

Kings and Prophets 13-10-04a

This is Friday, the 4th of October, 2013. Back in the days of Citizen Band Radio, I would have enjoyed saying 10-4, good buddies. But it is the 4th of October.

We continue tonight our study of the Kings and Prophets. And as is our usual practice, we'll take a moment as we begin to give each of us a few moments to focus our concentration, ensure that there are no impediments to the teaching ministry of God's Holy Spirit, be it unconfessed sin or distractions or things that tend to get a hold of the ankle of our mind, drag it off into a back room and beat on it. We don't want that to happen.

We want to be fully focused. We want this time to be meaningful. We want it to be productive and to contribute to our momentum and our fruitfulness in the service of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let's take a moment to pray and then we'll begin. Father, it is such a comfort to know that we are sustained by your grace. We are enabled by your strength.

We are guided by your hand. We are energized by your Holy Spirit. We are informed by your word.

We follow the example of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. All of these things have been given to us despite the fact that we ourselves have nothing to contribute. We are hopeless, helpless, and useless apart from your grace.

But we thank you for our salvation. We thank you for the privilege of living in this age and being assigned a place in this wonderful time, this wonderful provision, as you give us as a gift to your Son to be his body, to be his bride, to accompany him in a unique way in sharing and exploiting the inheritance that comes as a result of his victory on the cross. We thank you for this passage of Scripture.

We thank you for the truth that it reveals. We thank you for the examples we find in the Old Testament that are so helpful to us in understanding our place under the new covenant. We pray that as we look at it together, God the Holy Spirit will be our teacher, that we will come to a clear understanding not only of what it says and what it means, but how we should then live.

We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. I want to convey a special greeting to all of those who join us remotely. It's a rare thing, at least in my experience, to have people sharing in fellowship and in the study of God's Word at a distance with whom we have close friendship and fellowship and communication.

I enjoy the notes that I get and the exchanges of ideas and information that come from those who are not here with us. And it's a reminder of some of the extraordinary things that God is doing in our time as the end approaches, as the culmination of this dispensation draws near,

and as the density of believers who have an interest and who are pushing forward toward the calling of God. As we become less and less able to assemble physically, God has overcome that by making it possible for us to assemble spiritually, if you will.

By means of technology, we are able to enjoy many of the benefits that we have face-to-face. It's a wonderful thing and not something I take for granted. I'm grateful for the participation and the prayers, the encouragement, the questions, the fellowship that comes from those who communicate with us in ways other than face-to-face.

And it's, I think, our privilege to have that opportunity. As I said, we continue tonight looking at the time of kings and prophets in Israel and in Judah. We have reached the end of 1 Kings, where the transition is going to take place in the time of Elisha.

There are a lot of things you can do by way of comparing these two great prophets to the northern kingdom. I have mentioned in passing that there is a symmetry. It's fairly commonly observed that when Elisha requests that he receive a double portion of the spirit that rests on Elijah, that request seems to be granted, as he inherits the prophetic mantle and the prophetic ministry.

Just a physical count of the miracles performed by Elijah, there are twice as many. I think, depending on how you count them, if you include prophecies that are fulfilled and so on, but there are, you can reasonably justify counting eight supernatural miracles occurrences with Elijah present, and there are at least twice that many with Elisha. I'm going to do something a little bit different.

We have the advantage of most of us being pretty familiar with the stories of the Old Testament. And we know about Elijah at Mount Carmel. We know about the widow at Zarephath.

We know about the brook Cherith and the ravens feeding the prophet. We know about the death of Ahab and of Jezebel and the dogs licking up the blood in fulfillment of prophecy. We know about Elisha.

Perhaps to a lesser extent, some of his more minor miracles are not quite as familiar in terms of water being purified in a couple of cases, food being provided, axe heads being floating, and so on. But one thing you can notice just in general as you think about these, and we are doing more of an overview than a detailed study, and I have to keep reminding myself that or we'll never finish, but if you think about the ministry of Elijah, and this observation is key to something we're going to look at a little later this evening, Elijah is confrontational. His public miracles, his public presence, if you will, in the northern kingdom is of a rebuking and judgmental nature.

What are the prominent miracles of Elijah? When he first comes on the scene of 1 Kings 17, what does he do? There will be no rain except at my word. So, hello, I'm the prophet, and I'm

bringing you a drought, a severe drought. This is judgment.

This is rebuke. This is to stop people in their tracks and confront them with the need for repentance, isn't it? That's pretty much what it's for. He then disappears, and in the private miracle arena, we see him sustained at the brook until it dries up.

He goes to Zarephath. Of course, he's on one side of the Jordan. He crosses and goes way up to the northwest there to the regions of Tyre and Sidon.

That's where Zarephath is, and takes up residence with the gal up there and provides in the Then he returns, and what is the next big public spectacle presided over by Elijah? It is fire from heaven, demolishing of the sacrifice, the altar, the top of the mountain, and the slaughter of 450 priests of Baal. Then he goes back into private guide mode. He flees Jezebel.

He winds up at Mount Horeb, has a personal encounter with God there. After a couple of confrontations, God says, You're going to anoint your successor. What's the third prominent miracle we think about with Elijah? What's the big splashy thing we think of with regard to him? It's how he leaves, right? This has repercussions going all the way down to the Mount of Transfiguration.

You think about Enoch. You think about Moses. You think about leaving this life in a translation sort of manner.

Left without seeing death is how it appears. We're going to take a look at that tonight. But let me begin by going to the meeting that Elijah has with God.

You find that in the fleeing after this allegedly great victory in seemingly getting rid of the prophets of Baal, stymying or greatly reducing Baal worship, ostensibly, although we don't know that it actually produced that effect because Baal worship is alive and well later on. But turn to 1 Kings 19. Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, how he had executed all the prophets with the sword.

Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, Let the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. You've got less than 24 hours to live. If I have anything to say about it, says the queen.

Now, this is the Elijah that is capable of facing down kings, soldiers. But for some reason, fear grips him. And this is the only note that we have about his mental condition as he receives this warning, this threat.

And when he saw that, he rose and ran for his life and went to Beersheba in Judah and left his servant there. So he's left the kingdom, gone down to Judah, but he doesn't stay in Judah. What do we know about Judah at this time? It's a wonderful, godly place as a result of the efforts of King Jehoshaphat, priests going throughout the land, people experiencing great victories, God's deliverance and so on.

But he doesn't stay in Judah. He keeps going. He's just driven.

He's apparently not comfortable there, doesn't know what to do there. So he leaves his servant and he goes by himself. He's flying solo now.

Went a day's journey into the wilderness. Came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die and said, It is enough.

Now, Lord, take my life. I am no better than my father's. As he lay and slept under the broom tree, an angel touched him and said to him, Arise and eat.

Now, this would be enough, I would think, to really make you take stock. How many people get visited by an angel? How many people have an angel prepare a meal for them? Arise and eat. This is practical.

By the way, I think this is sort of a godly approach to depression. Would you say that Elijah meets the modern definitions for being depressed? Perhaps clinically so. Postpartum depression.

Lost all the priests of Baal and now he's depressed. But he's morose. He is fearful.

He doesn't see any future for himself. This is why he says, Take my life. He's not suicidal, but he sees no future for himself.

I am no better than my father's. He has lost any sense of self-esteem, any sense of God assigning him value by calling him to be a prophet. And he doesn't even call out to God for assistance.

He's telling God what to do. This is a mistake. Learn from the bad times that Elijah inflicts on himself.

Don't pray and tell God what to do. This marks an extremely off-kilter attitude. We don't sit down here and tell God what to do.

The purpose of prayer is to process what God tells us and to find out what He wants us to do. He's not waiting for us to pray so that He knows what to do. It just shows you the great fall in Elijah's spiritual function here, that he's dictating to God, telling God what the judgment should be and what the penalty should be.

I judge myself to be as bad as all of my fathers, so the penalty is death. Take my life. This is an unconscious form of arrogance.

If you get depressed and you start deciding that this is how things should be, it's actually arrogance. How arrogant is it to tell God what He should do or shouldn't do? It's kind of an unexpected turn. We wouldn't think that depression would be arrogance, but depression and self-pity go hand in hand, and self-pity is pure, distilled arrogance, self-importance.

Anytime you start feeling sorry for yourself, just slap your own face and say, I am arrogant, I am prideful, I am self-centered, I am self-absorbed. That's what self-pity is, and it is the flip side of depression. Depression is almost always self-centered, self-absorption.

Break out of it. How do you break out of it? Look at what the angel does. Tend to your practical responsibilities.

You have a responsibility to take care of your body and to feed yourself. Arise and eat. Get up and get back into a routine.

God has provided food for Elijah during the drought. God provided food for Elijah when he was up in Zarephath, and now here for a third time God is supernaturally providing food. This is the third time now that God supernaturally provides food.

Why? Apparently, Elijah isn't a survivalist. He's not a guy that can fend for himself. John the Baptist was able to locate honey and wild locusts.

You don't see Elijah eating honey and locusts. God drops food on his head out of the sky. God puts food into the hands of a widow to cook and provide for him.

And now God sends an angel out of heaven with food for Elijah. Why? The guy is so crippled up with self-absorption that he can't even make a meal. Apparently, he didn't bring any provisions.

So the angel makes him a meal. So he took, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again.

The angel of the Lord came back the second time and touched him and said, Arise and eat because the journey is too much for you. So he arose and ate and drank and he went in the strength of that food, says in the King James, the old King James, went in the strength of that meat, 40 days and 40 nights. Sometimes when I have an exceptionally good meal, something off the grill maybe, or something I really like, I think, I feel that way.

I feel like I could probably run on that fuel for several weeks. By the way, this is like a month and a half. I think you could eat a couple of angelic meals and go a month and a half.

That's pretty good. That's pretty good food. As far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

Now, it's interesting to put a compass needle into the map down there in Judah, where as far as Elijah might have gotten when he had these two angelic meals, and then figure the average that a man could travel on foot in 40 days to figure out the radius where Horeb might be. Because, of course, they don't really know. There are several candidate mountains.

They don't know for sure which one it is. There, at Horeb, the mountain of God, who's famously associated with this mountain? Moses. Moses.

What kind of experience did Moses have at the mountain, at Mount Horeb? Show me your

glory. Put him in the cleft of the rock. Covered him with his hand.

Took the hand away. He could look at the aftermath. He spent the night in that place, and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? What are you doing here? How many times does God, when we're messed up, when the disciples are messed up, when things aren't going right, God asks a question.

All parents know that this is the best way to train children. Don't just tell them a thing. Ask them a question.

Get the wheels turning. Get that rust to flake off of the moving parts. Get the mind going.

Ask a question. Now, look at the two things that God has done for Elijah when he's in this sorry state. First of all, he continues to provide for him, and commands him to take care of himself.

Secondly, he begins to ask him questions. What are you doing here, Elijah? He calls his name. So Elijah says, I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts.

Any sentence that begins with a first person singular pronoun, you're probably going to be in trouble. I have been zealous for the Lord God of hosts. The children of Israel have forsaken your covenants, torn down your altars, killed your prophets with the sword.

I alone am left, and they seek to kill me. So the unholy trinity of me, myself, and I are in Elijah's statement. My service to you isn't doing any good, and they are trying to kill me.

So God says, Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord. So behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord. Now, how does that work? How does wind break rocks in pieces? Well, it doesn't, does it? How hard does the wind have to blow before a rock breaks? Can you put a rock in a wind tunnel? Can you put a rock behind a jet engine and get the rock to break? You maybe can blow it over a cliff and let gravity break it.

Actually, the impact after gravity acts on it, if you want to be technical. But does wind break rocks? This is not just any old movement of the atmosphere, is it? This is a wind that represents the Ruach Ha-Elohim, the Spirit of God. Ruach is translated both as wind and spirit in the Old Testament.

And this is a special wind. This is not any old hard blow. If it's breaking rocks, what's the other thing we know from Scripture capable of breaking rocks? Anything come to mind out of your memory verse pack? Is not my word as a fire set the Lord and a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? How many words can you speak that will break a rock? What can you say that the rock will just split? Can you hit a high note? You might be able to shatter a glass if you're really, really good, shatter some crystal.

But can you break a rock with your voice? Can you say words? No. They'd have to be

supernatural words, wouldn't they, to break rocks. And this is a supernatural wind that breaks rock.

What is God showing Elijah here? Elijah says, I'm no better than my father's. Take my life. He gets two good meals, goes 40 days.

Now he's at Mount Horeb, the Mount of Moses, the Mountain of God. Elijah knows this. He knows where he is.

He knows who's been there before him. He's after an encounter with God. Remember Job said, I wish I could meet with God and figure out what's going on.

Well, Elijah goes there. There's been the progress of revelation since Job's day. God has come down to earth, has come down to Sinai, has come down and revealed His law and His word through Moses.

So he says, I have been zealous. The children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they're trying to kill me.

So the Lord passes by, and the strong wind tears into the mountains, plural. This is a massive wind. Horeb is in a group, in a chain of mountains.

And this wind blows through the mountains, plural. This is huge. This is a huge movement.

And rocks are apparently breaking at the impact of this wind. Perhaps some of them are rolling down and smashing. But the Bible doesn't say they rolled down and smashed.

It says the wind tore the mountains and broke the rocks. That's what the Bible says. That's what I believe.

The wind broke the rocks. There's intermediate means. It doesn't mention it.

But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind, an earthquake. This seismic activity, a shift.

God moved various places. There are faults that run under Israel. There's a fault that runs right under the Mount of Olives.

But this is way over at Horeb. This is 40 days' journey distant from Jerusalem and Kidron and the Mount of Olives. But there are a number of fault lines.

If you go look at a fault line map, I did this one time to try to see what God might do. And when you start seeing earthquakes in diverse places, Jesus says you better get ready. But there are two or three faults in that region.

But God doesn't need a fault. God can make the earth shake without a fault. He's God.

And this is a supernaturally induced earthquake. Happens in God's time for God's purpose. But

the Lord is not in the earthquake.

And after the earthquake, a fire. I can only guess at what kind of fire this is. Is this the kind of fire that appeared at the burning bush without consuming it? Is this lava and natural occurrence of magma spewing forth because of the earthquake and the rift in the earth's crust? Did God split the earth open and stuff coming up all the way from well below the surface creates this fire and heat? Whatever it is, it was really spectacular.

And it is for one man's benefit. The wind is observed by Elijah alone, apparently. The earthquake by Elijah alone.

This fire by Elijah alone. The four elements that were observed or listed by ancient man as comprising all things are earth, air, fire, and water, right? They figured everything was some combination of those. Well, you've got three of those here.

You've got the wind. You've got the earth moving. And you've got the fire.

But the Lord is not in the fire. So there are times when God is present in such manifestations. Because I ask myself, why does it say God's not in them? Was He supposed to be in them? Was Elijah expecting Him to be in them? Was He expecting God to pull up in His fiery, heavenly transportation? Remember in the book of Job, there is a great whirlwind.

And God is in it. Remember that? God speaks. God came down in the cloud and the thunders and lightnings and so on at Sinai.

And God is in it. God is there. Moses comes down and His face is glowing.

There is no glowing face episode for Elijah. This is one of the differences with the encounter that Moses has at Sinai with God. The Lord is not in the wind.

He's not in the earthquake. And He's not in the fire. And after the fire, a still, small voice.

This is an interesting phrase to try to translate. It has been translated as the sound of sheer silence. This is a way of taking the Hebrew that you have here.

We'll stick with the standard translation for now because we want to move forward. After the fire, a still, small voice. Voice and sound, this is kind of like phone in Greek.

It isn't as though words were being spoken. But if it is still and small, this can be construed as either being a loud silence, a marked, after all of this crashing and you can only imagine how noisy it must have been, suddenly there is this. And it puts you in mind of what happens in Revelation.

If it was in fact a sheer silence, the sound, the idea is it's the sound of a complete no sound. The sound of the absence of sound. Remember in Revelation where you have silence in heaven for the space of half an hour? What does this do? It builds anticipation.

What is next? It gives you time to pause and reflect. These three things are followed by a space of nothingness. Why? What's Elijah supposed to do in that space? What are you and I supposed to do in a time of calm with no distractions, no great movements of wind or earth or fire? What are we supposed to do in the silence? Reflect, process, digest, meditate, figure out what is the meaning of this.

These things have been given to me for a reason, right? If this was a voice, if it was the voice of God, we'd have some words here, wouldn't we? There'd be some message. So it was when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. This makes sense if it's a silence, right? I'm not going out during the fire.

I'm not going out during the rock breaking wind. I'm certainly not going out during the earthquake and stand at the mouth of a cave on a mountain. But when he hears the cessation of all of this tumult, he wraps himself in his mantle, maybe still hot out there, and goes to the mouth of the cave where he has been somewhat protected from this.

Suddenly, a voice came to him and said, Now we have a sound communicating. What are you doing here, Elijah? Same question that was asked the first time, What's the difference? God has put on a demonstration of supernatural power, control over the elemental building blocks of the world. After having supernaturally made provision for him on yet a third occasion, bringing him to the mount of meeting, if you will, asking this question, getting evidently an unsatisfactory reply, God asks the same question again.

Repeating the question tells me that the first answer wasn't good. Don't you think? If the first answer was good, why would God ask the question again? Question repeated tells me, Elijah, your first answer stinks. So, let me show you some things.

Four things. God can do the wind. He can do this earthquake.

He can do the fire. He can cause everything to cease. Now he asks the question again.

Elijah, what are you doing here? So, given, now here's the key, and this is the point of application with which we close our first session tonight. If we are having difficulties, if we have backed ourselves into a corner, we have failed, we have erred, we've gotten into the grip of fear, we have fallen apart, we've come unglued, we have run, it's all just kind of unraveled on us, and it's us. God makes revelation.

He makes provision, and He reveals. What should this do to us? If God demonstrates that He is still there, He still has a purpose in our life. If we weren't supposed to be here, He wouldn't provide.

Elijah would have died. He would have starved. He would have been taken to glory, something.

But God provides for him in the physical realm. Eat this meal. Get up.

Eat this meal. You have a journey ahead of you. There's a purpose for you being here.

He accomplishes the journey. He goes to the mountain, and then God gives him revelation. Elijah has not seen these things before, so this is communication of some sort.

What is the purpose of God's communication? He asks the question. Gets an unsatisfactory answer. Gives Elijah revelation.

Asks the question again. What should happen to Elijah's answer? It should change. There should be progress.

But in this case, and in this circumstance, Elijah is much like the northern kingdom. He almost embodies it. Did God not break down altars? Did God not shrivel arms and restore them? Did God not send fire from heaven? Did God not shut the heavens up so that there was no rain? And what was the response in the northern kingdom when God asks the question through his prophet, who are you going to serve? Who is God? God or Baal? Well, at the end of the fire from heaven demonstration, the Lord, He is God.

The Lord, He is God. Those people get it. But look at Elijah.

God has done fire and earthquake and wind and Elijah's answer doesn't change. He doesn't progress after the revelation. And this is really key because, what should you and I do? When we mess up, we find that God is still providing for us, we are given the opportunity to hear and to meditate on God's word, it ought to change our minds.

If exposure to communication from God does not change our minds, we are in trouble. How can you come in contact with the divine and not be changed? How can you come in contact with God's supernatural presence and power and not be changed? It isn't a shortfall on God's part. The Lord's arm is not shortened that He cannot save.

His ear is not heavy that He cannot hear. What is it that separates us? What is it that prevents us from benefiting from all of God's grace provisions and all of His power? It is our iniquities. And if we do not confess them, if we do not walk away from them, if we do not leave them in the dust of the past and move forward by God's grace, it is going to be the end of the road for us.

And we are going to see that it is soon going to be the end of the road for Elijah and in a very interesting way. And I promise you what we are going to cover in this next session is going to probably shock most of you, what happens with Elijah. Because Elijah answers in verse 14, I have been very zealous for the word of God because the Lord of hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, killed your prophets.

It is their problem. They are the problem. Not me.

Children of Israel. It is them. The word of God has to be... Have you ever seen or heard or been around people who you sit and hear a good sermon, a good Bible lesson, and they say, boy,

you know, that would really be great for so and so to hear.

Don't ever do that. Don't ever. I mean, you may think that somebody has some questions and it might answer them.

But first and foremost, these excursions into the word of God are for me. They are for us. I have to make application.

I have to think about it. I have to process it. There are people that sit Sunday after Sunday, sermon after sermon, in big churches thinking, boy, that's a really good sermon.

I sure wish so and so was here to hear that. And it never makes a dent. Their answer to God's question is always the same.

Well, yeah, there's plenty of people that sure need to hear this. Sure wish those northern Israelites had been here to see your fire and wind and earthquake, Lord. That would straighten them out.

He is unrepentant. He is unimpressed with these great manifestations of God's power. So in verse 15, the Lord says, Elijah, go return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.

And when you arrive, you're going to anoint the king of Syria, you're going to anoint the king of Israel, and you're going to anoint your replacement. Elijah is actually only going to do one of these. He's going to anoint Elisha, who is going to anoint these other kings, going to bring these other kings in.

Elijah is only going to get one out of three. And God's plan is going to move forward without Elijah. The sword of Hazeal is going to be active, the sword of Jehu is going to be active, and the sword of the Lord in the mouth and in the hand of Elisha, so to speak, spiritually, is going to prevail.

I have 7,000 in Israel whose knees have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him. And this is sort of the same situation with Elijah that it was with Moses. He missed his opportunity to finish his race strong.

Now, we're going to pause and take our break. When we come back, what is the further adventures of Elijah from this point? What else is left? It's just the anointing of Elisha. That's what we'll look at when we come back.