

Chapter 65: Elias Taken to Heaven—The Prophet Eliseus Chosen to Succeed Him

Commentary for Chapter 65

Elias, the Fourteenth Figure of Jesus Christ. Elias was in several respects a type of our Lord. He was sent by God, was a prophet and a worker of miracles. He raised to life the son of the widow of Sarepta: our Lord raised to life the son of the widow of Naim. He multiplied the meal and oil: our Lord multiplied the loaves and fishes. Moreover Elias fasted forty days in the wilderness, was hated and persecuted by the ungodly, was sorrowful even unto death, was strengthened by an angel, was brought to heaven in the sight of his disciples, and will come again at the end of the world.

The Relics of Saints. The cloak which Elias left behind him when he was brought to heaven was a relic of the holy prophet. By means of this relic God worked great miracles. By means of the relics (the bones) of Eliseus also a great miracle was wrought. If therefore God glorifies the relics of his Saints by working miracles through them, it is certainly reasonable and pleasing to God that we should value and honor them. The Church teaches that we ought to venerate them. She places them under the altars on which the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered and exposes them for our veneration.

A Figure of Holy Communion. The wonderful food brought to Elias by an angel was an evident figure of Holy Communion. We have before us a long and dangerous journey through the desert of this life, before we can reach heaven. During this pilgrimage God strengthens us by the most Holy Sacrament, the bread of angels, in the power of which we may rise from virtue to virtue and finally scale the holy Mount of God, heaven.

Justification of the Sinner. Naaman's wonderful cure from leprosy is, according to the Fathers of the Church, a symbol of the sinner's justification by the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance. Leprosy represents sin, and the waters of Jordan both the baptismal waters and tears of contrition in the Sacrament of Penance. In Naaman's case his flesh became as the flesh of a little child: even so is the soul washed from all its sins by Baptism and Penance. But to obtain this inward purity, the sinner must, like Naaman, humble himself and fulfil the exact conditions of forgiveness.

Holy Water. The blessing of the water of Jericho by Eliseus was a symbol of the blessing of holy water by the Church. At the blessing of holy water the priest expressly mentions the miracle of Eliseus in the prayer. Have you ever seen how holy water is blessed, and what the priest throws into it? He throws in blessed salt and prays in the name of the Church that the water may be freed from the influence of the evil one and be salutary to all who use it devoutly.

Questions to be Answered Using the Bible History Book:

1. How was Elias taken up to heaven?

2. (a) How did the boys of the city of Bethel disrespect Eliseus? (b) What was their punishment?

(a) _____

(b) _____

3. When Naboth was condemned, where was he taken and how was he killed?

4. (a) Who was Naaman? (b) Was he an Israelite or a Gentile?

(a) _____

(b) _____

5. Why was Eliseus' servant Giezi struck with leprosy?

Questions to be Answered Using the Commentary:

6. Give two ways in which Elias is a figure of Our Lord.

(1) _____

(2) _____

7. (a) What two miracles were worked in this chapter with relics? (b) How does this show that the veneration of relics is pleasing to God?

(a) _____

(b) _____

8. How is Holy Communion similar to the bread that the angel gave to Elias?

9. Explain what each of the following symbolize:

(a) Leprosy: _____

(b) Waters of the Jordan: _____

(c) Naaman being cleansed: _____

10. When a priest blesses holy water, (a) which miracle of Elias does the priest mention in the prayer and (b) what does the priest throw into the holy water?

(a) _____

(b) _____