

Kings and Prophets 13-11-15b

We pick up our study now in the book of 2 Kings. We're looking at the very significant transition from Elijah to Elisha. We have spent many weeks on it, and we have still only scratched the surface.

We had some good observations during the break that as you look at this, if you spend a little bit of time, it will reward your attention with additional insights. I'll just give you a few. Katie and I were talking on the break about how you notice that on the Elijah side of the chiasm, back in chapter 1, verse 8, when the king is trying to figure out what kind of man did you encounter that said, why are you going to Ekron? They said, he is a hairy man wearing a leather belt.

He's a hairy man. And this is the one that Ahaziah is going to tell to come down. And of course, what do the children shout at Elisha? Old bald head.

And this is a connection, the amount of hair. And my suggestion to you is that part of that taunt may have been, you're just a barbershop floor sweeping of Elijah. He shaved his head and you fell off.

So you fell down, go back up kind of a thing. But you can see the connection. I'll suggest to you another just real quickly.

And I am telling you we haven't covered the half of it. But just as another example, remember we talked about Elijah when they went across the Jordan. And I could talk about going across the Jordan and coming back ad infinitum.

You think about what the Jordan means and what crossing the Jordan means, what John the Baptist baptizing in the Jordan at this spot means, dressed like Elijah, compared to Elijah. He is Elijah if you will receive him, right? I mean, is there a connection there? But just to take one quick additional detail, look at verse 14 again, where Elijah having left in the fiery chariot, the fire has appeared, the double portion, because Elisha was there to see it, has fallen upon him. So he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, apparently without effect, because he speaks.

Now did Elijah have to say anything for the water to part on the other side of this chiasm? Remember in verse 8, Elijah took the mantle, rolled it up, struck the water, and it was divided this way and that. It was no speaking, there was no hesitation, there was no repetition of the action. He rolled it up, struck it, and then it divided.

But there's the rolling up and the striking and apparently crickets in the background. And so pay attention now, what does Elisha say? What does he say? Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Where is the Lord God? He just got through seeing the fiery chariot, saw the fiery horses, saw Elijah taken away. What is his question? Where is Elijah? Where is Elijah when I need him? He can whop this water and it just divides right off the bat.

I whop it and nothing happens. Where is Elijah? Is that what he asks? Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Now keep your finger here and turn to Matthew chapter 27. Matthew chapter 27, verse 45 and following.

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. This is the Lord Jesus on the cross. Matthew 27, 45 and following.

From the sixth to the ninth hour there is darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Where are you Eli? My God, my God, repeated twice. What did Elisha say when Elijah was getting into the chariot? My father, my father? Here the Lord Jesus says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Where are you? What does the next verse say? Read verse 47.

Some of those who stood there when they heard that said what? Said what? This man is calling for Elijah. These things are connected and not by accident. Even if people said this, there were all kinds of comments around the cross.

There were conversations for hours as Jesus hung on the cross. Why is this particular speculation? Why is this particular comment recorded in inspired scripture? Because it is significant. These things are connected.

They are tied together and not accidentally. And what is the purpose? You say, okay, they're tied together, but why? Well, think about it. What is happening on the cross? What is about to happen down at the temple? Something is going to be torn in two, is it not? It's a lot more than Elijah's raiment.

It is that which separates God's presence and God's holiness from the people of God. There is a change on that day, at that hour. And even as the Lord Jesus cries out from the cross, even as Elisha cries out, my father, my father, to the prophet, and where is the Lord God of Elijah? How many times does he strike the water? Twice.

How many times did Moses strike the rock? Twice. These things are connected. The Old Testament economy characterized by Moses and Elijah, where there is striking and there is acknowledgement that there is a God in heaven whose justice must be satisfied, who must be pleased and be proactively involved before there is any deliverance, before there is any conveyance.

What does crossing the water on dry ground represent? What does it fundamentally represent? It, at the Red Sea, represented salvation. Look at Hebrews, the first few chapters. They were all baptized.

They baptized into Moses. That crossing of the water means something. Crossing the Jordan with Joshua means something.

This Jordan is crossed twice. The first time it is crossed by means of Elijah. But which direction

are they going when Elijah parts it? Out of the land.

Which way are they going when the double strike parts the water? Into the land. What happens with the glory of God in the temple? Remember Ezekiel? Raised up by the hair of the head, by the river Kabar, taken to Jerusalem, weeping for Tammuz, all the rest of it. And what does he see happening with the glory of God? The glory of God departs, going the very same direction Elijah did.

And what is the prediction? That on the day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns at the Second Coming, the glory of God is going to return and come right back across, just as it did. The immediate vicinity is the Kidron Valley. It's the Mount of Olives.

What's just down the road? The Jordan, where John baptized. Why didn't John baptize in the Pool of Siloam? Why didn't John baptize in the Brook Kidron? Why didn't John baptize in any nearby water in Jerusalem? You want everybody in Jerusalem to get the message? You know, how much water does it take to go to any of the nearby pools? You've got a whole bunch of sick people sitting around there. Why didn't he go baptize that poor guy that Jesus is going to heal later on? There's nobody to put me down in the water.

You know, that angel stirring aberration. Why didn't John go baptize down there and get that guy healed or something? He's way over at the Jordan. Why? These things are connected.

They're tied together. And the more you think about them and the more you look at this symmetry and see what is at the center, it is the division of times. It is the Old Testament age and the New Testament age.

It is the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. And it makes us appreciate the side of that divide that we are on. And it ought to motivate us.

It ought to encourage us to do something with this privilege. It could just as easily have been some dusty Moabite or Edomite or Ammonite or some member of one of the lesser tribes of Israel traipsing around in sandals a couple, three, four thousand years ago. God chose to put us here and now.

We have the Elisha side of this divide. And from those to whom much is given, much is expected. Much is required.

Why do you think God put us here and not there? How come we're not in the Exodus generation? How come we're not in the early patriarchal days? How come we're not in the latter days of Israel, in the days of the United Kingdom or the divided kingdom? How come we're not back in those days? Why did God have you and I be born here? Have you and me born here? Why? Because we are supposed to recognize these provisions and these opportunities and do something with them. And it is pointed out, it is emphasized, this chiasm isn't just here so we can say, wow, neat, a chiasm. It is here to impress upon us where we are in God's plan, which side of the Jordan we are on and what we are supposed to be doing.

Now, you flip back to 2 Kings and the very last verse in verse 2, we haven't really covered. He turns around and pronounces a curse. Somebody else made a good observation on the break about how the curse on Ahab's house was fulfilled in the first side of the chiasm and it was a long-standing curse and it was fulfilled.

On this side, you have a long-standing curse that is lifted but then a new curse is pronounced on those who don't appreciate the lifting of the old curse. The old curse on Jericho was lifted, right? The last of the curse is eradicated. The water is fresh.

They can grow crops. People are no longer miscarrying. The last ill effects of that Joshua curse have been removed by Elisha.

And what is the thanks he gets? He gets mocked and derided and treated with scorn. And so what happens? Curse returns on those who do the mocking. There is a new curse and it is immediate.

They don't have to wait for the wells to dry up or the crops to fail. They don't have to wait to get married and have their wives miscarry. What happens? They are immediately torn by how many bears? Two.

Two bears. Because everything with Elisha seems to be in pairs. It's not one bear.

It's two bears. Why two bears? Well, my suggestion, and I mention this again to some of you all on the break, is how many youths are there? Forty-two. If everything with Elisha is doubled, we've seen two pieces of his clothing and two smackings of the water and two of this and two of that and two of the other.

So if there's two, what's 42 divided by two? 21. What's the only way you can factor 21? Three times seven. Three is the number of perfection in heaven.

Seven is the number of perfection on earth. And it's the double portion of the multiplied numbers of perfection. Two times 21.

So, again, the two is significant. When you take that 42 and divide it, 21, there's only one way you can break that down. Three and seven.

And can you not make a connection with those numbers? Is God active? Is His plan and purpose being perfected and completed? He who is at work in you will complete it, will perfect it with a view toward the day of Christ, we're told in the New Testament. I'm telling you, you can sit and stare at these verses, and the more you look, the more you see, and the more you learn, and the more motivated we will be to lay hold of that for which we were laid hold of. Fulfill the potential.

The time is short. The privileges are great. The provision is astounding.

There's nothing we cannot do in the plan and purpose of God. If we just wake up and realize

what we have been given, it's better than a winning lottery ticket. It's better than unlimited funds.

It's better than perfect health. It's better than the greatest job you could think of. It's better than the greatest relationships you can think of, because it is eternal.

It doesn't perish with the using. It doesn't grow old. I was musing earlier today about, you can do everything right.

Did you see that they've come out this past week with a new study, all the heart doctors and all these cholesterol management, Lipitor dealing pill salesmen, and all the doctors. The new guidelines now for Lipitor. You know how if you've had trouble with your bad cholesterol and your number is up 190 and it's bad, we're going to put you on Lipitor and we've got to aggressively attack this and get your numbers down.

Well, after 10 these many years, they have figured out that getting your numbers down makes no statistical difference in your risk of heart attack and stroke. It makes no difference. So they've dropped it from the diagnostic and from the analysis that the doctor does.

If you've got high cholesterol, they will put you on Lipitor and these other drugs, but they no longer monitor you to see if your numbers come down, because it doesn't matter. It's not the numbers. It's something else.

They still think that these cholesterol busters do some good, but it isn't by bringing your numbers down. So all of this gospel of, well, just do this and take these pills and pay all this money and you'll be healthier. Well, now they figure out, well, gee, I guess we were wrong about that.

And let's say you do everything right. Let's say you live on bird seed and pieces of seaweed and you just pick and scrimp and all that. Listen, nothing wrong with eating healthy.

I eat as healthy as I can. I eschew all kinds of stuff that I used to just pour down in great quantities. It's important to be a good steward of your body.

I'm not knocking that at all. What I am saying is everything needs to be a balance. In the plan of God, everything is balanced.

Nothing is taken to an extreme in God's Word. All things in moderation. Let your moderation be known unto all.

I think about this because I moderate a chat board. I am a moderator. And I've often thought I ought to just quote this first.

I'm going to let my moderation be known unto all men. But moderation. Moderation in all things.

Balance. You take nothing to an extreme. You don't take a doctrine to an extreme.

You don't take a teaching to an extreme. And you don't take concern. Because let's say you do every single thing right.

You are really careful. And you eat as though you're in the Garden of Eden. You're going to step out and get hit by a bus.

Something else will get you. You'll have some congenital thing that diet doesn't affect or control. That exercise cannot overcome.

I think about Bobby Darin. He was a tremendously talented guy. Sang like few have ever been able to sing.

But he had a congenital heart problem. And no matter what he did, he was on a timer. And he died young.

And he would have died young no matter what. It's just the particular hand of cards that he was dealt. All of us do the best we can with what we've got.

And it's great to be observant. It's great to be careful. But to overinvest, to obsess, to get too wrapped up is not biblical.

The Bible says, relax. In everything give thanks. Everything that you eat is good if you take it with thanksgiving.

If you're looking to God instead of looking at the food and weighing it and figuring out how bad it is for you, nothing wrong with being healthy. But the primary goal is to be thankful. In everything give thanks.

All food is good if it is taken with thanksgiving. Let God iron out the length of your life. Jesus said, you can't by worrying turn one hair white or black.

You can't extend your life by one second worrying. And that includes worrying about your habits, your exercise, your intake, by worrying. It doesn't mean that you can't be prudent, that you can't be wise.

What it does mean is ultimately you do what is reasonable and commit your way unto the Lord. Let Him bring it to pass. So all of these things are wrapped up as we look at the age in which we live and the gifts that we have been given.

Why invest in a world that is perishing, perishes with the using, is going to melt with fervent heat. What difference does it make except as it reflects faith and obedience? What difference does anything make that we do? Physical health, organization, job performance, school grades, cleanliness of your house, mechanical soundness of your car. What difference does any of it make except as it reflects faith and obedience? Because faith, hope and love are the only things

that are going to remain and abide.

And why get so tangled up in the immediate that you lose sight of the ultimate? Passages like this are designed to lift us up out of the immediate and remind us that there is a much larger plan in operation. There is a much larger God who is unconcerned with the trivialities of physics and chemistry in this life. With a thought He can negate, overcome, eliminate things that are in our path.

He is looking for people of faith. He is looking for people of obedience. He is looking for an Elisha who is hungry for the double portion of the Spirit and will stick and do whatever it takes to be there and to see what needs to be seen so that that Spirit can be received.

This is why you are in Bible class. I assume you are here because you recognize that it is important to see, even in the Old Testament, to see Elijah so that you can be Elisha. Isn't that what it really boils down to? That's why the study of the Old Testament is so extremely important for the church.

There are a lot of church people who don't really understand that, but if you don't see Elijah, you are not going to be able to do anything with the double portion of the Spirit. The last verse here, after the bears come, after this curse symmetry is fulfilled, with the curse we saw back in chapter 1, you've got the two bears, not the three bears, it's the two bears, and it's not porridge. They are eating people.

This one is too small. This one is too big. This one is just right.

But look at verse 25. Look at verse 25. There is something really important here.

Did you even notice verse 25 the last few weeks? Then Elisha went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria. Okay, a little travelogue. Let's get to chapter 3 and move on.

Here's the thing. Go to the maps in your Bible and find a map of Palestine in Old Testament days. If you don't have a map, look on with somebody that does.

My very first map here is archaeological sites in Palestine. Just find the map that's got a nice view of the Sea of Galilee, Jordan River, Dead Sea area. Everybody got one or something close? You see this? Now, I'll show you on mine if you haven't got a good one to look at.

But you can see this blue blob down here. This is your Dead Sea, right? And right at the top of it where the Jordan empties in, that's where this Jordan parting has taken place. This is where Jericho is and all that, right? Right at the top of the Dead Sea, due east of Jerusalem pretty much.

Now, Mount Carmel is way up here. See that little protrusion into the Mediterranean Sea way up north and west? Way up there. It's pretty much due west of the Sea of Galilee.

See that little protrusion out there? And that whole ridgeline extending down in sort of a southeasterly direction from that protrusion into the Mediterranean Sea, that's Carmel. So this is no little minor, oh, well, then he went from Plano to Richardson and settled down. This is a big distance.

And I'll tell you what's even more amazing. If you've located Carmel way up there, where is Samaria? Come back halfway on a line. If you draw a line from the north point of the Dead Sea up to Carmel, come back halfway, maybe a little bit less than halfway, that's Samaria.

So this is not like, well, he sort of went to this place and then went to that. He went all the way up to Carmel, then reversed and went the other way and went halfway back to get to Samaria. So why did he do that? He had to pass by or near or through Samaria to get to Carmel.

So if he was trying to go to Samaria, why didn't he just stop? Why did he go all the way up to Carmel and then come all the way back? Well, who are we talking about here? What's his name? Elisha. And he is the successor of whom? Elijah. What's the most significant? Elijah has two mountaintop experiences, right? He has a first one and he has a second one.

What's his first mountaintop experience? Altar, prophets of Baal, fire from heaven. What's his second mountaintop experience? On another mountain, presence of God, earth, wind and fire. Remember that? Still small voice.

Remember that? Now, if Elisha has crossed the Jordan with the question, where is the God of Elijah? He's got a choice of two mountains he can go to, right? He's going to cross the Jordan and the last question, the last thing we've heard him say, other than cursing the children, is where is the God of Elijah, right? It's not really the last thing he says. He talks to the 50 prophets and so on. But this was his question, his personal question.

When he's by himself, where is the God of Elijah? And he comes back across. And so where does he go? He goes to Mount Carmel. Why? If you think about Elijah's two mountains, and let's say I give you two little signs.

I give you one sign that says success and I give you another sign that says failure. Which sign are you going to stick into which mountain? Which mountain gets the success sign? Which sign gets the failure? Unnamed mountain of God, right? Could have been Sinai, Horeb, someplace. So which mountain, when Elisha, I think, is sort of answering the question for himself, where is the God of Elijah, which mountain does he go to? Which mountain would you go to? You want to go to success mountain or failure mountain? Or which mountain? Which mountain will you go to? Which mountain? You go to success mountain, you go to Mount Carmel.

Now, what's interesting about this is that apparently because of what happened at Mount Carmel, what has happened in Palestine, every place where something significant allegedly occurred? Now there's a bunch of monks living there, right? Keeping up a church and collecting indulgences and selling trinkets. There's now a presence there because, well, this is the spot

where they pulled the wheat off the heads of the stalks. Every single minor thing that happened in the career of Jesus, now there's an Orthodox church or a synagogue.

Not a synagogue, there's some kind of a memorial there, right? Well, what happened at Carmel? If you keep your finger in 2 Kings 3 and turn over to chapter 4, just look at the headers in chapter 4, Elisha and the widow's oil in chapter 4. Again, this is even a larger echo of our chiasm. Remember Elijah had his widow, Elisha has got his widow. That's another outside bracket that you can note.

But what I'm looking for is a little further down. Elijah raises the Shunammite's son, and the little boy is on her knees till noon and then died. That's verse 20.

Chapter 4, verse 20. The little boy dies. His mother's taking care of him, taking care of him, and he dies.

She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door on him, and went out. She called her husband, said, Send me one of the young men, etc. Verse 24.

She saddled a donkey, said to her servant, Drive and go forward. Do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you. And she departed, verse 25, and went to the man of God, where? At Mount Carmel.

The man of God is at Mount Carmel. Now he first goes to Mount Carmel at the end of our chapter 2, and then returns to Samaria. So he's living in Samaria, but there is something at Mount Carmel, and later on, when the Shunammite is looking for Elisha, she knows that he is at Mount Carmel.

So there is a dwelling of some sort, because he sees her coming from afar off, and you have this whole thing that we'll get into a little bit later. But this is a place of significance. Carmel was not significant previously.

Nothing special about it. They didn't pronounce blessings and cursings on this mountain. It's not Gerizim.

It's not Ebal. It's not Nebo. It's not Horeb, Sinai.

It has no significance until God speaks, and God responds to Elijah's challenge to the prophets of Baal at that mountain. And thereafter, it has symbolic significance. So if Elisha goes there, we would think this has something to do with its significance, right? What is the significance? This is the Northern Kingdom shadow, adumbration, echo of Sinai.

When's the last time a mountain quaked with fire and smoked, and God made a big point to His people? It is as though the Northern Kingdom is being taken back to their roots, being taken back to the beginning. You have sunk so far. At such time as you should be teachers, you have need that one teach you again the first principles.

So let me give you a mini Sinai moment with a prophet and choose you this day whom you will serve. Is it going to be the golden calf? Is it going to be Baal? Is it going to be the God of Israel? The God of Israel answers by fire. Remember, the people were so afraid of Sinai, they ran the other way.

And what do they do at Carmel? The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God. They get that much.

It doesn't stick and it doesn't last, but they get that much. Elisha does not eschew. He doesn't avoid.

He doesn't ignore Mount Carmel. He goes there. It's the first place he goes after leaving the environment where he got his commission and where he takes over from Elijah.

The first place he goes is to Carmel. He goes there before he goes to his place of business in Samaria. So this, too, is significant.

And it is a reminder to us that as New Testament Christians, the law of Moses, what God did with His people in Old Testament days, His pronouncements of judgment, His manifestations of presence and power are still significant for us. We need to visit them. We need to spend time with them.

We need to learn from them. You can imagine Elisha, who wasn't evidently present at that time. Remember, God says, you're going to anoint Elisha and Hazael and Jehu and so on afterwards.

But he goes to visit that site and to be reminded and to see for himself the place where God performed this great miraculous intervention. So that is what ends chapter 2. And these two locations also speak of a priority. What is Samaria? That is the earthly capital.

That's the king's city, the king's dwelling place. Remember, it was built to be the capital of the northern kingdom. That was its purpose.

And he knows as the national prophet that that's where he needs to go. But where does he go first? He goes to the vacant mountain, the place where God revealed himself to his people first. Even though it's out of the way, even though he might think, well, now that I'm the prophet, I've got to get in there and start prophesying and having an influence on the king and affecting the people and making a big noise, he goes first to Carmel.

And evidently, this is a place to which he returns. And you think about the Lord Jesus, who with all of his ministry obligations and functions and his preaching and teaching and healing and all the other things that he did, he often retired to a mountain by himself to do what? To commune with his Father. Where is the God of Elijah? And evidently, Elisha's fondness for Mount Carmel has to do with the altar, God's honoring the sacrifice there, and respecting not the failure of Elijah, but the success of Elijah, looking at the positive, looking at what Elijah did right, looking where Elijah was faithful and obedient and God was able to use him to the maximum extent.

He's got the double portion. If he can go and see the maximum that God did through Elijah, this is preparation and inspiration and motivation to be twice the prophet as he then goes to Samaria. And as we look at the people recorded for us in Scripture and their successes and their failures, we are inspired and we are motivated by those people who were faithful and who were obedient.

We visit that before we go to our place of business, our place of function and operation with that fresh remembrance of the presence and power of God. I think that's... I would suggest that's what's going on. That's why Elisha makes this pilgrimage, if you will, to Carmel.

He goes and visits, but he doesn't stay. Why would he do that? The same reason we go and visit in the pages of Scripture the career of God's people in the past to learn, to be inspired, to be motivated, to be educated so that we can then go to our place of function and fruitfulness and serve and fulfill our potential. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

We'll resume and move through chapter 3 next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how powerfully it can act inside us to cleanse us, to equip us, to motivate us, to inform us, to enable and empower us.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will perform all of those functions through his gracious presence so that we can reflect the glory of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in his name. Amen.