

Kings and Prophets 13-10-04b

We pick up our study now, we're looking at the end of the career of Elijah and the beginning of the career of Elisha. We've seen the confrontation between Elijah and the Lord God at Mount Horeb. And it seems as though when God makes this demonstration and Elijah's answer does not change, God says, because your answer has not changed, you are going to change.

You are going to be changed out. The king in Syria is going to be changed out. The king in Israel is going to be changed out.

And you, the prophet, are going to be replaced by Elisha. This, as we have seen and noted a few times over recent weeks, is something of a parallel with Moses being replaced for the job of taking the people on into the land after his failure to follow God's instructions. So, as you come to chapter 1 of the second book of Kings, we've seen the intermediate things, the end of the first Kings.

Moab rebels against Israel after the death of Ahab. The curse on Ahab's house was pronounced by Elijah. Elijah said, you're going to die.

He went around in sackcloth and ashes and was feeling real sorry for himself. And God tells Elijah, well, did you see how Ahab believes what God says? Unlike some others to whom the word of the Lord was delivered, he actually believes. And because of it, he puts on sackcloth and drags around.

And God says, look, he at least believes my word, so I will wait and fulfill the curse on his house after his death. So there is a delay, even this small amount of response on Ahab's part. And Ahab is such a rascal.

You look at the descriptions of what a terrible guy he was. Yet, because of this little bit of repentance, look at chapter 21, verse 25. There was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord because Jezebel his wife stirred him up.

And he behaved very abominably in following idols according to all that the Amorites had done. And those were the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. So it was when Ahab heard these words that Elijah was going to deliver.

And you find this back in verses 18 and following. Go down and meet Ahab, king of Israel. There he is in the vineyard of Naboth.

He's gone down to take possession of it. Speak to him, saying, Thus says the Lord, Have you murdered and also taken possession? You shall speak to him, saying, Thus says the Lord, In the place where dogs lick the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours. So when Ahab heard these words, in verse 27, he tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his body, and fasted,

and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning.

So the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, See how Ahab has humbled himself before me. Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. As evil, as awful, as wicked, he is a murderer.

He is an idolater. He is the king that has led untold thousands of people in his kingdom into these errors. But because of his repentance, God says, I will not bring the calamity in his days.

He's not going to see his offspring slaughtered. It will be after his time. And God rewards, in a sense, his repentance.

This is a powerful reminder. You look at somebody like Elijah feeling sorry for himself and not changing his mind after God makes a revelation. Here, God makes a revelation to the wickedest king.

You would think this would be something of a rebuke to Elijah. Ahab can change his mind in the face of a revelation from God. Can believe it and act on it.

And look at God's mercy in softening his judgment and putting it in a day that he won't see. Instead of having his sons slaughtered before his eyes and having the full weight of God's judgment while he's yet alive. But again, this oracle of judgment is pronounced by Elijah.

This is one of the things that characterizes Elijah's ministry. It is one of pronouncing these woes and these judgments. So then when you get to 2 Kings, Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

And Ahaziah, his son, fell through the lattice of the upper room and Samaria was injured. We've noticed this. So the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire? Saw this last time.

He's trying to inquire of Baal if he's going to live or not. God intervenes and gives him a message. And so the king doesn't like this.

And so he sends the three captains of 50 with their 50 men. The first two sets are incinerated. And the third humble themselves, prostrate themselves before God's prophet, and they are spared.

Another demonstration in Elijah's presence of what humility, what obedience can do before God, and what hard-heartedness and intransigence will do before God. And these two incidences with Ahab himself and with these captains of 50 from Ahab's son ought to be something of a rebuke to the prophet of God who himself has not changed his mind in the face of divine revelation, and because of that is in line to be replaced. But it seems he's continuing to minister for a time.

God said, Go anoint these people. He doesn't anoint Jehu. He doesn't anoint Hazael.

And he hasn't done anything with Elisha as of yet. So we saw these events in the first chapter of 2 Kings. And in verse 17, Ahaziah did according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken.

Because he had no son, Jehoram became king in his place. He never left his bed. He dies.

And so Jehoram, or Joram as he's sometimes known, became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Now, this is where it gets interesting, and you have to pay a little bit of attention here to this transition. Ahab's son Ahaziah has only a brief reign.

He falls through his commode, gets stove up, and doesn't recover. And so he didn't have a son, so Jehoram becomes king in his place in the second year of a guy by the same name down in Judah. He's the son of Jehoshaphat, who we already saw, the good king that did all the teaching and saw the mighty deliverance of God.

The rest of the acts of Ahaziah are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? Now look at chapter 2. 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 said to Elisha, Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to Bethel. Elisha said, As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.

Elisha disobeys Elijah. Elijah says, Stay here. And Elisha says, No, I'm not going to do it.

Why? This is my question. How does Elisha know to disregard the word of the prophet? Well, among many other things you could draw from this particular example, be aware that just because a guy is a man of God, you don't have to do everything he says. He has a function.

He has a prophetic mission. It doesn't mean that every word he speaks is an oracle from God, or that it ought to necessarily be followed. He's fallible.

He puts his robe on one fold at a time, just like everybody else in ancient Israel. He straps his sandals on just like anybody else. And Elijah says, Stay here.

And Elisha says, No, I will not leave you. Why? Apparently, Elisha has already begun to receive communication from God, and God says, Stick with the prophet. And Elijah is perhaps not privy to this information.

And it is as though Elijah is no longer tuned in to God's frequency, because he thinks that God told him, You're going to anoint Elisha. Now, people say, Well, he's just testing him. Maybe.

I don't see that here. He says, You stay here. Remember how when Elijah was in the depths of his depression, he left his servant in Judah and went out into the wilderness? Well, now he's trying to leave Elisha behind and go off by himself again as he goes to Bethel.

Elijah says to Elisha, Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to Bethel. And Elisha says, No. As the Lord lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.

So he's got some reason. I would assume this is an instruction from God himself that he's not to leave Elijah's side. Because in verse 3, the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel, they arrive at Bethel.

They've gone from Gilgal and they've arrived at Bethel, where Elijah didn't want Elisha to come. But now they're at Bethel and they're sons of the prophets. So they came out to Elisha and said to him, Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today? Now, how do they know this? We don't know.

Did God reveal it to some of them? Are they sort of sub-prophets and they get some limited revelations from God? Is this something Elijah told them? The only thing we know for sure is they didn't get it from Elisha. Because they tell Elisha, Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today? And he said, Yes, I know. Keep silent.

This is my clue that God has already spoken to Elisha and has said, Don't leave him. Because when the sons of the prophets came out and said, Hey, we've got a word for you. God's going to separate you and Elijah.

And Elisha says, I know. Be quiet. I don't need you to tell me anything.

Why is that? If God is speaking directly to Elisha, He doesn't need any filtered information coming through the sons of the prophets. Verse 4, Then Elijah said to him, Elisha, stay here at Bethel, please, for the Lord has sent me on to Jericho. Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho.

But Elisha says, As the Lord lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. So they came to Jericho. Now the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho.

So you notice that there are these little, what they like to call schools of the prophets, little groups of prophets. It's not a single prophet. It's a little community.

Are these guys studying the law of Moses? Are they waiting for divine revelation? We don't really know. But it's interesting that there is a group. And Elijah is apparently going to Bethel and going to Jericho to see and meet with these guys.

Because that's who they see. The people they see when they get there are these guys. So the sons of the prophets at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today? He answered, Yes, I know.

Keep silent. It's very peculiar that Elisha would say this. Who else told people to keep silent when they wanted to noise abroad a new truth that they had just figured out? Remember Jesus, after healing some individuals, even when He encountered demons sometimes, He'd say, Be quiet and come out of him.

And so they'd make a loud noise and then come out. And then Jesus would heal someone and say, Tell no one. But they would noise it abroad and then He couldn't function anymore.

But Jesus famously, on several occasions, said, Tell no one. He tells the disciples. He tells Peter, James, and John, Don't disclose what you saw on the Mount of Transfiguration until after I'm gone.

Elisha tells them, Keep silent. Don't be repeating this news. And what is it that both groups discuss with Elisha? Do you know that the Lord will take away your master? How and where? What's the specific detail that both of these groups get? It's exactly the same in both cases.

What is the movement here relative to Elijah and Elisha? What do we famously remember Elijah for on what's coming up here? Hop in the chariot, off to heaven, right? Is that what the prophets say? God is going to remove your master from over you. It doesn't say He's going to remove him to heaven. It doesn't say He's going to translate him.

It doesn't say the angels are going to carry him to Abraham's bosom. It says, Elisha, the news is for you. That Elijah is no longer going to be your master, is no longer to be an authority over you.

God is going to remove him from over you. That's the emphatic message. And we often miss that.

We're anxious to get to the chariot and the fire and all of that. But it's emphasized here for a reason. Why does God give this word? It was apparently not a common thing.

How many other places in Scripture do you have the sons of the prophets getting a word and communicating it to somebody? This is fairly rare. I think these guys are really excited. Wow, we got an actual word from God.

It's finally working. We're starting to be like real prophets. God gave us a word.

And they rush out to Elisha. Hey, we've got a word for you. Did you know that God is going to remove your master from over you today? And Elisha says, yeah, I got that.

Keep quiet. One of the things you've got to do is be circumspect. Just because you have a word from God doesn't necessarily mean you're supposed to noise it abroad.

Just because you receive a healing from the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't necessarily mean that you're supposed to noise it abroad. Especially if Jesus says, keep silent. Especially if Elisha says, keep silent.

Do you ever see Elijah telling anybody, keep silent, about any of the activities related to his supernatural prophetic ministry? This is an Elisha thing, not an Elijah thing. Elijah is the prophet of judgment, the prophet of doom. Ahab, you're going to die.

Jezebel, you're going to die. People, you're going to have a drought. Ahaziah, you're not going to recover.

Elisha, completely different kind of ministry. One of the things that's interesting is, look and see if you can find a negative prophecy delivered by Elisha. He will preside over the fulfillment of a couple of prophecies that were originally given by Elijah, like the death of Jezebel.

But where do you see Elisha ever walk into a king, a queen, a group, a city, a nation, and pronounce judgment, or start a drought? When you go through the list of Elisha's miracles, his accomplishments, the things that God does in and through him, let me just give you a quick rundown, and you can find this anywhere. The things that Elisha does in the power of God, there's the widow that Elisha multiplies the oil so that she can pay off her debt and sustain herself. The Shunammite woman who is barren has a son, and when that son dies, he's restored to life.

So, so far we've got productive, beneficial things that Elisha has done. The sons of the prophets are in famine. Elisha is going to change their poison gourd stew into something they can eat.

He's going to cure Naaman of leprosy. He's going to keep the attacking troops of the Syrian king from doing any harm. He's going to blind them, which might seem negative, but it actually saves their lives because they're taken to the border and sent home, and nobody dies, even though they came with the express purpose of causing harm themselves.

He floats the iron axe head so that the son of the prophet who had borrowed it doesn't get into trouble. He produces water when the kings, the three kings gather to fight a battle, and they're all thirsty, and there's no water for the troops. He predicts the retreat of the enemy and the end of the famine.

These are all positive, and the more you look at these in contrast to Elijah, Elijah is the prophet of judgment. Elisha is the prophet of deliverance. It's positive things.

It's good things that happen when Elisha is around. He seems to, it's kind of like Isaiah chapter 40 and following. After 39 chapters of dismal material, now you've got the upside in his prophetic ministry.

And, of course, what's the very last miraculous thing? Remember after Elisha dies and is buried, and these guys are trying to hide from highway thieves, and they drop down into a hole and throw this corpse that they were going to take out and bury into the hole and it touches the bones of Elisha, and the guy comes back to life. Even dead, Elisha is a blessing. The guy is restored to life.

So, anyway, that's sort of a preview. But here, Elisha does not leave, and he's told that Elijah is going to be removed from over him. This limitation and this restriction and this authority of Elijah over him is going to be removed today.

And he says, yes, be quiet. So, in verse 7, 50 men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. Of course, you know where Jericho is, not far from the Jordan.

You remember the, how can you help but remember, Joshua crosses the Jordan, and the first city they come to is Jericho, right? The walls of Jericho came tumbling down, and we saw how the curse was placed on that place and was fulfilled when Jericho was rebuilt. So, they go to the Jordan, and the 50 sons of the prophets stand at a distance and are watching. They are witnesses to what follows.

Elijah takes his mantle, rolls it up, strikes the water, and it divides this way and that, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. Which way are they going? They're going east. Now, this is significant.

Elijah strikes it with his mantle. His mantle is the symbol of his prophetic office. He is the one who delivers the word of the Lord.

That's what his mantle represents. The scepter in the hand of a king is his ruling authority. The mantle for the prophet is his communication authority.

He rolls it up, hits the Jordan, it parts, they go across. The sons of the prophets in Jericho witnessed this. When they had crossed over, Elijah says to Elisha, Ask, what may I do for you before I am taken away from you? So, Elijah knows that he is about to be taken away on this day.

Did he tell the sons of the prophets and they came out to tell Elisha? We don't know. But now, everybody knows that this is the day. You get three parties, Elijah, sons of the prophets, and Elisha.

They all know. Elisha says, Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me. A double portion be upon me.

They were in Jericho. They were on the west side of the Jordan. They were in the land.

Jericho, this is down, just almost on the line between the northern and southern kingdom there. Just not far from Jerusalem. They go across on dry ground to the east side of the Jordan.

Double portion of your spirit. Elijah says, You have asked a hard thing. But if you see me taken from you, it shall be so for you.

If not, it shall not be. If you're still here when I am taken from you, if you stick until we are forcibly parted by the Lord himself. If you don't leave of your own accord, but we're not separated until God separates us, then it will be so.

So it happened as they continued on and talked, suddenly a chariot of fire with horses of fire and separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. The chariot of

fire separates them first, then takes Elijah where? Your Bible says into heaven.

The Hebrew says toward heaven. Took him skyward would be a great translation here. Took him skyward.

This is very important now. What we have been told happened here, may not be what happened. The chariot arrives, forcibly separates Elijah and Elisha.

It is a chariot of fire. What does fire represent in the Bible? Judgment, universally so. Even in the throne room of God, the burning ones, the seraphim are there to preserve as it were.

They are the honor guard for the holiness of God. And sin is incinerated in the presence of God. That's what the fire represents.

Notice in the kingdom of the Father, with His throne and the river of life, now what is God's presence characterized by? Water, not fire. The throne of God in the kingdom of the Father, the end of Revelation, do you see any fire there? What is the light that shines from around God's throne? The Lamb is the light. Yet there is no picture of seraphim and burning ones, why? Sin issue has been resolved forevermore.

Heavens and earth have been destroyed by what? Fire. Death and hell have been cast into what? Lake of fire. Now the presence of God is characterized by benefit, by water, by healing leaves, trees of life, and so on.

But this is fire. Judgment separates Elijah and Elisha. And the chariot takes Elijah heavenward.

Into is not in the Hebrew. This is toward. And heaven is a word, it's like ouranos in Greek.

This can be anything. This is the birds of heaven. This can be just the sky.

So what I'm suggesting to you obviously is, Elijah may have only gained a limited altitude in this chariot. Just hold that thought. Elijah saw it and he cried out, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen.

The chariot of what? Chariot of heaven? Chariot of the throne room of God? It's the chariot of Israel and its horsemen. How does Elijah know this is the chariot of Israel and not the chariot of God, the chariot of heaven, chariot of something celestial, chariot of the solar system, chariot of the sun? It's the chariot of Israel, right? That has taken him. He took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces.

Why? There is a separation now between Elijah and Elisha. There is this tearing. His master has been removed from him.

He was there to see it. He's getting a double portion of the spirit. Elisha also in verse 13 of chapter 2, took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan.

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 struck the water, it was divided this way and that, and Elisha crossed over. You remember what happens when we went through Ezekiel and the glory of God departed up out of the temple, heading east, disappeared over the Mount of Olives and went out to the nations, and we talked about how that glory remains gone until the Lord Jesus Christ himself returns and comes back, starts at the Mount of Olives and comes back heading west, goes across the Kidron Valley and into the city. The idea here is similar.

Where is the Lord God of Israel, you could ask, when both of the prophets are on the other side of the Jordan? Well, the same God that parted it for them to leave parts the Jordan for Elisha to return. Elijah is the senior prophet when they go east, Elisha is the prophet coming back west, and that mantle parts the water each time, and they come across on dry ground. There's a huge amount of significance in this.

The reason I make a point out of this heaven word is for this reason. After Elijah disappears, something happens. And to cut a long story short, we know from what you saw earlier in 2 Kings that this is the second year of Jehoram because Elisha is already the primary prophet in Israel while Jehoshaphat is still alive.

If you look at chapter 3, just flip forward a little bit, look at chapter 3, verse 11. Jehoshaphat said, Is there no prophet of the Lord here that we may inquire of the Lord by him? One of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah. Jehoshaphat is the king, Elisha is the active prophet in 3, 11, and 12.

See that? So Elijah's departure had to have taken place while Jehoshaphat is still the king and is still alive, right? Well, again, to cut a long story short, Jehoshaphat dies in 848. So before 848 B.C., this episode takes place. 848 B.C. But it's after Jehoram comes to the throne because we saw that earlier on.

And the explanation for this is that there was a co-regency. Jehoram in the south actually began to function as king while Jehoshaphat was still alive. There was an orderly transition of power.

Jehoshaphat was a good king. One of the things he did was establish a transition. He didn't just reign until he died and then hope his son could figure it out.

His son Jehoram begins to reign in Judah and to take over the kingly functions before Jehoshaphat's death. So there is an overlap. There is a co-regency here.

And it is during that time frame between 852 and 848 B.C. that Elijah steps into the chariot and is removed from Elisha. This is important because a year or two after Elijah leaves, let's just say it's 848, something takes place very profoundly interesting to us. It is after this date, Elijah has stepped into the chariot and has disappeared.

Elisha sees him no more, right? Turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 21. 2 Chronicles chapter 21.

Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, buried in the city of David.

Now Elisha has already become the prophet before Jehoshaphat died, right? So Elijah is gone at this point. Elisha is wearing the mantle. Elisha is functioning as the prophet in Israel.

Jehoshaphat dies at the beginning of chapter 21. He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah and so on. Their father gave them great gifts of silver.

Verse 4, When Jehoram was established over the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, killed all his brothers with the sword, others of the princes of Israel. Jehoram was 32 years old when he became king and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife, Athaliah.

So despite Jehoshaphat's instruction and co-regency and all of his efforts to make sure his son was a good king, it didn't work out. But the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and since he had promised to give a lamp to him and his sons forever. So in his days, Edom revolted against Judah's authority and made a king over themselves.

Jehoram went out with his officers, chariots with him. He rose by night and attacked the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of the chariots. Edom had been in revolt against Judah's authority to this day.

At that time, Libna revolted against this rule. The Lord God of his fathers. Moreover, he made high places in the mountains of Judah, caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit harlotry, and led Judah astray.

Just the opposite of what his father Jehoshaphat had done. Now look at verse 12. Look at verse 12 closely.

Put a star beside verse 12. And a letter came to him from whom? A letter came to him from whom? From whom? Elijah the prophet? Saying, Thus says the Lord God of your father David, Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot, like the harlotry of the house of Ahab, and also have killed your brothers. This didn't take place until after Jehoshaphat's death, right? So where is Elijah as he pens this letter? Detailing current events including the slaying of the brothers of Jehoram.

He's not gone. He's not in heaven. He was separated from Elisha, but he's not gone.

Now you say, well, couldn't he have written this letter and left it behind? Possibly, but it's going to predict the slaying of his brothers. It would have to have been two years earlier that he wrote this letter and perhaps left it in the hands of Elijah. Why wouldn't Elisha just go deliver this? Why

is it from Elijah? What have we seen about the difference between the ministry of Elisha and the ministry of Elijah? Keep reading this letter.

Because you have done these things, led them into harlotry, led Judah astray, killed your brothers, those of your father's household who were better than yourself, behold, the Lord will strike your people with a serious affliction, your children, your wives, and all your possessions, and you will become very sick with the disease of your intestines until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness day by day. Who is the prophet that delivers judgments? Who is the prophet that says you and your house will be destroyed? This is Elijah's last act as prophet in Israel, and he's still around to write this letter. So what about the whole charitive fire deal? Well, remember what the 50 prophets said to Elisha after he disappears? Turn back over to 2 Kings 2. Chapter 2, verse 15.

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. Then they said to him, Look now, there are 50 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.

He said, You shall not send anyone. But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send them. So they sent 50 men.

They searched for 3 days but did not find him. Now these guys who were at a distance and watched this whole thing take place across the Jordan from the heights believe that Elijah can be found somewhere on a mountain. Why? Because this whirlwind was the type of whirlwind they have seen before.

Remember Obadiah talking to Elijah saying, If I tell Ahab that you want to talk with him and you don't show up, how do I know that God isn't going to take you up in a whirlwind and you disappear on me? Apparently Elijah was known for sort of disappearing. Remember Philip the Evangelist after he baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch and then God snatches him away and he's gone? The 50 witnesses to what took place didn't see a chariot ascend into the stratosphere. They don't say, Your master Elijah has been taken to glory.

They say, We think God has probably cast him on a mountain somewhere. And in fact, it appears that God has taken Elijah to the old prophet's home somewhere and has separated him from Elijah so that Elijah can do his work. He's got the mantle, he's got the double portion of the spirit, he becomes the active prophet.

But Elijah is not gone because two years later he is around to write this letter and deliver this last ominous warning prophecy to Jehoram in real time. And the only way people who believe that Elijah went clear to heaven have been able to explain this is to say, Well, he wrote it proleptically, he wrote it in advance, he wrote it somehow kind of like the name of Cyrus where it was just given to him that Jehoram was going to slay his... Well, maybe, but there's nothing in

the passage and several suggestions in the passage to indicate that Elijah didn't go very high or necessarily very far in this chariot. It's the chariot of Israel, it's the taxi from Israel and apparently took Elijah back to Israel, perhaps to Thisbe, perhaps to Gilead.

But he is around because Jehoram gets a letter from him detailing current events and prophesying, as Elijah's ministry was, his doom. So, interesting, no? We know that Moses in fact died and was buried by the Lord and everybody says, Well, the two Old Testament parties that were translated were Enoch and Elijah. Maybe not, maybe we have read more into this than anybody at the time believed.

Go to the New Testament references to Elijah, go to any of the other references about Elijah and it says in Hebrews, for example, detailing Old Testament history, there's no mention made anywhere of Elijah miraculously going to heaven. It talks about his ministry in other ways, but it doesn't say, it talks about the drought three and a half years, it doesn't say he was miraculously translated to heaven. So, we may have over-interpreted this.

It's a chariot of Israel and its purpose, as forecast by two different groups of sons of prophets, is to separate. Elijah has to be free of. Remember what Jesus said, I have not come to destroy the law.

By the law comes the knowledge of sin. The law indicates that the wages of sin is death. Jesus said, I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.

The commission to anoint Jehu and to anoint Hazael and to fulfill these ministries. Elisha is a prophet of fulfillment and he has to be free, he has to be out from under Elijah. Why would Elijah, who is in this non-functional state, be honored with a unique translation to heaven? What would be the purpose? He needs to be separated from Elisha.

There needs to be a clear demarcation, a miraculous indication by God, both to Elisha and to 50 witnesses, that Elisha is now the man. It is clear and indisputable. Elijah has been taken out of the picture by God to a safe distance and these sons of the prophets are now going to be the ones, as witnesses, to tell the nation, Elisha is the guy.

Elijah parted the waters going one way, Elisha parted them coming back. And we saw God remove Elisha and the spirit has come upon Elisha doubly so. And that's sort of the age in which we live.

This is the double portion time of God's spirit. The Lord Jesus has come and has freed us from the law of sin and death. And we now are in this productive, beneficial, healing, restoring, supplying, providing, watering mode.

Elijah is the prophet of fire. Elisha is the prophet of water. He makes stuff float.

He takes poison water and makes it drinkable. He fixes liquid stew and makes it edible. He is going to provide water for these three kings when they're fighting the Moabites.

He's the beneficial guy. So it's worth looking at. It's an interesting conundrum.

How does Elijah write a letter two years after he rides the chariot? This is my suggestion to you. And I am not alone in this. There's an excellent article on this that was published fairly recently, January 2005 in Bibsac, coming to this same conclusion by, let me find this guy's name, just ran across this today, as a matter of fact, Roy Knutson, K-N-U-T-E-S-O-N, of Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.

Pastor for 45 years and just has a Bible teaching and writing ministry. He's not a professor. He's not a notable author of any particular kind, but he has looked at these passages, and I'm always gratified when I'm not the lone set of tracks out in the snow somewhere.

He has a very nicely written article in the January 2005 Bibsac coming to these same conclusions. And I think he's right. Well, that's our study.

What does it all mean for us? Don't get self-involved and be taken out of the picture to be replaced by somebody that's got the double portion of God's Spirit. This is the age where we all have the Spirit of God. We are in Christ, as we see in our Ephesian study.

What a wonderful potential we have. We don't want to be ones that God has to move aside so that someone more effective, someone more committed, someone more positive, someone more outward-looking can do the things. God is going to get His work done.

Hazael is going to be anointed. Jehu is going to be anointed. And by the way, when God wants Baal worshippers destroyed, He commissions a guy like Jehu to do it.

Elisha doesn't do it. It's not the prophet's job. It's the king's job.

It's a general's job. It's a military operation. It's a slaughterhouse done by a man who is in the business of slaughter.

God does not put that work in Elisha's hands. God approves it. God condones it.

God commends it when Jehu does it. God says, Jehu is my man. And slaughtering these Baal worshippers is exactly what I want it done.

But He does not put that in Elisha's hands. And I think this was a mistake on Elijah's part that costs him his ministry, costs him the ability to bring these things to fruition and fulfillment. But it all works together as a picture in God's plan.

Israel also fails under the law and falls short and is replaced by us in the church. And we are the Elisha. We are the Joshua Age.

And what a great opportunity we have. Don't miss it. Don't be distracted and let it slip through the fingers.

We have a wonderful opportunity to be Elisha, to be Joshua, to be the positive side of God's blessing and fulfillment, especially in this age. Don't miss it. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for how powerfully it illustrates things for us in such broad and sweeping terms and then down to the tiniest details. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will minister these things to our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.