

Kings and Prophets 14-10-03a

This is Friday, October the 3rd, 2014. We're back after a bit of a hiatus in our study of the kings and prophets in ancient Israel. We're at 2 Kings chapter 10 and we're taking a look at some of the thematic elements that God weaves together in this account to communicate beyond just the telling of the story.

These are symbolic means of communicating to us some deeper things, and when we discern them here, they help us in other places. And we'll see that as we go forward this evening. Let's, as is our usual practice, take just a moment at the beginning to focus our attention, clear the cluttered decks of our minds, if yours is like mine at least, it's somewhat cluttered, and prepare to relax and be refreshed and enjoy ourselves as we look at the truth of God's Word together.

Shall we pray? Father, thank you for your provision for us, the strength that you provide so that we can live the life to which you have called us. It is something of which we are incapable in our own strength, but it is a wonderful blessing and privilege to be carried by your grace, to be buoyed up by your provision, to be refreshed and encouraged by the presence of the Holy Spirit, to be empowered and enabled and guided by your Word, and to have the example of the Lord Jesus Christ before us, recognizing that He has already traveled the road that we undertake here in our flesh. Having triumphed and having succeeded and having fulfilled all of your will, He represents us at your right hand.

We're grateful for this time that remains to us in this life before we enter into eternity and future things. We thank you for the challenges and the learning opportunities that you give us, and we pray that as we stop here at the oasis of your Word, that the refreshment and the instruction and the principles and doctrines that we see in your Word will equip us and strengthen us to maximize the use of the time that does remain to us, that we can make the most of our opportunities here, both to enjoy blessing and opportunity and to work our way through challenges and those things that strengthen us. We pray that we can be a blessing to one another as we spend time being blessed in the study of your Word.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We looked a couple of weeks ago when we last met at the ideas that are suggested when you see certain elements show up in these narrative stories.

We looked at the meaning, the connotation of weapons such as the difference between a sword and a bow and the notions that that suggests to us in a larger sense. Beyond the fact that Jehu shot his predecessor through with an arrow, there is something a little more suggestive going on. And this is a very useful thing to be aware of, to be sensitive to, because when these same elements occur in other places, what used to be an extremely obscure and puzzling passage can begin to sort of fall into place and shed its light for us.

We're going to see a really great example of that tonight, but in order to fully appreciate it, we need to look at a couple more of these concepts that we've already encountered multiple times.

And so in addition to swords and in addition to bows and the arrows that they launch, we have also frequently seen the notion of chariots and horses. You remember the bow idea? Jonathan was a man of the bow.

It's potential. It's looking down the road. Jonathan was the potential king of Israel.

He was the crown prince. But that arrow was shot beyond his servant when he was communicating to David. And he dies on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, and David composes the Song of the Bow.

This is mourning for the unrealized potential of Jonathan. And it wasn't Jonathan's fault. Jonathan was loyal almost to a fault.

But it is the unrealized potential of the house of Saul that initially had the promises that were made later to David and would culminate in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And the contrast between the house of Saul with Jonathan and later with Ish-bosheth and some of those guys and even Abner as a good man, but kind of on the wrong team. Is very suggestive for us.

And so other places when we see the bow, for example in Revelation, when there is a man riding a horse and he has a bow and he goes forth conquering and to conquer. It's not just a happenstance. It's not just a part of the illustration.

It means something. We are again thinking of this man is going to be viewed in terms of his potential rather than his accomplishments. We've had that happen in recent political history.

People get awards for things that they have not yet done. It's anticipated. It's expected.

It's hoped for. And it doesn't actually come to fruition. Well, another of the elements that has appeared time and again in our recent study of Kings is the chariot and the horses associated with the chariot.

This is a really fascinating subject. I didn't really know how fascinating it was until I started looking at it and I almost got all derailed looking at chariots and horses and horsemen and so on. But I've corralled my enthusiasm and got it all back on the ranch here.

So what I would like to do is just take a quick sampling because we have several of these to cover. But the most prominent chariot perhaps in the Bible is the one that we saw back in Chapter 2 where Elijah and Elisha are separated by a chariot of fire and its team of horses. And I finally figured something out that I've probably confused off and on as we've referred to this incident.

And if you look real quickly at 2 Kings 2 verse 11, as they continued on and talked, and you remember the sequence of cities. And the more you look at this, the more is going on. The travels of Elijah and Elisha following him are so significant in terms of the anticipation of the

Lord Jesus Christ.

Because Elijah foreshadows the Lord Jesus Christ in his first advent as the fulfillment of the law. As the, I've not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. As the one rebuking false and corrupted worship in the nation.

As the one who calls people back to God. As the demonstration in a miraculous fashion of the covenant God of Israel still on his throne and still expecting his people to be obedient and to respect the first and greatest commandment to love the Lord their God. Calling people to repentance by example and by demonstration as much as by vocal preaching and message.

But Elijah is the Lord Jesus coming in the Old Testament age, in the Old Testament paradigm to fulfill the Old Testament sacrifices and the Old Testament prophecies. And he is, his forerunner and announcer so to speak is John the Baptist who is called Elijah. Elijah has come as the harbinger, as the fourth teller.

The one who is calling the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. To remember that tradition, that patrilineal responsibility that Israel has been invested with ever since Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And the Lord Jesus as the fulfillment of what Elijah proclaims in the person of John the Baptist.

Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Well Elijah is the foreshadowing of that whole first advent that the latter day Elijah is going to announce and proclaim down by the Jordan. Baptizing in the Jordan with the water of the Jordan near Jericho.

That's where John the Baptist is going to be. Why? Because he knows Kings and Chronicles. This that we are studying.

Elijah is the forerepresentation, the anticipation of the Lord Jesus in his glorification, in his second advent, in his resurrected glory, his work of fulfillment having been accomplished, he goes forward. And so it's very fascinating because in the midst of this we have the chariot. And chariots are what we are going to talk about next.

And there is no place where you can see this more clearly than back in chapter 2. And we looked at this when we covered this chapter, but we are going to look at the specific role of the chariot. Just real quickly, you remember that it came to pass, verse 1 of chapter 2, when the Lord was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a storm. Storms also figure.

We'll get to storms. This is another one. There are storms all over the Bible.

There is a storm in the book of Job. There is a storm in the book of Jonah. There is a storm cloud on which God is said to ride like a chariot.

Storms are associated with the chariot of God, with the conveyance and travels of God in a number of poetic passages. And this is one of them. But we are not looking at storms just yet.

I will say, however, that if you have any doubt of what the means of conveyance was for Elijah to leave the scene down there by the Jordan, what does verse 1 say? It came to pass when the Lord was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a chariot? No, by a storm, by a big deal of wind. It's interesting, the word for storm is related to its S-A-A-R and some of the associated word meanings there. But it has the root idea of being hairy.

And you can understand if you have seen a tornado or a dust devil or a whirlwind that this chaos pictured in Esau was sort of a chaotic figure and is a hairy man. Even Elijah in his garb wears this camel's hair garment that speaks of an absalom with his hair. The idea of sort of a curly, roiling, sort of not quite in control mass divided in later Semitic thinking into the idea of a storm, this thing that's got that kind of shape to it.

But he went with Elijah from Gilgal. We've seen in our previous studies that Gilgal is this cyclical, they're up and they're down, and they're up and they're down. And all through the book of Judges, there's this rolling, bad, grocery cart wheel.

Cluck clunk, cluck clunk, cluck clunk, cluck clunk, all the way through. They are in distress and they call upon the Lord, the Lord sends them a deliverer. They're thankful, they serve Him for a while and then they become complacent, apathetic, pretty soon they become unfaithful, pretty soon they become rebellious.

And then God oppresses them and disciplines and judges them. They cry out to the Lord for deliverance and Gilgal, Gilgal, Gilgal, all the way through. Well, that's the story of the Old Testament and the story of man without the presence of God and the power of God to carry out the purpose and program of God.

That's what Israel illustrates and you think, boy, what a rough deal. Well, that's why God's going to bring them back and give them a thousand years with the Spirit. They're not left ill-equipped, but they got to show how it is to live without the ongoing presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament day.

And those few that had the Spirit prayed to God, please don't take it from me. But in general, the nation could not come anywhere near keeping the commands of God because it requires divine enablement and it's a picture of regeneration. It's a picture of indwelling and filling.

It is a picture of the presence and power of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Israel is the picture of the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. And without God's Spirit, our willing spirit just can't get it done.

So that's the story of Gilgal. And notice that Elijah now is leaving Gilgal. We're going to leave that behind.

There's a sense of movement. There's a sense of change. Something new is going to happen.

And he takes Elisha with him. Actually not. Elijah says to Elisha, Stay here, please, for the Lord

has sent me to Bethel.

We know two important things about Bethel among many that we could name. The first is its origin. What's Bethel most famous for? How did it get its name? Jacob, fleeing the wrath of his brother and the deception of his father, lays his head down on a stone.

And what does he see? Jacob's ladder, angels ascending and descending, and the pledge that he makes. And he calls the place Bethel, formerly Luz. The Canaanite name was Luz.

That's one of the first and most significant things about Bethel. The second one is when Jeroboam becomes king of the northern kingdom, what does he do with his golden calves? He puts one in Dan, and he puts the other one in Bethel. Why Bethel? It's got this mystical association, this history.

Everybody knows, well, this is the place, there's Psalms. But they've got the Virgin of Matamoragora or something. The little kids see the Virgin Mary and run around having hysterics.

And they say, oh, or somebody cooks a piece of toast and it looks like the Virgin Mary. And so suddenly that's a famous place because of the mystical association. This is what happened at Bethel.

They said, well, it's closer to God somehow. If Mount Sinai had been in the land, who knows what kind of awful contraption buildings they would have tried to make on it. That's why God put Mount Sinai way down in the desert so they wouldn't fool around trying to make it a holy place.

But here they are, and they're going to Bethel. So Bethel represents the best. This is kind of the origin of the nation of Israel with Jacob and his commitment, his covenant with God.

And it is the descent to which that commitment and that covenant has fallen with the golden calf of Jeroboam there. And that's where Elijah is going to go. And he says, Elisha, you stay back.

I'm going to go there. Why would he go there? Well, if the prophet of God goes to Bethel, you would get the idea that maybe he, at least in these symbolic terms, would be confronting, calling out what the place should have been, what its origins were, and what it has now become. It has gone from the highest to the lowest.

It's gone from being the place where this is the train station for angels going to and from heaven or the airport, perhaps, to being this place of awful idolatry. And so the prophet is going to go there, and he says, I'm the prophet Elijah. I'm the one that calls down fire out of heaven.

I'm the one that confronts the prophets of Baal. I'm going to Bethel. You, Elisha, stay here.

And Elisha says, no, I'm going with you. I will not leave you. And they both go to Bethel.

What did the Lord Jesus do when he came in his first advent? He confronted the false worship of the day. It had started out so well. Here they are at the temple, and he looks around.

He weeps over the city. He weeps over what's going on at the temple. He goes to the temple and has to leave.

Nothing is happening there as it should. He's got to drive the money changers out of it. That's sort of his Elijah first advent.

You're not even conforming to the law, much less ready for the age of grace. And the sons of the prophets are there, and they say, do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today? And he says, yes, I know. Keep silent.

How many times did Jesus silence those who said, you are the Lord of glory? He says, I'm not the Lord of glory yet. I am here not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. I am here in the Old Testament, first advent, convicting and calling and presenting kingdom to Israel since.

And the fact that there's going to be a separation, and Elisha is going to emerge, and Elijah is going to demerge is going to disappear. Don't talk about that. Who says that, by the way, Elijah or Elisha? It's Elisha that says, don't talk about that right now.

He says, I know, but that's not something to proclaim yet. Exactly what the Lord Jesus says. So after they go to Bethel, Elijah says, Elisha, stay here, please.

The Lord has sent me on to Jericho. Jericho also has a colorful history. What does Jericho represent? Where does it come on the scene? It's the first place where you have a prominent Gentile convert to Israel and to the worship of God in the person of Rahab and with her family.

And them coming into covenant relationship with God through Israel, through the scarlet cord, through an agreement by proxy with Yeshua, with Joshua, and deliverance. Ultimately, she's going to be entered into the very line of the Lord Jesus himself. Right? That's Jericho.

But after the deliverance of the family out, the site itself, the city itself is utterly destroyed and placed under a curse. You can't go back to Jericho. And the day you do, the day you rebuild the old Jericho that Rahab and her family are delivered out of, the son is going to die in the foundation and the son is going to die in the setting up of its gates.

There's going to be death at the beginning and death at the end. There's going to be sorrow at the beginning and sorrow at the end. And that's where Elijah says he is going next.

Jesus himself goes to Jericho. And tells a story about the good Samaritan that's related to Jericho. As the Lord lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.

Very interesting choice of oath. As the Lord lives and as your soul lives. And when you think about the significance of Elijah in foreshadowing the Lord Jesus, Elijah, this almost becomes a pun in spiritual terms.

As the Lord lives and as your soul lives is almost saying the same thing when you look at Elijah as representing the coming, not personally the Lord Jesus, but as the whole first advent idea. So the sons of the prophets at Jericho come out and say the same thing. Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today? There's going to be a division.

You and Elijah and Elisha are not going to be a team. They're not going to be sort of a spiritual father and son going around ministering together for years. Instead, he says the same thing.

Yes, I know. Keep silent. Elijah says stay here please.

And you think about the two main purposes that the Lord Jesus had. First of all, he came and convicted Israel of their apathy and indifference and how far they had fallen from the covenant. Secondly, was a harbinger in dealing with the Syrophoenician woman, in dealing with the, I'm sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Well, can the dogs not eat the crumbs that fall from the table? And there is that foreshadowing and you have that here in Jericho. Elijah never does anything for Jericho, but Elisha does. And you see that foreshadowing here when they go to that town.

So then, and I say all of this, we're reviewing this a little bit because this tells us something about the chariot that is going to show up. Why a chariot? Why not a cherub with a flaming sword? If you need flames, you got flames. If you need intervention, you got intervention.

Why a chariot and not a cherub? Why a chariot and not a talking donkey? Why a chariot and not a crack in the ground? The Lord opened the earth and it split between them, with Elisha on one side and Elijah on the other. And then the storm sucks him up and carries him off. Why a chariot? Well, I want to refresh and reload these ideas about what Elijah and Elisha represent because that helps us understand the chariot.

So the 50 men of the sons of the prophets go and stand facing them in a distance while the two of them stand by the Jordan. Standing by the Jordan. You wonder how close John the Baptist got to standing in the very spot that Elijah had stood.

You know, the area there. You have to think that angels who can kind of see it all. Have you seen, by the way, the latest in physics? You can see it now on YouTube.

It's a couple of years old, but there's a special in four parts. Really well done, by the way, and not antagonistic to Christian faith for a change. Called The Fabric of the Cosmos.

You might have seen it when it first came out. Really, really good. But they're talking about the physics of the universe and the fact that there is, and they really elegantly illustrate how this whole reality that we perceive and function within seems to be a hologram projected into a space from the outside.

And the nature of time versus space, the way Einstein came to understand it, which is totally

valid. And then what's most interesting in this context is the idea that in reality what we perceive as the past, the present, and the future are actually, from a physics point of view, scientifically speaking, pretty much the same thing, that they all coexist. The past, the present, and the future is sort of a construct that we perceive, but that's not the way it really is, which is a direct reflection of what the Word of God says about God, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, sees all things from the beginning.

Before the foundation of the world, the Lord Jesus was already the Lamb slain. It's really kind of cool. But when you see these 50 men standing at the Jordan, and you think the angels who might be perceiving this in sort of a past, present, and future sense can see, here's Joshua and the Ark of the Covenant crossing.

Here's Elijah and Elisha crossing. Here's Elijah in the person of John the Baptist baptizing the Lord Jesus. The two of them, the Elijah and the Elisha, standing there in the same place that Elijah and Elisha stood.

It's really very profound. But that's where they are, and it divides this way and that, so the two of them cross over on dry ground. Unlike John and Jesus, who are both wet with the water of the Jordan, Elijah and Elisha cross back and forth the way Joshua and the Ark of the Covenant crossed on dry ground.

Those two elements. So when they crossed over, Elijah says to Elisha, ask what may I do for you before I'm taken away from you? Elisha says, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me. Double portion.

And we've seen this double thing over and over and over again. He says, you've asked a hard thing. You have asked a hard thing.

What's the hardest thing ever done in history? It's the cross. It's our salvation at the cross, that the Lord Jesus would not only be the perfect sacrifice and die for our sins and accomplish the work of salvation for the entire human race, potentially at least, but what's the hardest part of it? It's what happened on the third day. Raised again.

The resurrection is the biggest thing God has ever done. The Bible says so. Declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.

It's not declared to be the Son of God by the crucifixion. Not declared to be the Son of God by His death atoning work. Declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection.

Paul says in Corinthians 15, if Jesus is not raised from the dead, you're yet in your sins. His work is not complete until He's raised. That was the hard part.

Death is swallowed up in victory. It doesn't say sin is swallowed up in victory. Death is swallowed up in victory.

He is the first fruits out from the dead. It's a hard thing, you ask, that this double portion spirit pass from me to you, because it's a picture of the Lord Jesus dying in the Elijah age and returning in the Elisha guise. It's a hard thing.

But if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you. If not, it shall not be so. What does this mean? It means that Elisha has to be fully committed to the Elijah mode all the way up to the last moment.

Can't peel off. Can't accept the kingdoms of the earth from some other source. Can't dodge the cross.

Can't let this cup pass from him. He's got to stick with the Elijah plan all the way until Elijah is taken. Elisha cannot peel off and do something different, have a different plan.

He's got to be identified with Elijah all the way up to the point at which he is taken. If he diverges at all, the double portion of the spirit isn't going to happen. The whole future of the plan of God isn't going to happen.

This is a powerful, powerful picture. I don't think we can ever fully appreciate it in this mortal life. But it happened as they continued on in talk, verse 11, 2 Kings 2, that suddenly a chariot of fire with horses of fire, notice appeared isn't even there, suddenly a chariot of fire with horses of fire and separated the two of them.

What separates them? Fiery chariot. Chariots, the word Reqab, R-E-K-E-B, R-E-K-E-B is the noun form, Regeb. This is the noun form that means a conveyance.

It can mean anything from a wagon. It's from the verb rakab, R-A-K-A-B, which basically means to travel, to move, to roll. It is the word used to describe the upper millstone.

It's the millstone that rides, that rolls, that travels on the bottom millstone. And when you talk about the upper millstone that got thrown down from the wall and a guy was killed, that upper millstone, the word that is used to describe the mill, it is the Regeb millstone. It's the moving millstone, the rolling, traveling millstone as opposed to the stationary fixed one on which you heap the grain.

So fundamentally the idea of a chariot is that which moves, which travels, which changes the scenery by travel. And it comes to mean symbolically, I think, this is the passage of time, this is the forward movement of the plan of God. When the time comes, when the time is right, the chariot of God, God withholds judgment, God waits patiently, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God waited in the days of Noah. God waited in the days of the wanderings of Israel to see if there is anybody in the land of Canaan who will respond to that law written on the cliffs. If there are any in the nation of Israel who are going to be faithful to the promises during that time, God waits, God suspends.

But in the forward movement of His plan and purpose, the day of the Lord comes, the day of judgment comes, and that's the chariot. Even in terms of deliverance, when you think about, Lord, open my servant's eyes so that he may see, and here are the chariots of God on the hillside. It doesn't say, look, here's an angel standing right here with a sword, we're safe.

Anybody comes in here, He'll just hack them up. Chariots are on the hills. Chariots with their teams of horses.

Why? I see Him now, but not near. A star will arise in Jacob and smite the brow of Moab. I see Him now, but not near.

This isn't just the bow in terms of potential, this is you've got to wait for the rolling of the wheels. You've got to wait for the passing of time, and when the time is right, when the time comes, God's plan and purpose will be fulfilled. That's what the chariot signifies.

Elisha has got to stick with Elijah until the time of God's choosing. No man knows the day or the hour, not even the sun, only the Father. He'll roll that chariot in when the time comes.

And so when you see a chariot, when you see Jehu riding in his chariot, this is God's time. You remember all the work we did on the symmetry and the timing of the coming of Jehu and how significant those intervals and those generations were? It was God's time for Jehu to come. That's why he comes in a chariot.

Well, as interesting as this is in this context, wait till we come back. We're going to pause here and take our break. We'll look at a couple of other places where you'll see this connotation of chariot really illuminating the passage.

Then we're going to go someplace really special. But let's pause here and take our break.