstrate Yahweh's power over the rains. Of what does he inform Ahab and where does Elijah go (1 Kings 18:41-42)? What forms over the Mediterranean Sea (1 Kings 18:43-45)? How does his next action prove he was a rugged and strong man (1 Kings 18:46)? Surely Ahab and Jezebel, seeing that Yahweh had the real power, relented from their worship of Baal, right? How did they respond (1 Kings 19:1-2)?

10. We always think the prophets and other famous people of God are always strong and full of faith. But how did Elijah feel after the king and queen failed to believe his word and repent (1 Kings 19:4)? What did the angel do and what did he command Elijah to do (1 Kings 19:5-8)? How long did it take Elijah to walk to Mount Horeb (another name for Mount Sinai)?

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<sup>5</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

11. While hiding in a cave on the same mountain God had revealed himself to Moses and given him the Ten Commandments, what did Elijah also experience (1 Kings 9-12; CCC 2583)? In what did Elijah hear or feel the presence of God (1 Kings 19:12-13; CCC 217)? How does Sirach interpret this event (Sir 48:7)? What had God said to Moses (Ex 34:6)?

*“Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit—his actions, his gifts, and his biddings” (CCC 1309). God speaks in a “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12), and if we are to hear it, we need to develop the lifelong habit of listening to this voice—in our personal prayer, in reading Scripture, in our participation in the Church’s liturgy, and in all of life’s occasions and relationships.”<sup>6</sup>*

12. Thinking ahead—what other mountain, again in relation to Moses, will Elijah see God again on another mountain (CCC 253)? How does the biblical book of Sirach summarize the life of Elijah (Sirach 48:1-11)?

### **CHAPTER 3: ELISHA AND THE DOUBLE PORTION**

Returning from Mount Sinai, Elijah chooses young Elisha, son of Shaphat to be his protégé. His name means “God is salvation.” The hairy Elijah commissions the baldheaded Elisha by casting his mantle upon him. Elisha left his farming and followed Elijah. He witnessed his mentor taken up into heaven in a whirlwind and received a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. He continued the battle against pagan gods and idolatry. God’s power manifested itself through Elisha’s many miracles continuing to demonstrate that Yahweh of Israel was the only God. He healed the waters of Jericho, multiplied loaves and oil, raised the dead, cured a leper and much more. He is a prefiguring of Christ and he help to prepare the way for the coming Messiah.

#### **Questions for further discussion and study:**

1. Who was Elisha’s father and where did he live (1 Kings 19:16)? What was his career and what was he doing when Elijah returned from Mount Sinai and found him (1 Kings 19:19)? After Elijah commissions Elisha by casting his mantle on him, what did Elisha do with his oxen (1 Kings 19:20-21)? Consider Elisha had land and lots of oxen plowing in the fields which implies a man of means. St. Peter also had a home and business and was well off. How is Elisha’s response similar to that of Peter and the apostles when they were called by Jesus (Matt 4:18-22; Lu 5:11)? What do these actions signify?

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Kreeft, *Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of Catholic Beliefs Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 319.

2. We return for a moment to King Ahab and Queen Jezebel to finish their story. What had Elijah prophesied concerning King Ahab's end (1 Kings 21:18-19; 22:37-38)? What had Elijah prophesied against Queen Jezebel (2 Kings 9:36-37)? What actually happened to the evil queen (2 Kings 9:30-35)?

3. Now that Elijah's successor has been chosen and commissioned—and other events have taken place—we come to the final stage of his ministry and his exit. After Elijah says his good-byes to the other prophets (2 Kings 1:1-6) what does he do (2 Kings 1:7-8)? Who had earlier done something similar at this very place in the Jordan River (Josh 3:14-17)?

4. Elisha made a bold request of Elijah and what were the conditions to receive what he requested (2 Kings 2:9-10)? Elisha's eyes were opened to witness heavenly actions. What did he see (2 Kings 2:11-12)? Was the condition of receiving the double portion fulfilled and what did Elisha retrieve that fell from Elijah (2 Kings 2:13-15)? How can we also be sharers in this spirit (CCC 2684)? How does Scripture refer to this assumption into heaven (Sir 9, 12; 1 Mac 2:58)? How does this assumption into heaven "prepare the way" for another assumption body and soul into heaven (CCC 966; Rev 12:1)? People tend to doubt in assumptions into heaven. What did the people do after Elijah's entry into heaven body and soul (2 Kings 2:15-18)?

5. During his roughly sixty years as prophet, Elisha did many powerful miracles proving the power of Yahweh, the God of Israel, over the false gods of the surrounding nations. After parting the waters of the Jordan, what was Elisha's second recorded miracle (2 Kings 2:19-22)?

6. What kind of "hair style" did Elisha apparently have (2 Kings 2:23)? His third act of power and authority is a bit macabre. Remembering that Elijah has just gone up into heaven, what were these rowdy boys chanting at Elisha (2 Kings 2:23-24)? Considering that 42 were actually mauled by the bears how many were likely threatening Elisha?

*"The paucity of references to the physical characteristics of prophets in the OT throws this into sharp relief. It is in direct contrast to the identifying features of Elijah (1:8). Since artificial baldness was legislated against in Israel (Deut 14:1), Elisha's condition was a natural one."*<sup>7</sup>

*"[It shows] the continuing opposition to a true prophet in Bethel, the chief centre of pagan calf-worship. The main objection lies in the curse ... in the name of the Lord (v. 24). In the Deuteronomistic doctrine of retributive justice*

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<sup>7</sup> Hobbs, T. R. 2 Kings. Vol. 13. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998. *Word Biblical Commentary*, 24.

*(Deut. 7:10) this was a requirement against anyone mocking a prophet, an act which was the equivalent of belittling God himself (Deut. 18:19; Lev. 24:10–16). ... To deride God's representative (cf. 2 Chr. 36:16) as God himself (Gal. 6:7) or his city (Ezra 2:25) inevitably incurs judgment.*"<sup>8</sup>

7. What is the next miracle of Elisha (2 Kings 4:1-7)? How does this anticipate the miracles of Jesus (Jn 6:5-14)? Jesus owned no property; he had no place to lay his head but was taken care of by others (Lu 9:58)? How was Elisha's situation the same (2 Kings 4:8-11; Mk 1:29, 35; 2:1)

8. What is the fifth recorded miracle of Elisha (2 Kings 4:11-17)? After this miracle the boy dies which leads to Elisha's sixth recorded miracle (2 Kings 4:18-37)? How does this anticipate the miracles of Jesus (Lu 7:11-17)? Many of Elisha's miracles regarded eating or drinking. What was his seventh miracle (2 Kings 4:38-31)? You will have to read the rest of 2 Kings to see the full ministry of Elisha and his many works of power. But we need to discuss two very important remaining miracles which anticipate the miracles of Jesus Christ.

9. Elisha's miracles anticipate the New Covenant and find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. For example, once there were one hundred hungry men with no food. Someone offered Elisha twenty loaves of barley bread. Elisha said, "Give the loaves to the men so they may eat." (2 Kings 4:42-44)? Does verse 44 bring to mind something from the miracles of Jesus (Matt 14:20; 15:37; John 6:13)? This multiplication of loaves by Elisha anticipates the miracles of the multiplication of loaves by Jesus Christ which in turn prefigures the superabundance of the unique bread of the Eucharist (CCC 1335, 1151).

10. Read the story of Naaman the the captain of the army of Syria and his disease of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14)? What sacrament does this washing and healing anticipate (CCC 1214-1215)? What was Naaman's response (2 Kings 5:15)? Naaman acknowledges Yahweh as Lord of the whole earth—but in a special way also of Israel—so he takes home soil from God's presence upon which to build his altar and to stand upon when he worships. How does this help understand "holy ground" and sacramentals (2 Kings 5:17; see also Ex 3:5)?

*"As Naaman was cured by washing in the waters of the Jordan (cf. 2 Kings 5:1–14), so the baptized is cured in the waters of Baptism....As the waters of the Jordan cleansed Naaman of leprosy not due to their intrinsic power but the grace of God, so the waters of Baptism cleanse the soul of sin not*

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<sup>8</sup> Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 9, Tynedale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 210.

*due to their intrinsic power but the grace of God....While Naaman dipped 7 times in the Jordan (cf. 2 Kings 5:14) to be cleansed under the old law, under the new law the baptized is dipped 3 times in the name of the Trinity (St. Ambrose, On the Mysteries).’’<sup>9</sup>*

11. How is Naaman the Syrian memorialized in the Gospels (Lk 4:27)? How were Jesus’ words a rebuke to the people of Israel in Jesus’ time and even for us today?

#### **CHAPTER 4: “HE HAS SPOKEN THROUGH THE PROPHETS**

After about sixty years of ministry Elisha died and was buried in Samaria. After a period of time a dead man is tossed into Elisha’s grave and making contact with the prophet’s bones, he came back alive. Elisha’s bones were rescued from desecration, along with the bones of John the Baptist, and taken to Egypt where they remain to this day. God sent many other prophets to the northern and southern kingdoms. These prophets risked their lives and many were killed for speaking the word of the Lord. Eventually both kingdoms were defeated and sent into exile. The tribe of Judah returned to Israel. After four hundred years of silence God sent a new prophet John the Baptist who came in the “spirit and power of Elijah” and prepared the way for Jesus Christ.

#### **Questions for further discussion and study:**

1. What was seen just prior to the death of Elisha (2 Kings 13:14)? Notice the simple, almost austere announcement of Elisha’s death “So Elisha died, and they buried him” (2 Kings 13:20). Where was Elisha buried (and later joined by the remains of John the Baptist)? St. Jerome, Doctor of the Church wrote from Bethlehem in AD 386, “*We shall make a pilgrimage to Samaria, and side by side venerate the ashes of John the Baptist, of Elisha, and of Obadiah.*”<sup>10</sup>

2. It seems that the purpose of the brief announcement of his death and burial was to set up the following miracle. What happened when a dead man was tossed into Elisha’s grave and made contact with his bones (2 Kings 13:20-21). How does Scripture comment on this miracle (Sir 48:13-14)? Notice Doctor of the Church, St. John Chrysostom’s mention of Elisha’s sepulchre (bones) as he was eulogizing the tomb of St. Ignatius of Antioch in Rome around AD 400.

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<sup>9</sup> Devin Roza, *Fulfilled in Christ: The Sacraments—A Guide to Symbols and Types in the Bible and Tradition* (Bellingham, WA: Verbum, 2014), 57.

<sup>10</sup> Jerome, “The Letters of St. Jerome,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 6, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1893), 65.

*“For not the bodies only, but the very sepulchres of the saints have been filled with spiritual grace. For if in the case of Elisha this happened, and a corpse when it touched the sepulchre, burst the bands of death and returned to life again, much rather now, when grace is more abundant, when the energy of the spirit is greater, is it possible that one touching a sepulchre, with faith, should win great power; thence on this account God allowed us the remains of the saints, wishing to lead by them us to the same emulation, and to afford us a kind of haven, and a secure consolation for the evils which are ever overtaking us.”*<sup>11</sup>

3. How does the miracle of the bones of Elisha contribute to the Catholic understanding and practice of venerating the relics of the saints (CCC 1674)? The Catechism states, “Such veneration is often extended to the *relics* or remains of those recognized as saints; indeed, to many sacred objects and *images*. Veneration must be clearly distinguished from adoration and worship, which are due to God alone” (Catechism Glossary, *Veneration of Saints*). Where do we find other examples in Scripture of miracles attributed to “things” related to holy saints (Matt 5:25-34; 14:36; Acts 15:14-16; 19:11-12)?

4. Who are the four major prophets? Who are the twelve minor prophets? Why are they considered major and minor? Who are the prophets and what was their mission (CCC 702, 711; also see *Prophets* in Catechism Glossary)

5. What happened to the northern tribes of Israel around 722 BC when they failed to listen and obey God’s word as spoken and written by the prophets (Amos 5:25-27; Ezek 39:23; 2 Kin. 15:29; 17:6)? These tribes disappeared from history.

6. What happened in 586 BC to the southern tribe of Judah (2 Kings 24:10-16; 25:11; Jer 52:27-31; Lam 3:1-3)? What did God later do to keep his promises of a remnant from whom would come the Messiah (Ezra 1:1-4; 2:1; Neh. 1:4-7:6)? How is the return from exile a prefiguration of the Church (CCC 710)? What two prophetic lines developed during this time (CCC 711)? What was the mission of the prophets both before and after the exile (CCC 2581, 2595)?

7. Who is the last of the Old Testament prophets (CCC 719; See Catechism Glossary under *Prophet*)?

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<sup>11</sup> John Chrysostom, “Homilies on S. Ignatius and S. Babylas,” in *Saint Chrysostom: On the Priesthood, Ascetic Treatises, Select Homilies and Letters, Homilies on the Statues*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 9, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 140.

*“John the Baptist is the turning point. He is the last of the Old Testament prophets, but, as the herald of Jesus, he belongs also to the preachers of the gospel. He is the bridge between old and new.”<sup>12</sup>*

8. Four hundred years before the appearance of John the Baptist, what had God promised through the Prophet Malachi (Mal 4:5)? After four hundred years of silence, how would Elijah come again before the coming of the Lord (Matt 11:11-4; Lu 1:16-17; CCC 523; 696; 714)? What was John’s mission and how is he “more than a prophet” (Matt 11:7-15; CCC 719)? What is Elijah’s relationship to John the Baptist (CCC 2684)? What did Elijah wear (2 Kings 1:8)? Who is the only other man in Scripture who we are told wore the same thing (Mk 1:6)? What did John eat (Matt 3:4; Lev 11:22)? How is Elijah a type of John the Baptist and Elisha a type of Christ?

*“Elijah is also a type of John the Baptist (cf. for example, and Matt 3:4; 11:1-19; 17:11-13; Luke 1:11-17) and of individual believers, teaching about the way in which God works with “remnants” of his people, about faith, and about prayer (Rom 11:1-6; Heb 11:32-39; Jas 5:13-18). Other characters of importance include Elisha (also mentioned in Luke 4:27), whose miraculous ministry clearly provides parallels to that of Jesus (cf. for example, 2 Kgs 5 and Matt 8:1-14 / John 9:1-12; 2 Kgs 2:19-22 and John 2:1-11; 2 Kgs 4:8-37 and Mark 5:21-43 / John 11:17-37; 2 Kgs 4:1-7, 42-44 and Matt 14:13-21 / John 6:1-15).”<sup>13</sup>*

9. Eight hundred years after Elijah was assumed into heaven, where did he again appear (Matt 17:2-9; Mk 9:2-10; Lu 9:29-36)? How does Jesus and others refer to the Old Testament (Matt 22:40; Lu 16:16; Acts 13:15; Rom 3:21)? What does this tell us about the reason it was Moses and Elijah who were present at the Transfiguration? How is the Transfiguration a fulfillment of many Old Testament types and a foretaste of the Kingdom (CCC 554, 697)? Notice it was Moses and Elijah who had both seen God on Mount Sinai and were now seeing the full glory of God in the face of Christ (CCC 2583)? How had God spoken in the past (Heb 1:1)? What is God’s final word—how has he spoken definitively now (Heb 1:2; CCC 65)? The prophets spoke the word of God, but who IS the Word of God (Jn 1:1, 14; CCC 516)?

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<sup>12</sup> Dianne Bergant and Robert J. Karris, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary: Based on the New American Bible with Revised New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 966.

<sup>13</sup> Willem VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 855.

10. What does the Catholic Church teach about great Old Testament figures being saints (CCC 61)? These two great prophets are considered saints in the liturgical tradition of the Catholic Church. Elijah's Feast Day is July 20; Elisha's is June 14.

### **The Catholic Challenge**

We have viewed *Elijah and Elisha, Conscience of the Kingdom*. Now having gone through the study guide, you should be better equipped to understand these powerful prophets and their impressive role in salvation history from a Catholic, biblical, and historical perspective. You should also better understand the ancient world, the covenant people of Israel, the temptation of foreign gods and idolatry, God's love for his people and how he wants to prove his love and ability to care for them. We've learned how the prophets paved the way for the coming Messiah Jesus Christ, not only a prophet but the very Word of God himself.

Now, let's answer some questions about Elijah and Elisha: who they were, what they did, the false gods they confronted and how they taught us to believe and obey in Yahweh, the God of Israel in *The Catholic Challenge*.

1. Why did God choose Israel and what did he want to bestow on them?
2. Living among pagans was a great temptation for the Israelites. How is it similar to us now living in a non-Christian world?
3. What are the modern "gods" that we are tempted to follow and worship?
4. How can we identify these idols that take the place of Christ in our life and how can we combat this idolatry?
5. In what ways can we be prophets in the world around us, with our families, our fellow workers and neighbors?
6. What were the priorities held by Elijah and Elisha?
7. Are we courageous in our faith and willing to stand out for Jesus Christ and proclaim him to a sinful world?
8. When we go astray what does God always do? How do we respond?
9. How do the Sacraments help keep us in the right place as true disciples of Jesus Christ?
10. Like Elijah on the mountain, how does God speak to us?
11. With all the distractions of modern life, why is it important to find time to be quiet and listen to the Lord?
12. What places or devotional tools have you found helpful when praying and waiting on God?
13. How can we train ourselves to be still and listen to God?
14. Elisha and Peter gave us examples of how to follow the call of our Lord. Are we willing to follow him all the way?
15. Why do you think Elijah is called the "Father of the Prophets"?

16. Does God always make his prophets comfortable? Or can we expect at times hardship and suffering?
17. Why is typology important and give a few examples?
18. Explain the typology we find on the Mount of Transfiguration?
19. How do we view the prophets today, especially their significance in the liturgical life of the Church?

### **For Further Reading**

Bronnner, Leah. *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1968.

Von Speyr, Adrienne. *Elijah*. San Francisco, CA; Ignatius Press, 1990.

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Gavigan, James, Brian McCarthy, and Thomas McGovern, eds. *Joshua–Kings*. The Navarre Bible. Dublin; New York: Four Courts Press; Scepter Publishers, 2005.

Krummacher, F. W. *Elijah the Tishbite*. University of Michigan, 1875.

Most of the research and study for this documentary and study guide was done using Verbum Catholic and Bible software. See this program at [www.Verbum.com/SteveRay](http://www.Verbum.com/SteveRay).