

THE SPIRIT OF GOD ON ELIJAH AND ELISHA

BIBLE TEXT : I Kings 18:41-45. II Kings 2:14. II Kings 4:1-7, 18-35.

I Kings 17:10-24. II Kings 3:9-20. II Kings 8:7-10.

I Kings 21:19-22. II Kings 2:8,11,12, II Kings 13:14-21.

LESSON 318 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psalm 37:37).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Kings 18:41-45

⁴¹ And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for *there is* a sound of abundance of rain.

⁴² So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

⁴³ And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, *There is* nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

⁴⁴ And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

⁴⁵ And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

2 Kings 2:14

¹⁴ And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where *is* the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

2 Kings 4:1-7

¹ Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

² And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.

³ Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, *even* empty vessels; borrow not a few.

⁴ And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

⁵ So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought *the vessels* to her; and she poured out.

⁶ And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, *There is* not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

⁷ Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

2 Kings 4:18-35

¹⁸ And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Elijah's Call

Elijah was called to become a prophet of God when the hearts of the people of Israel were turned far from the God of their fathers. Their king, Ahab, had married a heathen woman; and this wicked Jezebel had persuaded him to worship heathen gods. The people naturally had followed their leader, and the hearts of all Israel had become corrupt.

We are told nothing about Elijah's home life and family. Much of his early life was spent alone in the wilderness. He was a stern, brave man, fearing God only.

Elijah had a difficult duty to perform, and he was fitted for the task. It was Elijah's life's work to prove to Israel that there was but one God, the God who had made them a nation when He gave Moses the Law on Mount Sinai. His task would not be easy, because people do not like to be told about their sins nor warned of judgment. They would not want to listen to him. He would have to go before the king and the people to tell them that they were all wrong in their worship and their morals; and no one was going to love him for it.

Elijah seldom went into the cities. When he did, it was to give some message of judgment from God. Then he would quickly disappear into the wilderness again. Some of the people believed that the Spirit of God carried him from place to place (I Kings 18:12), and hid him when his enemies tried to destroy him.

Judgments

The acts of Elijah were big and colourful. He could stand before the people and say confidently: "As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (I Kings 17:1). This was judgment upon Israel for backsliding, and it was proof to the people when it came to pass that there was a God in Israel who answered prayer. For three years and six months the people suffered for lack of water. And they did not love Elijah for his part in this judgment (I Kings 18:17).

After the fire had come down and consumed the sacrifice Elijah had offered on Mount Carmel, he destroyed 450 prophets of Baal. Elijah had pleased God in carrying out God's commands, but the queen vowed to get even by making him as the dead prophets before the day closed. Elijah hid in order to save his life.

Another time Elijah called down fire from Heaven, which destroyed two different bands of fifty soldiers who had come to capture him. God gave Elijah this power for the work of purging idolatrous Israel.

The Still, Small Voice

One day God showed Elijah that his religion for Israel was

he went out to his father to the reapers.

¹⁹ And he said unto his father, My head, my head.
And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

²⁰ And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and *then* died.

²¹ And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* upon him, and went out.

²² And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

²³ And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? *it is* neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, *It shall be well.*

²⁴ Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not *thy* riding for me, except I bid thee.

²⁵ So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, *yonder is* that Shunammite:

²⁶ Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, *Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?* And she answered, *It is well.*

²⁷ And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul *is* vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid *it* from me, and hath not told me.

²⁸ Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

²⁹ Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

³⁰ And the mother of the child said, *As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* And he arose, and followed her.

³¹ And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but *there was* neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

³² And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, *and* laid upon his bed.

³³ He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.

³⁴ And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

³⁵ Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

1 Kings 17:10-24

¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman *was* there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

¹¹ And as she was going to fetch *it*, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in

not all fire and judgment. Elijah was living alone in a cave, hiding from the wicked queen. He felt that his work was accomplishing little. The people were still worshiping idols in spite of all his efforts to turn them back to God. He felt that he was the only person in all Israel who loved the Lord.

God told Elijah to go out and stand upon the mount and he would pass by. A great storm came up, and the wind was so strong that rocks were broken by the force of it. But the Lord was not in the wind. Next there was an earthquake. Elijah may have thought of the great earthquake that shook Mount Sinai when God gave Moses the Law. But this time God was not in the earthquake, nor in the fire that followed. Then Elijah heard a still, small voice, a voice of love, of mercy, of tenderness. This was the voice of God speaking to encourage the faithful prophet. Though Elijah could not see the work of God, it was quietly going on. There were 7,000 people in Israel who had not bowed their knee to Baal, nor kissed his image.

Elijah's Successor

The work that Elijah began was established by his successor, Elisha. How grateful the people of Israel should have been for the self-sacrificing Elijah who was willing to come up to the help of the Lord, though it meant a rough and unappreciated life for him! There are many tasks that God has for man to do, and there has to be someone who is willing to fight the difficult battles in order that the truth of the Word of God may be laid in the hearts of the people.

Before Elijah finished his work, God sent him to anoint Elisha to be the prophet to follow him. Elisha was an entirely different man. He lived with his family the life of a contented and prosperous farmer. But from the day that Elijah passed by and threw his mantle upon him, meaning that he wanted Elisha to be his "son" or successor, Elisha began preparation to follow the will of God.

It was no doubt hard for Elisha to leave his family and his work, but he had felt the call from Heaven, and the Lord's business became more important to him. For some years he walked with Elijah and waited upon him, meanwhile learning from that mighty man of God what would be of value to him when it came his time to carry on the great work that Elijah had begun.

Elisha asked for a double portion of the Spirit that was upon Elijah. Because of his faithfulness, this petition was granted. According to the miracles listed in the Scriptures, Elisha performed twice as many miracles as Elijah did.

Works of Elijah and Elisha Compared

The work of Elisha was to be very much different from that of Elijah. Elijah had spent much of his time alone in the wilderness, hiding away from the people and the government, appearing only occasionally to announce the words of God. Elisha lived in the cities with other people (II Kings 4:8), and he was well known to the king and evidently in his favour (II Kings 4:13).

Whereas most of Elijah's activities were tremendous acts of judgement, Elisha went about doing deeds of kindness and mercy — things for which people would love him. Elijah's first work had been to predict famine; Elisha's was to heal the poison waters. Elisha's miracles have been compared with those of Christ when He walked among men, healing the sick, relieving the weary, multiplying food to the hungry and lending a helping hand in many ways.

thine hand.

¹² And she said, *As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.*

¹³ And Elijah said unto her, *Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.*

¹⁴ For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

¹⁵ And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days.

¹⁶ And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

¹⁷ And it came to pass after these things, *that* the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.

¹⁸ And she said unto Elijah, *What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?*

¹⁹ And he said unto her, *Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.*

²⁰ And he cried unto the LORD, and said, *O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?*

²¹ And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, *O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.*

²² And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.

²³ And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, *See, thy son liveth.*

²⁴ And the woman said to Elijah, *Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.*

2 Kings 3:9-20

⁹ So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.

¹⁰ And the king of Israel said, *Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!*

¹¹ But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him?* And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, *Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.*

¹² And Jehoshaphat said, *The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.*

¹³ And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, *What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into*

Time For Mercy

There are times for judgment — and God has used some of His prophets to proclaim them — but Jesus said when He was on earth: "He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18).

On one occasion when Jesus had been insulted by some Samaritans, His disciples asked: "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias (Elijah) did?" (Luke 9:54). Jesus rebuked them by saying: "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56). The time for judgment was not yet.

Most of Elisha's ministry was marked by deeds of benevolence: increasing the widow's oil so she would have something for herself and her sons to live on (II Kings 4:1-7); healing the poisoned water at Jericho (II Kings 2:21); providing food for the school of the prophets during a drought (II Kings 4:42-44); bringing back a widow's son to life (II Kings 4:35); providing water for the thirsty armies of Israel and Judah (II Kings 3:16,17). One time, after capturing a whole army of Syria, he gave them food and water, and then sent them back home. Even after he was dead there was such power in his bones that the body of a dead soldier thrown in upon him came back to life (II King 13:21).

Such was the life of these two great men of God, each with his own work to do in his own way, but both fulfilling the will of God in behalf of the nation of Israel.

QUESTIONS

1. What do we know about Elijah's background and living habits?
2. How did Elisha's background and living habits differ?
3. Of what type were most of Elijah's miracles?
4. In what way did Elisha's miracles compare with those of Christ?
5. What was the first miracle of Elijah?
6. What was Elisha's first miracle after crossing the Jordan River?
7. Why did Elijah need to do such work as he did?
8. Compare the number of Elisha's miracles with those of Elijah.
9. What was Elisha's last request of Elijah?
10. What was the last miracle accredited to Elisha?

the hand of Moab.

¹⁴ And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

¹⁵ But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

¹⁶ And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

¹⁷ For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

¹⁸ And this is *but* a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

¹⁹ And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

²⁰ And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

2 Kings 8:7-10

⁷ And Elisha came to Damascus; and Benhadad the king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither.

⁸ And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and enquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

⁹ So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Benhadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

¹⁰ And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the LORD hath shewed me that he shall surely die.

1 Kings 21:19-22

¹⁹ And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

²⁰ And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found *thee*: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

²¹ Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel,

²² And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked *me* to anger, and made Israel to sin.

2 Kings 2:8

⁸ And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped *it* together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry

ground.

2 Kings 2:11

¹¹ And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

2 Kings 2:12

¹² And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

2 Kings 13:14-21

¹⁴ Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

¹⁵ And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

¹⁶ And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand *upon it*: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

¹⁷ And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened *it*. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD'S deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed *them*.

¹⁸ And he said, Take the arrows. And he took *them*. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.

¹⁹ And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed *it*: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria *but* thrice.

²⁰ And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

²¹ And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band *of men*; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.