

Kings and Prophets 13-10-11b

We pick up our study now, we're looking at overall kings and prophets, specifically the days of Elijah and Elisha. And we've seen Elijah making a 40-day, 40-night trip to the mountain of God, which brings us to a review of that number. And I'm just going to quickly allude to the second half of the list.

You can get any good concordance and look these things up. But the ones that we have covered and the next few that we look at serve to make the point that 40 is not just the number of testing, but suggests to us what the proper response is to testing, which is claiming the promises of God by faith. And both in overt and in implicit ways, we see this in the use of that number in the Bible.

I left off talking about David's length of reign in Israel in 2 Samuel 5, 4 and 1 Kings 2, 11, his 40 years reigning over Israel. Some of the dimensions associated with the tabernacle and the temple involve the number 40. Why would that pertain? Well, look at the specific things.

For example, the holy place was 40 cubits long in the temple. You find this out in 1 Kings 6, verse 17, Solomon's construction of the temple. The holy place, this is the meeting place.

This is as far as the priests could go, except for the high priest once a year who could go into the Most Holy or Holy of Holies. What is in the holy place? That's your table of showbread, your golden lamp stand, your altar of incense. This is the meeting place.

How do we approach God? How do we meet Him and come as close as possible to Him? It is by faith. We dare to approach because of God's promise. Of course, in this age, when you go to Hebrews 10, Christ has made a way for us through the veil.

We have access into the very Holy of Holies itself because of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we still dare to approach and feel confident in approaching by faith, resting in the promise of God that He finds us accepted in the Beloved. But the holy place was 40 cubits long, and that's not an accident.

The lavers in the temple, the volume, the amount that they held was 40 baths, 40 units of liquid measure, if you will. Why is that associated with the laver? What's the purpose of the laver? Cleansing, purification, ritual holiness before God. And we gain that in our lives by faith, claiming the promise of God for forgiveness and cleansing, as we find in 1 John 1. Even in the tabernacle, you go back to Exodus 26, verses 19 and 21, the sockets that supported the boards, the structural portion of the tent or the tabernacle, there were 40 of those silver sockets.

And it's the same idea. Where is the place of meeting? Where is the place of approach? On what do you place your confidence? It is the promises of God. The reign of Solomon in Israel was also 40 years.

You find that out in 1 Kings 11, verse 42. We've already seen Elijah's trip to the mountain of God in 40 days and 40 nights in 1 Kings 19. Ezekiel symbolically bore the iniquity of the house of Israel.

We saw this when we studied Ezekiel chapter 4, the house of Judah. Sins are symbolically borne by the prophet Ezekiel for 40 days. Egypt is to be desolated for 40 years, Ezekiel 29.

The temple in Ezekiel's vision, in Ezekiel 41, verse 2, is 40 cubits long. This is the millennial temple and there will still be that resting in and benefiting from the promises of God and the fulfillment of those promises in the millennium. The courts in Ezekiel's temple are also 40 cubits long.

Famously in the book of Jonah, what is the period of time in which the people of Nineveh can change their minds? Yet how many days in Nineveh will be destroyed? 40 days. And this of course, do you believe the promise of God that judgment is coming? And do you avail yourself of the solution? They did. In symbolic terms, this speaks to Israel.

The book of Jonah wasn't written to the Assyrians, it was written to Israel. When God is about to judge, there is a time of opportunity to turn. And this is a promise, claim it by faith.

Matthew chapter 4, you come to the life of the Lord Jesus. And how long was Jesus in the wilderness to be tested by Satan? Matthew chapter 4 verse 2 tells us Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights. This is the third time in Scripture you see somebody spanning a time of 40 days without food in a supernatural fashion.

Moses does it, Elijah does it, and the Lord Jesus does it. And not coincidentally, those are the three you see on the Mount of Transfiguration. Luke chapter 4 verse 2, Mark 1 verse 13, tell us that during that time of fasting, Jesus was tested in the wilderness.

How long was Jesus here on earth between the resurrection and the ascension? Jesus was raised the third day, Sunday. How long was He here before the men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into heaven? What was that period of time? According to Acts chapter 1 verse 3, that is 40 days. Why would that be significant? Why would it be 40 days between the resurrection and the ascension? What do the disciples who are quickly becoming apostles to do during that time? Lay hold of all of Jesus' teaching that He has imparted to them by faith.

Whatsoever things I have commanded you, teach, make disciples, teach them to observe everything I have commanded you. So, this is not without significance, and it is suggestive to us when we find it in the story of Elijah. Another number that we've seen frequently in this regard is the number 7. This is perhaps even more prominent as a biblical number.

Again, your post-it note, one word answer for the number 7. What would you write down? Completion, perfection, fulfillment. The number of God is 3, the Trinity, the strength of a triangle and so on. The number of universality and completeness on earth is 4, 4 plus 3. The God's perfection in heaven and God's fulfillment of His perfect plan on earth gives you the

number 7. And so, you've got 7 everywhere.

Obviously, the days of creation, the giving of the Sabbath, which harks back to that creation week in Leviticus 23. The year of Jubilees, which follows 7 sevens. When is it in the book of Revelation that the mystery of God will be completed or fulfilled or finished? If you go to Revelation 10, verse 7, it says, In the days of the sound of the seventh angel, the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished.

How many seals? How many trumpets? How many bowls? How many vials? And remember as we went through and we discovered that those are three parallel accounts talking about the same period of time, which is how long? Seven years. And in that seven-year period, specifically in the last half of that seven-year period, you have the seals and trumpets and bowls, seven each. They are the same events looked at from three different perspectives.

The earthly perspective is the seals. Seals were made of clay or wax, an earthly substance. The trumpets sound in the air.

This is the place where the angels, the prince of the power of the air, Satan is called, with his fallen hench demons, hench persons, his minions, his factotai. And then up in the heavens, the bowls. Obviously, you have to be above everything to pour a bowl down below.

So you've got the earthly perspective, the angelic perspective, and the divine throne room of God perspective on those events. 3D, three-dimensional view of that seven-year period, and specifically the last half, the Great Tribulation, all of those characterized by sevens. And by the way, you also have the seven thunders, which we don't speak of because that's an unrevealed mystery.

That's the card that is still face down on the table that God will flip over, and this will be part of Satan's ultimate undoing because as much as God has revealed, as Ken likes to say, God is working with clear cups and balls, and Satan still can't figure out what's happening. But one of the things God has chosen not to reveal is what is spoken by those seven thunders. John heard that and was told not to repeat it, and that is coming up in that period as well.

So that gives you a fourth hidden dimension in that account. You see it again in Revelation 16, verse 17, the seventh angel pours his vial into the air, and a great voice comes out of the temple of heaven from the throne saying, It is finished. It is finished.

It is done. It is accomplished. Revelation 16, 17.

If you look at the Genesis creation account, you have the word bara or created used seven times. You have it in 1.1. You have it in 1.21. You have it three times in Genesis 1.27. You have it again in chapter 2, verse 3 and chapter 2, verse 4. Seven bara's in that first several verses of Genesis. Even in nature you see this.

Our time divides very neatly and elegantly into seven day weeks. Not only from the biblical

perspective, but looking at the lunar cycle, four seven day weeks brings you full way around with the moon. There are seven notes in a musical scale.

When you hit the eighth, you are back to where you started. The clean animals were taken into the ark in Genesis chapter 7, coincidentally. Seven days after Noah went into the ark, the flood came as we have already seen.

Peter reviews that long suffering of God who waited in the days of Noah over in 1 Peter 3.21. God's time of opportunity was complete after seven days. And the door of the ark was shut and the rain came. The initiation of the Levitical priesthood was a seven day process.

Leviticus 8, verses 31-36. Aaron and his sons were consecrated over a solid week, seven days. This is entire and complete preparation and sanctification, dedication, consecration.

How many times was blood sprinkled on the mercy seat by the high priest? Seven times, Leviticus 16.14. This pictures the perfection, the completeness of the work of Jesus Christ. The satisfaction, complete and full satisfaction of God's justice by the work of foreshadowing, at least the work of Christ. Conquest of Jericho.

You remember the sevens associated with marching around the city. They marched around the city seven times on the seventh day. They marched around the city seven times.

Again, there was time of opportunity. There was a time of delay. God waited in patience before judgment.

People could have left. They could have done as Rahab and her family. How many feasts are there in the feast calendar of Israel? Spring feasts, fall feasts, four plus three, seven.

Seven feasts on the feast calendar. You've got the first four, Passover, first fruits. I'm sorry, Passover, unleavened bread, first fruits, and Pentecost.

That's your four spring feasts. You've got that four, which is the number of perfection, completeness on earth. This is also the incarnation, the first advent of Christ in His earthly form, taking on the form of a servant, coming in the likeness of man.

All of that is pictured in those first four feasts, four feasts. The fall feasts, there's a long break through the summer, and then in the fall, you have three more feasts. That's atonement, trumpets, and tabernacles.

Actually, you've got Rosh Hashanah, head of the year, trumpets, the day of atonement on the 10th, and then the feast of tabernacles. Those picture the second advent, the glorified, heavenly personage of the Lord Jesus Christ, total of seven feasts. The menorah has how many branches? By the way, you see some oddball menorahs.

I've seen them with more than that, like for Hanukkah and one thing and another. A proper menorah, the lampstand in the holy place, seven branches, and in the book of Ephesians, seven

branched. How long did it take Solomon to build the temple that replaced the tabernacle that had fallen into ruins? Seven years.

You find this in being celebrated by keeping a feast for seven days. You find all of that in the first part of Kings. How many sons did Job have? Careful now.

How many sons did Job start with? Seven. How many daughters? Three. Then they all got wiped out, and then what happened? Everything else was doubled.

He had twice as many camels, twice as many sheep and oxen, twice as many everything. How many new sons and daughters did he get? Seven more sons, three more daughters. Seven and three, seven and three.

How many times did Naaman wash in the river of Jordan? We'll be seeing this shortly. Not six, not eight, seven. How many separate statements did Jesus make from the cross? I thirst, Father forgive them.

How many total statements do we have recorded in the Gospels? Seven. There are seven discreet statements by the Lord Jesus from the cross. How many years of plenty and years of famine did Joseph interpret from the Pharaoh's dream? You've got seven and seven there.

The number seven so characterizes the book of Revelation that you can hardly count them all. How many times did Jesus tell Peter to forgive his brother? Seventy times seven. Again, we observe this and we say, yes, it's a very prominent number.

I see it all over the place. What is the significance? It is related to the number 40 in this way. In a time of challenge, we claim the promises of God, knowing what? God will bring to perfection and fulfillment every part of His plan.

His plan is symmetrical. It is complete. It lacks nothing.

There are no omissions. There are no lacunae. There are no gaps.

Nothing falls through any cracks. God's purpose, His plan, His provision, His power, His oversight, His presence with us and for us is perfect. And will be completed and will be perfected.

God will finish His perfect work. And from Genesis to Revelation, there's nothing but sevens when it comes to characterizing the work of God, the provision of God, the place where God meets man, the place where God creates man in sevens, the place where God fulfills the purpose of human history in sevens. So there is complete and perfect deliverance at the end and is the fulfillment of those promises.

So that's a quick numerical review. We want to return now to, while we've got a little bit of time left here, to 2 Kings. Elijah ascends in this fiery taxi, leaves the scene, is separated from Elisha, and that is its purpose, is to leave Elisha on his own.

Verse 17 of chapter 2, when they urged Elisha until he was ashamed, he said, do not go look for my master. These prophets, the sons of the prophets back in verse 15, who were from Jericho, saw him. They said, the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.

They came to meet him, 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.

Now, if you think about this, what's the first thing they say? What's the first thing they recognize has taken place? It's really in the invisible realm, but they have figured this out. The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha. That's the salient point.

The spirit of God has, so to speak, transferred the flag from Elijah to Elisha. But the sons of the prophets, of course, have known Elijah for a long time, evidently, and they are concerned for him. And even though they've got God's newly minted, freshly commissioned prophet in their midst, and they recognize that he has the spirit of God, they're concerned about the old guy.

They're concerned about Elijah. Perhaps the spirit of the Lord has taken him up and cast him upon a mountain or valley. Elisha says, you shall not send anyone.

Do not look for him, Elisha says. Now, this doesn't indicate whether God had expressed any preference or any instruction in this regard. Elisha says, don't go look for him.

Now, Elisha's got the spirit of God. So if the communicator with the word of God and the spirit of God makes a statement, wouldn't that be enough? Not for these guys. They recognize that God's spirit is on Elisha.

Elisha says, don't look for him. They don't like that answer, so they keep pressing. They urged him until he was, it says, ashamed.

That's not really a great translation here. He basically got tired of them pestering him. You'll find in your New King James, I think, that there's a note to chapter 8, verse 11, where we will see this same word again.

Somebody stares at him until he is ashamed. The word is bosh. Remember, ish bosheth, instead of ish baal.

Same word. It's translated variously as confounded, confused, delayed. But the particular lexical definition I like is disappointed.

Disappointed. If you look at this, even in Strong's, the popular level Hebrew lexicon, bosh is your number 954 there. First definition, to put to shame, to be ashamed, be disconcerted, be disappointed.

This isn't Elisha ashamed of himself, so much as Elisha ashamed of the sons of the prophets.

He's disappointed in them. He says, all right, you can't step up to the mark.

You can't take what I say based on knowledge that the spirit rests on me. Fine, go look. Knock yourself out is basically his response.

So they sent 50 men, which is pretty much all of them, isn't it? They come and say, look, now there are 50 strong men with your servants. Let them go and search. So, I don't know, are these 50 men the servants of the sons of the prophets? Is that who they send? They don't go themselves? That's what you have up in verse 16.

But they sent 50 men and they searched for three days but did not find him. So these guys go out and burn 150 man days of time to no purpose. When they came back, for he had stayed in Jericho, he said to them, didn't I tell you don't go? Why did you not trust? Why did you not believe? Why didn't you take this on board and respond? There is a lesson here for us.

We sometimes are sure that we have the best grip on the situation. We are sure that we know what the right answer is. And it is motivated by the best of intentions and the best of motives.

Why would these guys want to go search for Elijah? They recognize that the spirit that was with Elijah is now on Elisha. So they're not worried about, well, he might have some spiritual guidance for us. What's their motive? What are they worried about? Probably just his physical health.

The spirit may have cast him on a hillside or into a valley and he needs our help. We need to help him. Listen to me carefully.

We are often very impressed with the purity of our motives when we want to help someone. We think, how can this be wrong? Look, I'm just looking out for their interest. I'm very concerned for their well-being.

I really feel like I need to get in there and help. And we have many one-another passages. Look out for the interests of others, not just your own.

Love is sacrificial toward self and beneficial toward others. Nothing wrong with that. However, when the Word of God says, back off, and there are such occasions.

If you've approached somebody a couple of times and you've even taken other believers with you and they do not respond, they do not want to be reconciled, for example, Jesus gave that, you've got to put some distance. Put the same distance between you and them as you would with a heathen or a tax collector. You don't have to be mean.

You don't have to abuse them. You don't have to have spite and bitterness. But distance.

Treat them like a heathen and a tax collector. Don't eat with the idle, Paul tells the church. People that do not work, do not eat.

Don't associate with them. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, Paul says. You can have all of the sympathy, all of the goodwill, all of the best wishes for somebody.

But in this case, what overrides that concern for Elijah's physical well-being? The man of God with the Spirit of God said, don't go. That's a Bible for these people. Now, I'm not saying you go find some person you think has the Spirit today.

We have the Word of God and we carry the Spirit with us. But our guidance from God through the Word of God and the resident Spirit of God overrides any well-meant concern that we might have. If there is a clear biblical instruction that says, do not associate, do not fellowship, do not, with all of your good intentions, go look, you're going to waste three days in a futile search.

Because even if you find them, you're not going to be able to help. Even if they had been able to find Elijah, A, he doesn't need their help. And it's ironic here, they say, well, the Spirit of the Lord may have cast him somewhere.

If you're in the hands of the Spirit of the Lord, if Elijah is in the care of God's Spirit, what are they worried about? God's Spirit is now going to destroy Elijah? And if the Spirit is going to destroy Elijah, you have to wonder, why would they think that the Spirit would do something physically destructive to Elijah? Do they think maybe he's not hitting on all eight cylinders spiritually anymore? Why do they think God would do him harm that they would need to go remedy? It's kind of an interesting question. But here's the thing, whatever God's Spirit decides to do with a person, if you're told, don't meddle, don't interfere, it would be a good idea to respect the guidance that comes through your channel of communication from God. For them, it was the prophet Elijah.

For us, it is the Word of God and the resonant Spirit of God within us. And we want to be sensitive to the leading and the guidance of God. Good intentions do not trump and override the instructions we have from the Lord God.

They are subordinate to and must function within that framework. Within the limits of what God constrains, we should look for avenues of opportunity to express love. But if it is proscribed, if it is forbidden, if it is off limits, at best, you're going to waste three days.

And at worst, you can come under the same judgment. Well, this brings us to the formal career of Elijah. And we're going to pick up at that point next time.

And we're going to see not only the comparison with Elijah and the function of the same Spirit that rested upon Elijah, but we're also going to see the uniqueness of the prophet Elijah. And we're going to see why. Why is this in the Word of God? These seemingly minor miracles, axe heads float, pots of soup are okay to eat.

Why are these things in the Bible? What significance do they have for you and me? It's interesting, but so what? Why is it there? Why do we need to know these things? Jesus did many miracles that are not recorded in the Gospel of John. The ones that are recorded have a

purpose. Same thing here.

Whatever else this prophet may have done, these things have been written. And we are going to see some really fascinating insights and application from them in the days ahead. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the powerful ways you communicate to us through these narratives from the days of the kings of Israel and your prophets, motivated, carried along, enabled, and empowered by your Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that enables and empowers us. We pray that He will be our teacher, that these observations from your Word will be meaningful and a source of application and strength and wisdom for us in the days ahead. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.