

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles to 2 Kings 2,

This morning, we are going to see the baton passed between Elijah and Elisha and we will also see the beginning of Elisha's ministry.

And as we look to the miracles that he performed, we will see how his ministry points to Jesus.

Let's pray...

[2Ki 2:1-25 NKJV] 1 And it came to pass, when the **LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind**, that **Elijah went with Elisha** from Gilgal.

Elijah the prophet had a protégé, a disciple if you will...

He was mentoring an individual by the name of Elisha and sometimes we get them mixed up.

Elijah is best known for the battle/contest that he set up against the prophets of Baal at Mt Carmel – and we looked at a few verses last week in our study.

And this battle/contest was done in order to force the people to make a decision between whom they were going to worship – Baal or Yahweh.

And of course fire comes down from heaven and consumes the altar that Elijah had set up.

Elijah then orders the people to detain the prophets of Baal and they kill them.

However, after the victory on Mt Carmel –

Elijah gets word that Jezebel (the queen) wants to kill him – and Elijah flees.

And he hides out in a cave (on the same mountain that Moses had his encounter with God) and then God speaks to him and says, “Elijah, What are you doing?”

Turn with me to 1 Kings 19

Because God reveals to Elijah in a still small voice that He is not done with him – he still has work to do – and part of the work he has to do is pass the baton to the next one – Elisha.

[1Ki 19:19-21 NKJV] 19 So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who [was] plowing [with] twelve yoke [of oxen] before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. (make a note of this – we will come back to this later on) 20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and [then] I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" 21 So [Elisha] turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered

them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

So here in verse one – it tells us that Elijah knew his time was coming to an end – and God had revealed to him that he was going to be taken to heaven in a whirlwind – meaning that he was not going to experience death.

God was going to take him up to heaven by a whirlwind.

By the way, the only other persons in the bible that don't experience death are Enoch – in the book of Genesis and those in the church that will be raptured.

Now, as we continue in our study, I want to focus first on the four locations that Elisha is going to follow Elijah.

The first place was Gilgal.

Gilgal was a significant place for two reasons –

1. There was a school of prophets there
2. This was the place of purification or separation – when Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promised Land, the first place they came to was Gilgal and the first thing that Joshua did was that he circumcised all the men – because for forty years as they wandered the wilderness they didn't circumcise their male children and therefore they couldn't partake of the Passover. So therefore in scriptures,

many times when the Children of Israel suffer defeat – they return to Gilgal – to the place of purification (from the flesh).

2 Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel.

Now, Bethel is the place where Jacob had the dream where he sees the stairway to heaven. (Gen 28)

Jacob named the place Bethel – which means, “House of the Lord” – because he had been in the presence of the Lord.

" But Elisha said, "[As] the LORD lives, and [as] your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to Bethel. 3 Now the sons of the prophets who [were] at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent!" 4 Then Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho."

Now, we all remember the significance of Jericho –

Jericho is the place that the Angel of the Lord (Jesus Christ) appears to Joshua as Joshua was scouting Jericho – Jericho had these impenetrable walls -

and the Angel of the Lord proceeds to give Joshua the blueprint for defeating Jericho.

March around Jericho for six days – on the seventh, march around seven times – and by the way, do it all without talking.

And once you've marched around 7 times on the 7th day – have the priests blow the trumpets – and command everyone to shout and the walls will collapse.

That was the perfect plan!

So the spiritual significance of Jericho is that God taught the Children of Israel the principle of “walking by faith” as they came to their first test once they entered into the Promised Land

But he said, "[As] the LORD lives, and [as] your soul lives, I will not leave you!"
So they came to Jericho. 5 Now the sons of the prophets who [were] at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" So he answered, "Yes, I know; keep silent!" 6
Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan." **But he said, "[As] the LORD lives, and [as] your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So the two of them went on.**

Now, the Jordan River – speaks of baptism – of death and resurrection.

Of laying down one's life.

Jesus' whole life demonstrated this principle, but it was clearest as He contemplated the cross...

Turn with me to John 12

[Jhn 12:23-26 NKJV] 23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 "If anyone serves Me, **let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him [My] Father will honor.**

For us to serve Him, we must first die to self.

Jesus spoke repeatedly to His disciples about taking up their cross (an instrument of death) and following Him. He made it clear that if any would follow Him, they must deny themselves, which means giving up their lives—spiritually, symbolically, and even physically, if necessary.

This was a prerequisite for being a follower of Christ, who proclaimed that trying to save our earthly lives would result in our losing our lives in the kingdom. But those who would give up their lives for His sake would find eternal life

Elisha knew that Elijah's time was coming to an end.

These sons of the prophets knew that Elijah's time was up as well – maybe it was revealed to them through prophesy or maybe Elijah told them himself.

And we kind of get the idea here that Elijah doesn't want Elisha to be around when he is taken away – but I believe that what Elijah is doing here is that he is testing Elisha's loyalty.

He is testing Elisha's loyalty and faithfulness to see whether Elisha was up to the challenge to be used by God.

Was he willing to go to Gilgal with him – the place of purification / consecration?

Was he willing to go to Bethel – the place of God's presence?

Was he willing to “walk by faith” (Jericho)

And was he willing to die to self in order to serve the Lord. (Jordan)

Three times Elijah provided Elisha with the easy way out and three times Elisha responded – “As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you”

Church, had Elisha taken the easy way and stayed behind at any of these cities – he would have missed the blessings of the next few verses.

Always remember, that it pays to be faithful to what God has called you to do.

To quit prematurely means that you will most likely miss out on blessing that were just down the road.

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing [them] at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan.

These fifty men were some of the same guys that were reminding Elisha that his master was going to be taken away from him.

However, we see them tag along – they know something is going to happen – but notice that they follow at a distance.

They will get a glimpse of what happens next while Elisha gets a front row seat.

8 Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled [it] up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

Elijah removed his mantle, that cloak he wore over his shoulders and used as a prayer shawl, rolled it up, then used it like a whip to strike the water.

As soon as he did, the flow of the river stopped and made a passage for them to cross.

9 And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."

This seems a haughty request; as though Elisha was saying, "I want to be twice as powerful as you."

If that's what Elisha means then he's just a power-hungry maniac.

But, that's NOT what he's asking for.

He doesn't want twice as much POWER as

Elijah, He wants a double portion of the Spirit Elijah had.

In other words, he wants to be twice as close to God as his teacher was.

He wants to be twice as effective, twice as useful, twice as yielded.

Elisha knew Elijah was man that was used mightily by God as we saw at the incident on Mt Carmel.

But he also knew that Elijah was prone to moodiness and periods of dark despair – as we saw earlier as he hid in the cave –

and it was during these times, that he was useless unto God.

When he was on, God did amazing work through him, but when he was off – not very effective.

Elisha wanted to stay in the place where he was useful at all times; where his emotions never got in the way of his effectiveness.

That is what he means by asking for a double portion.

Another reason he asked for a double portion is because during this time the first born son would inherit a double portion upon the death of his father.

This was a request for the spiritual power to fulfill the calling he already received.

10 So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. [Nevertheless], if you see me [when I am] taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be [so]."

It's not up to Elijah to grant this request.

This is God's job.

But he does tell Elisha – that if he continue to be faithful and sticks around until he is taken up, he will be blessed.

11 Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire [appeared] with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw [it], and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces.

Now, if we look at the text closely, Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind – not the chariot of fire.

the chariot of fire and the horses of fire appeared only to separate them.

And after Elijah is taken away, Elisha responds in mourning.

Why was he mourning –Elijah didn't die?

Because there was going to be that separation from his the one whom he served.

Now, I had you make a note of where Elisha says, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!"

Because at first, it appears that Elisha is talking about the chariot of fire –

But if you look at it closely, he is talking about Elijah.

The idea is that Elijah was better for Israel than any number of chariots or horsemen because of his prayers for Israel.

Now, you might be asking – where do get this from?

Turn to 2 Kings 13

Look at verse 14 -

[2Ki 13:14 NKJV] 14 Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!"

Joash says the same phrase but he uses it upon Elisha.

Joash wasn't there when Elijah was taken up.

Therefore, the chariot and the horsemen are in reference to the blessing that was brought forth by these individuals who were obedient to God's calling.

Church, You are a huge blessing to your family, your friends, and your work when you are walking in obedience to the Lord. They may not see it, but you are their “chariot” and their “horseman”.

13 He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where [is] the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.

This mantle that was on the floor – was the same one that Elijah had anointed him as his replacement.

But notice that Elisha had to physically put the mantel here upon his shoulders – he had to make the decision whether or not to he was going to take the responsibility of the ministry upon his shoulders.

So he takes the mantel and strikes the Jordan and it is divided in the same way as when Elijah had done it earlier.

When Elisha asks, “Where [is] the LORD God of Elijah?”

He didn’t know if God had honored his request or not.

His question was a sincere one – “Where is God; Is He with me as He was with my master, or not?”

God made it very clear He was very much present and Elisha had now stepped into the prophet's role.

15 Now when the sons of the prophets who [were] from Jericho saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him. 16 Then they said to him, "Look now, there are fifty strong men with your servants. Please let them go and search for your master, lest perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley." And he said, "You shall not send anyone."

17 But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, "Send [them]!" Therefore they sent fifty men, and they searched for three days but did not find him. 18 And when they came back to him, for he had stayed in Jericho, he said to them, "Did I not say to you, 'Do not go'?"

The sons of the prophets wanted to send out a search party for Elijah –

And at first Elisha said no – he knew Elijah was in heaven

But they continued to bug Elisha and eventually allows them to search for Elijah and of course – they found nothing.

19 Then the men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city [is] pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water [is] bad, and the ground barren."

20 And he said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought [it] to

him. 21 Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.' " 22 So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.

In order to fully grasp what is happening here in verse 19-22, we have to understand that the men of the city here, refers to the city of Jericho.

In the book of Joshua, when Jericho is conquered after they all scream – Joshua pronounces a curse upon anyone who rebuilds Jericho.

[Jos 6:26 NKJV] 26 Then Joshua charged [them] at that time, saying, “Cursed [be] the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.”

In 1 Kings 16, we have an individual by the name Hiel, who failed to read the book of Joshua and he rebuilds Jericho on the backs of his firstborn and his youngest son.

So, even though Jericho was rebuilt – it was cursed.

So the spring that provided the drinking water and the water for irrigation and for their animals – it was bitter, it was undrinkable.

So Elisha does something significant here.

He calls for a bowl of salt.

Keep in mind that the Dead Sea is just south of Jericho – the people are very familiar with salty water – they knew it had no use.

So Elisha calls for salt that is placed in a **new bowl**.

So it wasn't the salt that transformed the bitter waters – it was the salt coming in contact with the new bowl that changed the properties of the salt that healed the waters.

You see, Elisha's ministry is going to be like that "new bowl"

Joshua pronounced a curse on the land – Elisha does the opposite.

His ministry emphasizes divine grace which heals and pardons instead of divine justice which condemns.

His ministry announces the ministry of the Messiah who presence transforms the nature of individuals.

Church, we are the salt in the story – but in order to be effective, we must be transformed by coming in contact with the "new bowl"

23 Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" 24 So he turned around and looked at them,

and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the LORD. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths. 25 Then he went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

Serves them right – kids can be so cruel. Let that be a lesson to you all.

To begin with, Elisha did not kill anyone – he cursed the youth.

God used two female bears to do the rest.

It doesn't even say that the bears killed them – it says they mauled them

The word that is used here for youth can be used for someone who is a young adult – so it is not like he cursed a couple of grade school kids who didn't know better.

Keep in mind that Elisha had just healed the waters from Jericho and he is making his way up to Bethel.

The youth most certainly knew who Elijah was and they heard about what Elijah had done – but here they see Elisha coming as his successor and they assume that he's nothing but a figure head and doesn't have the gift that Elijah had.

So they mock God's representative to them.

Now, in chapter one, we saw the 100 men that came to arrest Elijah they mocked him – and he called fire from heaven and consumed them.

Here the youth mock Elisha and he pronounces a curse on them.

Someone might say – well I thought you just said that Elisha the new bowl – the one who is bringing grace.

Yes – but here we see what happens to those that reject grace.

Elisha had no problem reversing a 500 year curse with a bowl of salt.

However, the hard hearts of the youth in Bethel demonstrate to us that lack of faith is more difficult to heal than any physical lack.

[Heb 2:1-3 NKJV] 1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard [Him],

Amen

Let's pray...

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