

## Kings and Prophets 13-10-25a

This is Friday, the 25th of October, 2013. We continue our study in Kings and Prophets this evening. We're in 2 Kings 2, looking at the handoff of prophetic responsibility, symbolized by the mantle and the carrying away of Elijah and the double portion spirit coming to rest upon Elisha.

We'll take a moment to dedicate our time and our personal concentration to the Lord through prayer, and then we'll begin. Father, your grace and provision have sustained us through another week. We thank you for all of the ways that you have extended your fatherly care to us.

We thank you for the challenges we have faced and the tests that you have given us, the resources that we have in our soul through the presence of your spirit and the power of your word to meet those challenges and make decisions so that we have the opportunity to reflect your glory and grow in our experience and our preparation for service both in this life and in the ages to come. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word and seek a better understanding through it that you will bless our time of fellowship and instruction. We pray that each of us will find the things that we see tonight meaningful, powerful in our souls, that we will have a greater appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the wonderful privileges and potentials that we enjoy through him.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We saw last time that this is quite a momentous occasion.

Elijah, after a very prominent and powerful ministry, is retiring as prophet. Based on our very interesting study of the letter that he will send at a later time, we believe that unlike almost the universal belief of tradition, he doesn't actually go to heaven at this point. He goes into the heavens to be taken to his Florida retirement home.

But he has one prophetic responsibility left to fulfill, which will come later. But this is the time when Elisha takes over and is fully invested and signified by God's power, by the performance of miracles to take over these functions. You think, well, that's fine.

That's a couple of dusty Old Testament prophets out in the middle of nowhere, parting waters and flinging mantles and seeing chariots and so on. But what does that really mean to me? One of the things we began to look at last time is where this occurs. 2 Kings 2, verse 1. And it came to pass when the Lord was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a storm.

And remember the word heaven can mean any one of several different places. He is going to take him up into the sky. The sky is about as much as you can say here.

Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. Our starting point is the town of Gilgal. It's no accident.

The account could easily have left out this reference if that had been God's purpose. But it is mentioned here and it is for a reason. So we began to look at the significance of Gilgal last time.

Where are they going to go from Gilgal? Well, Elijah says, don't go anywhere. Stay here. Stay at Gilgal.

I'm leaving. But you stay here. The Lord has sent me on to Bethel.

Well, Elisha says, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. And so they went to Bethel. So that's the second town that is mentioned, Bethel.

It starts at Gilgal and goes to Bethel. And you have a little episode with the sons of the prophets. And in verse 4, Elijah says, Elisha, stay here at Bethel.

I'm going to Jericho. Elisha says, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. And so they both come to Jericho.

So there's another meeting with some prophets. And in verse 6, Elijah says to Elisha, stay here in Jericho. I'm going to the Jordan.

But Elisha says, as the Lord lives, as your soul lives, I will not leave you. And so the two of them go to the Jordan. And we remember what happens there.

Parting of the waters, going to the far side. Chariot arrives. Elisha gets the mantle.

Parts the waters, comes back across. But we've got these four places in this order. You've got Gilgal, then Bethel, then Jericho, and then the Jordan.

And I ask myself the question, why? Why this travel? The first thing I would suggest that is helpful to look at is, what does the geographical travel itinerary here look like? Well, you have a map in the back of your Bible. I don't know how close it might be for this. But I'm going to draw you my air map.

Because you don't really need a geographical map. All you need is your Bible knowledge and my air map. So I'm going to draw this backward for me and frontward for you.

Here's the top of the Dead Sea, okay? Jordan River goes basically north. It's almost straight north. And then up there you've got the Sea of Galilee, right? Sea of Galilee, Jordan River, Dead Sea.

Now, to the west, which for you is this way, you have Jerusalem down here. But where the Jordan flows into the Dead Sea, a little ways north of that, and on the west side, you have Gilgal. This is where chapter 2 begins.

Bethel is basically due west of that. There's a little bit of a curving path, a curving motif here. But basically, you leave Gilgal.

You have to pass through two towns to get to Bethel. When you leave Gilgal, what did Joshua and the Israelites first encounter after they came across the Jordan River, got circumcised at

Gilgal? Joshua meets the commander of the armies of the Lord where? At Gilgal? Are you for us or against us? He says, neither. I'm here to take charge of this post and all government property in view.

He takes command of everything, right? He's the Lord's commander. That's at Gilgal. What's the next town? Where are they going to march? Jericho, right? If you're going to go west from Gilgal, you must needs pass by or through Jericho.

What's the next town going west after Jericho? Think about the history in Joshua. Where did they go right after Jericho? Ai. It is right on the road, and then the next major town is Bethel.

So they're starting here at Gilgal, and they're going where? To Bethel. So they're going to pass Jericho, pass Ai, and go to Bethel. Once he's in Bethel, he says, I'm leaving, and where's he going? Jericho.

Back the same way they just came. And then when it's time to leave Jericho, where does he say he's going? To the Jordan. Back the same way he just came, back past Gilgal to the Jordan, right? So this is a west-east traverse.

So keep that in mind as we look at these cities. This is not here accidentally. It's not a happenstance.

Gilgal. What's the first thing that happens at that town? Back in the days of Joshua, the first thing that happens is that Moses has to transfer his mantle of leadership, so to speak, to Joshua because Moses will not enter the land, right? So Moses is going to die and be buried in a place only the Lord knows. Joshua is going to take command.

And how do they get across the Jordan? You remember the priests heist the ark and begin marching toward it, and as soon as their sandals hit the edge, God parts the waters. They cross on dry ground, and once the priests stop in the middle, everybody comes across. The ark comes on out.

Then before the waters close back up, what does Joshua do? Twelve stones out to make a memorial. Where is that memorial? What town? Where is that twelve-stone memorial going to be? Gilgal. And then they take twelve stones and put them in the Jordan, right? So now they're on the west side of the Jordan, but they don't immediately go attack the Canaanites because the disobedient generation that fell in the wilderness, one of many facets of their disobedience is they did not circumcise their sons.

And God says, you're not going to go in and take possession of this land until you honor the covenant I made with Abraham way back in what, Genesis 17? And so they stop, and contra all military wisdom or strategic thinking, they disable themselves for three days. You remember the whole Jacob and Simeon and Levi and Dinah, and they tricked them into getting circumcised and slew them while they were disabled? Well, they're backed up now against the Jordan in Gilgal. If the people in Jericho had had any spunk, they could have come out and attacked them

all while they were helpless.

But God has put His fear in them, and they huddle inside the city. The Israelites take their time getting circumcised, and the place is called Gilgal because God says, today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you. You are now signified.

It is the sign of the covenant, circumcision, which is a circumcision, circular, this idea of circularity. And the word galal means to roll, and this is where they get the word for wheel. And its variations are used in Ezekiel, a wheel within a wheel.

And that's what it means, something round, something that rolls. And you have galal, and then they throw in an extra G, because gal doesn't mean woman in Hebrew. It means wheel or something that rolls.

So that's the first thing that happens, circumcision. And there is a period of rest. They rest and recuperate in Gilgal, and you have these 12 stones.

Some people think maybe those stones were set up in a circle, not exactly a stonehenge. Remember, these are not gigantic stones. A man can carry these stones.

Remember, they sent one man from each tribe to go in and pick up a stone. So this is a stone a man can carry. And so this is a relatively small memorial, but it was significant.

So that's at Gilgal. Now, keep in mind the essential elements. After the parting of the Jordan, you have a memorial made of stones, you have a dedication to the Lord in a ritual fashion, and there is a period of rest.

All that make sense? Now, if we stop right now, suddenly the lights go out or something, Bible class has to end, what would we take away from this ourselves? Crossing the Jordan into the land of promise, this is the place of fulfillment and blessing and service to God. They have been on a sojourn. They have been in a place of purging and cleansing in the 40 years of wandering.

That generation that was not qualified to enter the land had to be eliminated. And a generation with sufficient faith and obedience had to take its place. We have to similarly be cleansed and purged of our love affair with the things of the world, loving the leeks and garlies of Egypt and wanting to return to the worship of a golden calf, not trusting God for provision, not being content with God's provision of manna.

All of this characterized Israel in the 40 years of wandering, right? Disobedience, faithlessness, only momentary commitment, momentary faithfulness, oh yes, all the Lord has said we will do at Sinai, and then almost immediately there is a guy out there picking up sticks on the Sabbath. And that generation, even though God sustained them with the manna and God provided water for them, they were not qualified to go into the place of service, of function, and of blessing and inheritance. The two go together.

God uses them to cleanse the land and to fulfill His promises, and it is also the place of blessing. So we similarly, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as children of God, look for that active cleansing and separation, sanctification, so that we are people of faith and obedience, qualified to enter into that place of service and function. And it all sounds good in the abstract, but how do we do this in practical terms? Well, it doesn't happen unconsciously.

It doesn't happen just because we occasionally think of it and think, well, that would be a good thing. This is something that we must pursue. It is a command in Scripture.

Remember Romans 12, 1 and 2? I beseech you, therefore, brethren, invoking the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice. The fact that you had a wonderful animal without spot and blemish in your herd or in your flock wasn't enough. You had to select that animal, you had to examine that animal, and you had to take it down to the place of worship, tabernacle or the temple, take it to the priest and present it in the same way.

When Romans 12, 1 says, present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and without blemish, this is your reasonable service. This is something we have to actively decide to do and know how to do. It won't happen just because we think, well, that's a good idea.

I should do that one of these days. We have to do it, and we know how. This is why you're here.

You understand this. That's why you're in Bible class. That's why you spend time thinking about the things we see in God's Word.

This is why you cultivate the active presence and power of God's Spirit in your life. This is why you pray. This is why you try to make your decisions and live your life in a way that is pleasing to God because you understand this.

That's what it is to present ourselves as a living sacrifice. We live day to day, so we try to live before the Lord. We present ourselves holy and acceptable to Him as our reasonable and required service and be not conformed to this world.

This is getting increasingly difficult because technology is being used to drag us into the gaping maw of the world. It just attracts us. The gizmos say, read the thoughts of the world and follow the blogs of the world.

It is hard for ministries to compete. We try to use this technology of the Internet and so on to get the Word of God out and to make resources available. It's a wonderful thing, but as you try to get to them, all of these little ankle-biting side ads and pop-ups and stuff trying to get into your computer and come through on your email.

I met a week before last with a really great guy who's working on his doctorate down at Dallas Seminary, and he's an IT guy. His name is Dan Pfeiffer, and he has done something, I think, clever with technology. You've got all these social media things, and you think, well, can any good come of that? Can anything good come out of that? He has developed a spend-a-year-

with-Jesus idea, and he's figured out day by day what Jesus and the disciples did during the last year of Jesus' ministry.

So every day, if you subscribe to this, you will get anywhere from two to five text messages reminding you that on this day, October the 25th, this is what Scripture says Jesus and the disciples were doing. He is in this area. He is doing this sort of ministry.

And it keeps your thoughts. It is just a little reminder. Jesus was a real person.

He and the disciples actually lived in time doing things that took time and traveled to places. If you're interested, go there. It's real easy to find.

Just put [spend-a-year-with-Jesus-without-spaces.com](http://spend-a-year-with-Jesus-without-spaces.com), and you'll find Dan's website, and there's a little link you can click. Be aware that it comes as text on your phone, so if you've got a limited text plan, you have to think this out because you'd end up getting maybe 150 texts a month. But if you're going to spend money on texts, why not get those? Be reminded several times a day that the Lord Jesus lived this life so that He could bear our sins in His body on the tree, so that He could partake of our experience and be tested in all points like as we are.

And it's an interesting idea. But apart from efforts like that, we are so easily drawn into the world, and so Romans 12 says, be not conformed to this world, be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Well, this requires active effort on our part.

So when you're at Gilgal, what do you do? Before you go out and attack the Canaanites of your world, there is a time of dedication, remembering what is important, checking, have I fulfilled the responsibilities of my covenant relationship with God? Am I sanctified? Am I purified? Am I committed and dedicated? Before I go march around any walls or fight any enemies, am I personally qualified? Those that wandered in the wilderness were not and did not. But when you cross the Jordan into that place of service and function and blessing and inheritance, right at the threshold, before you do anything else, you've got to stop and make sure, just like Jesus said, if you're getting ready to go offer a sacrifice, and you suddenly remember that you've got an unresolved conflict with your brother, drop your sacrifice and go fix the conflict, then come back and offer your sacrifice. I've often wondered, will the sacrifice still be there? Because He says, leave your sacrifice at the altar, go resolve that personal issue, then come back and finish the sacrifice.

But no matter how close you are, if you suddenly remember you've got to stop, there are certain things that have to come first. So Gilgal is a reminder of that. We've got to be ready because this is the place of separation.

The rite of circumcision was a commitment to God. It was a sign of separation. They had just crossed the Jordan and the waters closed behind them.

They're separate from the generation that wandered and died in the wilderness. They're separate from Moses and his leadership. They're separated from that entire 40-year generation

of experience.

They're starting fresh. It's like the new birth. It's like the cleansed leper.

They are severed from the old and ready to undertake the new. It's a new place of dwelling. It's a new kind of provision.

Where, by the way, a little trivia question for you, where does the manna stop? The manna that has been provided for 40 solid years, every day except the Sabbath, where does it stop? Does it stop on the far side of the Jordan? It stops at Gilgal. Gilgal, new form of provision, new opportunities. All things are made new when they cross over the Jordan and stop and get that circumcision squared away.

That's when the manna stops. So Gilgal is a highly significant place. But remember now, there are things associated with it.

You have the stones that came up out of the Jordan. You have that rite of dedication, circumcision. You have the rest period after that, rest and recovery before they proceed.

And you have that idea of separation, sanctification, both in the fulfillment of the ritual and in the closing of the waters of the Jordan behind them. There's no going back. There's only going forward.

Now, this is not the end of the significance of the town of Gilgal. You remember, as I mentioned, this is where Joshua meets the commander of the armies of the Lord. And there is the implication that there is now a partnership that didn't exist before they crossed the Jordan and came into the land.

Where have you seen the commander of the armies of the Lord showing up and talking to Moses? This is something that happens in the land. New land, new battles, new allies. The commander of the Lord's army is now available.

And they're going to have that supernatural intervention in their initial battles to help get them started. Their first battle, it's all the Lord. The walls are going to be knocked down by the Lord.

And once again, what are the walls made of? It's not a wood palisade. They're made of stones. And God has them set up those memorial stones in Gilgal, and then they go watch the protective stones of the Canaanites fall down and become as nothing.

That's coming up at Jericho. Now, what's really interesting, though, is turn over to the book of Judges. Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges.

After the days of Joshua, right after the death of Joshua, we have the events of chapter 2. And in fact, you get kind of a double notice of Joshua's death. He dies at the end of the book of Joshua. And then Judges begins after the death of Joshua in chapter 1, verse 1. But look down at chapter 2, verse 6. And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each

to his own inheritance to possess the land.

So there's kind of a little bit of a back and forth here. And if anybody starts trying to give you grief about two creation stories in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 for mankind, just bring them over to the end of Joshua, beginning of Judges, and say, look, Joshua dies, and then he's not dead, and then he dies, and then he's not dead. This is common to Hebrew narrative.

But look at the beginning of chapter 2. Well, actually, look at the end of chapter 1. They go into the land, but in verse 27 of chapter 1, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shon, and the villages of Tanakh, and the inhabitants of Dor, and so on. Verse 28, it came to pass when Israel was strong, they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out, which is what they were told to do. Wipe them out and drive out the ones you don't kill.

Verse 29, nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer, nor did Zebulun, verse 30, drive out the inhabitants of Kitron. Verse 31, nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants. Verse 33, nor did Naphtali drive out.

Verse 34, the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains. They would not allow them to come down to the valleys. Verse 35, the Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres, in Eijalon, and in Shealbim.

When the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute, and so on. So there is this incomplete obedience, even among this generation that came across with Joshua. They've been in the land now for a while, and they go up to try to take their portioned inheritance, but they don't completely fulfill the potential.

They begin to settle. They begin to plateau. They begin to say, well, I've done enough.

And this is a danger for us. We move forward. We learn.

We grow. And we say, you know, I've made quite a bit of progress. I'm on the far side of the Jordan, maybe.

And I'm certainly not like all those that dropped in the wilderness. But we fall short of achieving everything that God calls us to and everything that God has for us. And because we do not commit and because we do not persevere and because we do not endure, we end up in this situation.

Now, look at what happens in Chapter 2. So the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim and said, speaking for God, delivering a message from God. The angel of the Lord, of course, is the big divine telephone here. I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land which I swore to your fathers, said, I will never break my covenant with you.

You shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land. You shall tear down their altars.

But you have not obeyed my voice.

Why have you done this? What's the situation in Elijah and Elisha's day? It's this on steroids, isn't it? There's altars to Baal and Asheroth and all of these other Canaanite gods all over the place. The kings in the north are promoting this sort of thing. There are high places and idolatry rampant.

It began in the very first generation that came into the land. And the angel of the Lord, not accidentally, Judges 2, verse 1, leaves Gilgal and comes up to where the people are. The angel of the Lord started out at Gilgal.

And guess what? The people are no longer at Gilgal. They have forgotten what that pile of stones represents. They have forgotten what the rite of circumcision represented.

They have forgotten their dedication and their separation and their rest in the power and provision of God. And they have gone out into the land. Under their own strength, they have failed.

They have compromised. They have allowed the enemies to remain. And now they're starting to engage in the idolatry that is endemic to the land.

And God said, if you do not destroy it, it is going to destroy you. So the angel of the Lord, Judges 2, verse 1, comes up from Gilgal. He's not talking in Gilgal and the people are not at Gilgal.

He's got to go find them and they're at Bochim. We don't even know where this originally was because its name is going to be changed on this occasion to Bochim, which means tears, weeping. I led you up.

I did all these things for you. Told you to make no covenants and tear down their altars. You have not obeyed my voice.

Why have you done this? Verse 3, Therefore I, the Lord, also said, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall be thorns in your side. They will be your enemies. They're going to be a constant threat and a constant pain to you.

And their gods will be a snare to you because you've not driven them out. They're here and inevitably they're going to be a snare. So it was when the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the children of Israel.

Now this is really interesting. Moses served as a messenger and the angel of the Lord might appear to Manoah or to Gideon or to one person or another in the days of the judges. But here the angel of the Lord appears to all the people and addresses them directly.

How many times do you see that happen? They had the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire for all of the people, but that ceased at Gilgal. Now the angel of the Lord himself addresses the

entire assembly of Israel. And you figure, well, but aren't the people scattered all out through the land? And is he addressing maybe the representatives? Are they having a tribal council? The elders of Israel have assembled for a meeting.

How did he do this? But it says, all the children of Israel, the people, lifted up their voices and wept. In verse 4, so they called the name of that place Bochim, and they sacrificed there to the Lord. Sort of a too little, too late thing.

Well, let's offer sacrifice to the Lord. But he's not going to change his mind because their disobedience is complete. It's already happened.

And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land. So on the one hand, this seems to be chronologically out of place, an anachronism. But I think what this is is a parenthetical element because it harks back to the end of the book of Joshua.

If you look at Joshua chapter 24, verse 28, Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance. After Joshua had written the book of the law of God and so on. And this is harking back.

That was their start. That was their launch into the land. And now they have had some years to go take possession.

And they've come back to whatever Bochim used to be named, without having done that. And the angel of the Lord addresses them, tells them of their failure and the judgment that is coming on them for it. And they offer sacrifice to the Lord.

And then you just have this parenthetical reference back. This apparently is the same place where Joshua had originally dismissed them to go and take possession. Well, now they're going back under this curse, basically.

That the people of the land are never going to be dismissed and the idols are always going to be a snare. And once again, there is a gill-gall type of element. They have returned to the place from which they first sallied forth, but now they don't have the potential they had the first time they left.

When Joshua sent them out to take their possession, they had every potential. Now they're leaving, apparently, from the same place and they don't have that potential. They've sacrificed it and they've lost it.

But that's gill-gall. The angel of the Lord comes from gill-gall. Well, we have an even more interesting parallel coming up related to gill-gall when we come back from the break.

But if nothing else, this place reminds all believers, and especially us in this age and with all of the potentials we have been given of how important it is to seize and lay hold of God's grace

and God's provision while the day is called today. Remember what it says in the first part of Hebrews? They could not enter into that rest. It's a combination of faithfulness and obedience and rest.

We do the things that we are called to do and then we rest in the things that God says He will do. And we can so easily and foolishly exchange that and start working elbows and knees doing things that we can never accomplish because we have forgotten God's promises and we will inevitably fall short. We can't do His work and He will not do our work.

And so we wind up neither being faithful nor obedient. We're tired and we don't inherit. And it's an awful mistake for us to make.

This is a reminder of dedication, of focus, and of resting in the Lord. If we can remember the lesson of Gilgal, we will not suffer this fate. We will not leave with the prediction of everlasting problems from the Canaanites, everlasting snares and traps from the allure of this world.

But we have to remember what God has provided and what God has called us to. Well, we will pick up at this point as soon as we come back from the break.