

## 2 Kings 2 – Thursday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016

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. 2 Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to Bethel.

- Couple of thoughts here at the start, the first of which has to do with Elijah's servant who's been with him for about 10-years.
- It seems even though Elisha has been loyal to him, Elijah, knowing he's about to be taken up to heaven, still tests his loyalty.
- The reason I point this out is because it speaks to the importance of loyalty on the part of God's people, especially in ministry.

- The second thought has to do with Elijah who keeps doing what he's always done even though he knows this is his last day.
- In other words, he's ready to go be with the Lord and it's evidenced by how he doesn't do anything different before it's too late.
- If there's anything you would do differently if you knew it was your last day, you best be doing it now, so you're always ready.

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!"

- This verse begs the question of how the prophets who were at Bethel knew that the Lord would Take Elijah to heaven that day.
- One possibility is that there must have been a prior prophecy that was announced concerning Elijah being taken in this way.
- If that's how then this clearly points to the importance of prophecy, the rapture in particular as it relates to our being taken away.

4 Then Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho." 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!"

- Here we see Elijah's second test of Elisha's loyalty in the sense that he seems to be giving him an out to see if he will take it.
- I would suggest that this is perhaps one of the best tests in order to determine whether or not someone is called into ministry.
- This because, if you can be talked out of it and go do something else, you should probably go do something else instead.

It was Charles Spurgeon who famously said, "If there is anything else that you can do, anything [besides ministry], do it."

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. 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.

- It's interesting to note that Elijah is not only testing Elisha, he's also willing to have the Lord take him without anyone seeing it.
- In other words, Elijah doesn't need a lot of fanfare, as it were, so much so that such a dramatic event can be in total obscurity.
- The reason it's interesting is as dramatic as Elijah's life and ministry has been, he's perfectly content to be out of the limelight.

F.B. Meyer of this said, "The prophet's evident desire to die alone shames us, when we remember how eager we are to tell men, by every available medium, of what we are doing for the Lord."

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. 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." 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."

- This is fascinating for a number of reasons not the least of which is Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit upon him.
- Elisha could have asked for anything when Elijah tells him to ask, what he can do for him before he is taken away from Elisha.
- Of all the things he could have wanted, he asks to be Elijah's successor, such that, he would in effect inherit Elijah's ministry.

F.B. Meyer, "He sought neither wealth, nor position, nor worldly power; nor a share in those advantages on which he had turned his back for ever."

- It's important to understand Elisha isn't asking for twice as much as Elijah had, rather, he's asking as if he were a firstborn son.
- This because, the firstborn would receive the inheritance known as the "double-portion," which included spiritual responsibility.
- This is why Esau sold his birthright; he wanted the material inheritance but not the spiritual responsibility that would come with it.

- There's one more thing that I want to point out before we move on and it has to do with Elijah's response to Elisha's request.
- More specifically, he tells Elisha that "if" he sees him taken up, his request will be granted, but if he does not see this, it won't.
- I point this out for two reasons, first, Elijah wisely knows this can only be granted by God, and second, Elisha passed the tests.

You'll forgive me for borrowing heavily from F.B. Meyer, but once again, he just seems to say it best yet again when he writes that, "It was with the object of testing the spirit of his friend that the departing seer had urged him again and again to leave him. And it was only when Elisha had stood the test with such unwavering resolution that Elijah was able to give him this carte blanche."

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.

- I can't help but wonder what Elijah is thinking as this happens. I wonder if he thanks God for not answering his previous prayer.
- Namely, that God would just kill him when he was hiding in the cave after God didn't just kill Ahab and Jezebel after the contest.
- This is one of those places in God's Word that makes one thankful for the prayers that God in His goodness doesn't answer.

- I also can't help but wonder what Elisha is thinking as this happens. I wonder if he thanks God for giving him what he asked for.
- Namely, that God would grant him the "double portion," which He does by virtue of the fact that he's seen Elijah go to heaven.
- Perhaps this is one of those places in God's Word that makes one thankful that you have because you asked. (James 4:2-3)

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. 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.

- There's an interesting detail here that could be easily missed at first read where we're told that Elisha "took up Elijah's mantle."
- The reason I find this interesting is that Elisha, had to make the decision, by faith to take up that which he had been promised.
- In spite of the tremendous amount of responsibility and knowing of the pressure that comes packed with it, he still takes it on.

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.

- Where I come from they call this a confirmation. I suppose you could say that Elisha's faith in God has in fact also pleased God.
- Notice that Elisha does not say, where is Elijah, rather, he does say, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah," before parting the water.
- The point being is Elisha clearly has the "double-portion," blessing and anointing of Elijah, and he's getting down to business.

Charles Spurgeon, "And when you have got their mantle, do not waste precious time in lamentations about them any more; get to your business. There is a river in your way; what then? Well, go to the Jordan as the prophet Elisha did, and try to pass it. Say not, 'Where is Elijah?' but 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' Elijah is gone, but his God is not; Elijah has gone away, but Jehovah is present, still."

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.

- Please know they're not bowing down to the ground before him to worship him, rather, it was to acknowledge God's call on him.
- I'm of the belief that God allowed them to see what Elisha did in order for them to know that God's anointing was upon Elisha.
- In other words, Elisha didn't have to convince them that he had Elijah's anointing God sort of did the convincing for him instead.

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'?"

- It seems they in their disbelief concerning Elijah had badgered Elisha to the point where he was ashamed for them and of them.
- Perhaps this explains why it is that Elisha would acquiesce to their petition and just let them go so they can see for themselves.
- Sometimes, it doesn't matter what you say and you just have to let people figure it out for themselves and learn the hard way.

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.

- For those of you who went to Israel with us in the past, you may remember how lush and fertile Jericho was when we drove by.
- The reason I mention this is because it's a fulfillment of God's Word as it relates to yet another miracle Elisha has performed.
- One has noted there are 8 recorded miracles for Elijah and 16 for Elisha, which makes him second only to Moses in this regard.

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.

- The lesson here becomes quite clear, which is to never ever disrespect an older man who suffers from male pattern baldness.
- Actually, what these young men are doing here is rejecting God and his prophet by wanting Elisha to go up as Elijah had done.
- This is what happens when a generation worships false gods, which in this case was the consequence of their Baal worship.