

Kings and Prophets 13-11-15a

This is Friday, the 15th of November, 2013. I would like to send a special greeting out to those who are joining us at a distance. We always appreciate your presence and your support and questions and comments and fellowship, participation.

And to those in the future who hear me in a recording, I say greetings to you from the past. Do I hail thee? Hail, yes. Let me remind you that our study, we missed a week, but we're in the Book of Second Kings.

Our study is called Kings and Prophets. We're in Second Kings, Chapter 2, moving into Chapter 3. We formally start Chapter 3, but we have a little bit of interesting observation to make on what we have covered in the first two chapters and the preceding section in First Kings. Before we continue, as I have pointed out now for several weeks, this is such a dense and critical area of Scripture.

There are so many things that are an intersection point for Old Testament and New Testament truth that it is worth slowing down a bit and mining some of those riches. But we'll pretty much finish that analysis in our first session tonight, and then in the second session we'll move into Chapter 3. Let's take a moment as we begin to prepare ourselves to ask God's blessing on our study of His Word. Father, thank You for granting us the grace and the provision that brings us to this point.

You have preserved us, sustained us, and blessed us, even as You challenge us in many ways in our circumstances, in the situations we encounter day by day that give us opportunities to practice and to put into effect and into application the principles and truths that we find in Your Word. We thank You for the ministry of Your Holy Spirit. We thank You most of all for the presence and power and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf.

We pray that as we look at these things in Your Word tonight, that God the Holy Spirit will make them real to us, will teach them to us in a way that will transform us and renew us and equip us to do those things You would have us to do. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

The prophet Elisha has just been mocked as he leaves Jericho, heading back ultimately to Samaria, to the northern kingdom. As we saw two weeks ago, the traverse has been a very interesting one where Elijah and Elisha together began down near the Jordan and went west and then returned east, crossed the Jordan. And after the departure of Elijah, not necessarily from this earth but from the scene, Elisha now is going to recross the Jordan, move through Jericho, heading back to the northern kingdom.

And it is at this point that I think it might be helpful to point out one of our favorite things. What is our favorite, everybody together now, what is our favorite structural device in the Bible? Chiasm. Yes.

Isn't it time for a good old chiasm? It's been a while since we had a chiasm. I think we ought to avail ourselves because there is a wonderful chiasm right here. And perhaps the best way to point it out is to start at this translation of Elijah in chapter 2, verse 11.

This is a central point. This is where we have the, and I use the word translation loosely, he's translated out of the area at least. But you have the chariot of fire, horses of fire, and Elijah went up in this windstorm into the sky.

This is going to be our center point. Now, just before this, you have Elisha in verse 10, verses 9 and 10. Elijah says to Elisha, So what may I do for you before I am taken away from you? Elisha says, please let me have a double portion of your spirit be upon me.

Right? So Elijah says, if you see me, it will be so. If not, it won't. So if you see me, that's in verse 10.

What do we have in verse 12? Elisha saw it. So you can see the symmetry there. If you see me, you'll get the double portion.

Elisha saw it. And he cries out, my father, my father, twice. And then he saw him no more.

And so he says, my father, twice. He sees him and then he doesn't see him. And then he tears his clothing into two pieces.

This is a helpful hint or clue that we want to look at the two parts or two halves of this symmetry and compare them, which is what we like to call a chiasm. Before that, in chapter 2, verse 8, Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up. So if you're, let's just say you're not squeamish about writing in your Bible and you're going to label these.

So at the center where Elijah steps into the chariot of fire with the horses of fire and is taken up into the sky, that would be, let's just call that A. You could just write an A out beside that. B is verse 10. And if you see me, you'll get the double portion you're asking for.

If you don't, you won't. So that would be B, verse 10, verses 9 and 10, really. And the B prime, the corresponding part to that is verse 12.

Elijah saw it. And you have all of these doubles. He says, my father, twice.

He has a verb of seeing twice, what he sees and what he doesn't see. And his clothing is torn into two pieces. So things start doubling right away.

Not just a double portion of the spirit, but the significance of things is going to become clear to him because of the presence of the spirit. Everything is going to take on a new meaning. It has its primary meaning, but it has a secondary meaning.

It has an over and above meaning. One of the things that we notice about the presence and power of the Holy Spirit is that everything is invested not only with a mundane significance for

us, but a spiritual significance. Our whole life is a double.

We are citizens of some place on this planet, but we are citizens in heaven. We do earthly tasks, but they have not just the earthly impact and earthly import, but they have a heavenly impact and a heavenly import. And our lives have a double significance, if you will.

And it is because of the presence and power of God in our lives through the Holy Spirit representing for us the Lord Jesus Christ and his presence. So B and B prime there. Now if we step back to the next level in verse 8, what did we have? This is chapter 2, verse 8. Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water.

And it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. Quacks the water once, two guys go over. Got it? That would be C, verse 9. Everybody still with me? Verse 9 is C. Now we go afterward and we get down to verse 13.

Elisha 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 he struck the water. It was divided this way and that, and Elisha crossed over.

Now, how many times does it say he took the mantle in those verses? Verse 13, he took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen. Verse 14, then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen. Yes? In verse 14, it says he struck the water and apparently nothing happened.

This is even more vivid in the Hebrew. They've kind of smoothed it over by putting in the word when. There is no word when in the second part of that verse.

So he struck the water, apparently nothing happened. And so Elisha says, where is the God of Elijah? Yes, he, literally in Hebrew. Where is the God of Elijah? The Lord God of Elijah.

Yes, he. And he struck the water, evidently a second time. And it was divided this way and that, and Elisha crossed over.

So this would be your D prime, if you will, corresponding to D in verse 8. So Elijah strikes the water once and two guys cross over. Elisha strikes the water twice and one guy crosses over. And again, you have this continual doubling of verbs, doubling of ideas, doubling of actions in the Elisha side of this structure.

Okay, let's go back a layer further. Go back to 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. Remember that in verse 7? So the 50 men of the sons of the prophets stand at a distance and witness the two of them going across.

Okay, we could label that E. Now, on the other side of the symmetry, go down to verse 15. The sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him and said, The spirit of Elijah rests on

Elisha. They came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

So you've got the sons of the prophets mentioned, and then you've got the sons of the prophets mentioned again. That would be your E prime. So the sons of the prophets see Elijah and Elisha crossing on one side, and they see Elisha coming back by himself on the other side.

So that's our E layer. Let's go back one more. Go back to before verse 7, in verses 2 through 6. Remember when the sons of the prophets kept saying, Do you know your master's going to be taken today? Do you know your master's going to be taken today? And they keep asking Elisha, Do you know that you're going to lose your master today? Do you know that your master's going to be taken today? And they're talking about the departure of Elijah to Elisha, right? In 2 through 6. Well, go over to the other side.

And in verses 16 through 18, the sons of the prophets say, Look, there's 50 strong men with your servants. Let us go and search for your master. So they want to confirm that Elijah is gone.

They're predicting that Elijah is going to go. Now they want to confirm that he has gone. In 16 through 18.

So that would be your F layer, if you will. 2 through 6 on one side, 16 through 18 on the other side. Where the sons of the prophets are talking about the departure of Elijah.

They say, It's going to happen. Do you know it's going to happen? Do you know it's going to happen? Well, now they want to know that it did happen. They're not convinced.

They're not sure Elisha is convinced on the one side. And they're not necessarily convinced on the other side. So there's that mirror image, that symmetry.

If you want to expand it even further than that, you can go back to chapter 1. And you remember in verse 8, you had Elijah showing up. Because the king Ahaziah had fallen through his lattice. And didn't know if he was going to recover or not.

And he says, Go inquire of the gods at Ekron. And instead they encounter Elijah. You remember that, right? And so he's wanting to be healed.

The king would like to get well. He's hoping to get well. He's hoping that gods or God will smile on him to get well.

And that desire, that impulse is answered by a word from God. God speaks through the prophet and says, You're going to die. And you're not going to have any offspring.

Right? The king dies, has no son. Fulfilling the curse on the house of Ahab. Well, on the other side, if you go to chapter 2, verse 19 through 22, you've got a problem where there are people who aren't having any progeny.

The ground is barren. And there is death and barrenness in the town of Jericho. And there is a

desire for healing.

And there is God acting through the prophet. And there is healing. And there's restoration.

So there is a need for healing. God in the person of the prophet, Elijah, on one side, Elisha on the other side, in the first case, predicts death. And in the second, there is healing.

And this reminds us of what we have observed about the ministries of Elijah, Elijah being largely one of pronouncing judgment. And many of his miracles were of sort of a destructive nature, withholding the rain so that there is a drought, taking off the top of the mountains, slaying the prophets, and pronouncing curses. And on the other hand, you have this actions of Elisha, which are largely of a restorative and healing nature.

And this is one of the first contrasts we see is Elijah, the Tishbite, pronouncing that the king is going to die, and Elisha, with the double portion of the spirit, healing the waters. Now, think about this. You think, well, that's getting a little shaky.

It doesn't really seem like a parallel. Think about this. Why does Ahaziah die without issue? What's the operative force that causes this to happen? Who is Ahaziah? Who's he descended from? He's an Ahabite, right? What is upon the house of Ahab? What's the big thing that is overshadowing the house of Ahab? It is God's curse, right? And that curse is fulfilled.

So if you want to shorten the title of this particular element, which we would call G, it is curse fulfilled, right? Somebody needs healing, no healing's coming to you, you're under a curse, and the curse is fulfilled. Now, on the other side, when you get to chapter 2, verses 19 through 22, what's the location? Jericho? What cloud hangs over that spot? What did Joshua say? There's a curse. And even when the guy lost his son setting up the foundations and his other son is putting in the gates, the place is still under a curse.

Why do you think the water's bad? Why do you think there are miscarriages and barren crops and things? The place is cursed. So what happens when Elisha shows up? Curse is lifted. Curse fulfilled.

Curse lifted. Now, does the symmetry make a little more sense? And notice, these layers, they're very definite, they are very easily linked. And what is the center? It is the change.

It is the conversion from Elijah to Elisha, from the prophet of judgment to the prophet of deliverance and healing, from the power of God's Holy Spirit brokered in and through that prophet to the power of God's Holy Spirit doubly in view, doubly operative. But we already begin to see these comparisons and contrasts on the day that it happens. Let's go one more layer out.

Go back to chapter 1, verses 9 through 15. Remember in the story of the injury and the attendant curse, Ahaziah says, I want Elijah to come talk to me. I want to see if I can get him to speak a good word.

And you remember the story. The king sent a captain of 50 with his 50 men who went up to him, sitting on top of the hill. Man of God, the king has said, come down.

Man of God, the king says what? Come down. On the other side, when you go to chapter 2, verses 23 and 24, what do the youths say? Go up, old bald head. Come down.

Go up. Here is the guy under a curse with really no hope of deliverance saying come down and the people he sends get roasted. Here's the people who have had the curse lifted saying go up.

Now we begin to see some additional illumination on the 42 youths. You had 102 soldiers burnt, incinerated. You have 42 youths torn.

Fire comes down from heaven in one case. Bears come out from the earth in the other. They're related.

They shine light on each other. And you have specific numbers given in each case. So we've looked at some of the symbolism of those numbers.

The 50, it's not called 51 men. It's called a 50, a captain of 50. Are there 49 and he's the 50? Then he's the captain of everybody including himself.

Are there 51? Not sure. I tend to think that there's 50 guys and he's the 51st. But the number in Scripture is 50.

Here the number is 42 that is specifically given. So you have these specific numbers and you have a case where somebody is telling the man of God to go somewhere and judgment ensues for trying to tell the man of God where he ought to go. You don't tell the man of God to come down and you don't tell the man of God to go up.

So that would be your H layer. That's pretty good, isn't it? A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H. That's one of the whopping great chiasms of all. The chiasms we've covered in my view.

So anyway, I wanted to offer that to you because God is telling us this is important. Now, here's the \$64,000 question. You look at those brackets converging in on verse 12 and we say, why? I get that this is the center of the bullseye.

I get that all of the rings surround it. What am I supposed to be really deriving out of this verse 12? Is it going to heaven? Actually, verse 11 is your central point. As they continued on and talked, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire.

One of the most overlooked things in this entire story is the second verb in verse 11. As they continued on and talked. I would love to know what this talk was about.

I don't think it was, boy, you know, this gravel is small enough it really gets in between your sandals and your feet, doesn't it? I've got a cactus prong there between my toes. I'm going to have to slip. Can you hold on to it? Do you think that's what they were talking about? If the Bible

says they continued on and talked, what kind of conversation would you imagine that to be? Elijah knows it's his last day as the chief prophet of the northern kingdom, that he is going to be passing the baton to Elisha.

Elisha knows it's the last day that Elijah is going to be removed and this is going to be day one of his prophetic ministry. What would you imagine that they talked about? They continued on and talked. Have you ever been part of a major last day event? Somebody's last day at work? Your last day on active duty? Your last day at a duty station? Your last day in a neighborhood where you've lived for years and years? Your last day with a loved one that is about to check out and go to glory? Last days, people really think about what they talk about, don't they? If they're not frivolous and shallow, it's significant.

You want to be sure important things are covered and that feelings and appreciations are expressed, that important information is passed along. I'm handing over, I'm transitioning, I'm the outgoing head guy, you're the incoming head guy or girl, and this is what you really need to know. Don't forget this.

Here's where the turnover file is. Here's where we keep the keys. There's the light switch.

Important things. They continued on and talked. I would suggest that if God has gone to this much trouble to focus attention on this verse, then everything in it is important.

Once another time, there were people continuing on and talking and it was a significant day. He wrote to Emmaus. He opened to them the Scriptures and showed them.

It doesn't just say the Scriptures, it says all the Scriptures. Have you looked at that Emmaus passage lately and seen the occurrence of the words all in there? There's, I don't have time, there's a lot of them in there. People that want to be real literal, it says he opened all the Scriptures and showed them all things concerning himself.

All things? All the Scriptures? What kind of all is that? He covered every verse in the Old Testament on that walk and showed them every single thing concerning himself. It's just a reminder that we're supposed to use common sense in interpreting the Scripture. I'll just leave it at that.

So, what's going on in verse 11? Then it happened. It came to pass. And even that is significant because who chose the timing and the location of this event? Did Elijah or Elisha know exactly when and where it was going to happen? Did they have the timing of the rapture, so to speak? No.

So what did they do? Did they stand in one place, cut a hole in a sheet, sell all their possessions, stand out there, watch for signs in the heavens? What did they do? They knew the time was near. They knew the event was certain. But what did they do in the meantime? They continued on and communicated.

And that's what we should do. We know that the return of the Lord Jesus for us has never been as close as it is right now. It's never been this near.

In human history, nobody has ever been as close to the rapture as we are. Never. Sort of a tautology, isn't it? But it's nevertheless true.

But as you see the day approaching, what is it we're supposed to do? Continue on and speak the truth to one another in love. This is why we have Bible classes. This is why you and I search the Scriptures daily.

This is why we think about it, pray about it, pray it to God in our prayers, reflect what we've learned, ask Him to help us understand what it means to us. I cannot figure out for you what the things we cover in Bible class signify, what you should do in their light. I have no idea.

And if I did, it wouldn't be any of my business. Each of us has to take these things and work it out between us and the Lord. We continue on and we talk with one another and with the Lord.

They continued on and talked and suddenly, unexpectedly, a chariot of fire with horses of fire. Notice it appeared there's not even a verb there. It's just suddenly.

This is what I like about Spanish. You know, in English we say, there is this or there is that. Here it is, there it is.

In Spanish it's just, hay. Hay mucho frio. You know, H-A-Y.

H-A-Y means there is. Well, a lot of times in Hebrew you don't even get that. Suddenly, chariot made out of fire, horses made out of fire.

Flaming chariot, flaming horse, suddenly. It's so fast, you don't even have time to stick in a verb. Immediately, suddenly, there it is.

And this is a reminder to us that many things in God's plan happen this way. Thief in the night, don't be caught unprepared. You do not know at what hour the Lord is going to say, time's up.

We know the signs and the seasons. We do not know the day or the hour. The Lord Jesus Christ does not know the day or the hour.

And the fact that he said that wreaks all kinds of havoc with systematic theology, hypostatic union, undiminished deity. If he's undiminished deity, how can he not know when the rapture is going to happen? Hmm? Pop that on your next theology guy, other than me. Somebody wants to tell you they've got theology figured out, and this is under Christology and theology proper both.

God is omniscient, he knows all things. Jesus Christ is undiminished deity, so he must necessarily know all things. And the Bible says he doesn't know when the rapture is.

Figure that out. Anyway, suddenly, chariot of fire, horses of fire, and separated the two of them. Now, what is the symbolic expression of the presence of the Holy Spirit on the day the church age began? How is it pictured in Acts chapter 2? Doves descending from heaven? Saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove on all the assembled company? Why isn't it a dove? It's a dove in other places.

And behold, oil from heaven poured out on everybody's head. Everybody got anointed. Is oil not a symbol of the Holy Spirit? What happens on the day of Pentecost? Tongues of fire.

Fire. Now, name me a situation where fire falling on your head is a good thing. Vesuvius? What's the one in Hawaii? Not in Hawaii.

Kilauea. I don't think Kilauea is a volcano. Yeah, Mauna Kea, Mauna Loa.

Pick your Hawaiian volcano that's active. Pick any volcano that's active. Is any fire coming out of that thing falling on your head a good thing? Watching a multi-story building fire, high wind, brush fire, wildfires in California.

Is fire falling on your head ever a good thing in human experience? Oh, some fire is falling. Let's go run under it. Hurry, hurry.

They have storm chasers. They don't have fire chasers. They don't have little trucks equipped to go get under the falling lava, under falling meteors.

Oh, look, it's a meteor shower. Let's see if we can get hit by it. Doesn't happen, does it? So why in Acts 2 would God picture this great gift of God, the promise of the Father that Jesus iterated and reiterated to the disciples when He gave them the Spirit? How did He do it? Blowtorch? He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.

Remember that? So why isn't it a, there was the sound of a rushing mighty wind, but what was the visible manifestation? It is flames of fire. Why? Well, among many reasons, one of them is this passage. What does the chariot of fire and the horses of fire do? What does it specifically say in verse 11, surrounded by these brackets and target rings, what does it say it does? It separates them.

The prophet representing judgment and condemnation is separated by the appearance, the sudden appearance, of this fiery manifestation from heaven, from the guy who is going to have a double portion of the Spirit and is going to largely use that power to heal, to restore, to benefit, to deliver, to build up. They are separated. Well, it's interesting, and these are just idea starters.

We could easily spend, I say we, I could easily spend another month of Fridays just looking at all of the implications and the connections that you find in this passage to the rest of Scripture. But hopefully this is suggestive enough to make the point. And what is the point? Which side of the chariot do we live on? Are we in the age of Elijah or are we in the age of Elisha? What should our

presence, our bringing of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit into every situation we encounter? You are a vessel.

You are a temple. We are all receptacles containing, conveying, bringing the presence of this same Holy Spirit. It's the same Spirit that enabled and empowered Elisha.

You and I are manifestations and local occupied presences of that Holy Spirit. So what should our presence do? What should our testimony and witness be? Is it for condemnation and judgment? That is a necessary function. By the law comes what? The knowledge of sin.

How did grace and truth come? By Jesus Christ. And God the Holy Spirit has as His sole mission in this age to reveal and manifest and show forth the glory of Jesus Christ. We've seen that throughout Ephesians chapter 1 and into chapter 2, haven't we? So do we have a destiny? Do we have a purpose? Do we have a responsibility? The presence of the Holy Spirit in you creates for you and for me a profound responsibility to be Elisha, to be a benefit, sacrificial toward self, beneficial toward others.

And God will preserve us. God will protect us. God will ensure that we fulfill that role if we are willing.

Remember the requirements that Jesus gave about being a disciple. If any man come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me, deny himself. Anyone that won't leave father and mother and kindred and so on is not worthy of me.

The one putting his hand on the plow and turning back is not worthy to be a disciple and so on. And you look at the requirement that Elisha had to stick and to stay and to persevere even when Elijah himself was saying, don't follow me, stay here, I'm going to go somewhere else. And Elisha had to express that dedication and that stick-to-itiveness and that purposeful pursuit.

He wanted that double portion of the Spirit. He wanted to be able to serve God and he wasn't going to let anything get in his way, even the prophet Elijah himself. What happened in the first days of the church? The prophet Elijah himself, the Old Testament age, the law of Moses, was getting in the way of these people pursuing their obedience and representation of God.

And it had to be ignored, it had to be set aside. So I say that to say that there are a lot of applications, there are a lot of truths that have a big bow tied around them. And there is a knot right here at this point.

And that's what this chiasm kind of shows us. We'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up in Chapter 3.