

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 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37:23).

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:

I Elijah's and Elisha's Lives Paralleled

1. Both prophets smote the waters of Jordan to gain a passage, II Kings 2:8, 2:14.
2. Elijah and Elisha were each instrumental in bringing water to relieve distress, I Kings 18:41-45; II Kings 3:9-20.
3. Two separate widows received aid and comfort in time of need by the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, I Kings 17:10-16; II Kings 4:1-7.
4. Both Elijah and Elisha interceded with God, and caused sons to be brought back to life again, I Kings 17:17-24; II Kings 4:18-35.
5. Vengeance was called down upon unbelievers by Elijah and Elisha, II Kings 1:9-12; 2:23-25.
6. Elijah's life ended on earth when he was taken to Heaven in a whirlwind, II Kings 2:11, 12.
7. Elisha died of a sickness, yet his body retained the marvellous resurrection power of God, II Kings 13:14-21.

NOTES:

Prophets of God

The casual reader of the Bible sometimes confuses the persons of Elijah and Elisha. Their names are similar, and they laboured together for a season in the work of God. Both these men performed great miracles, and their influence was powerfully felt in Israel. Even so, the personality and character of Elijah and Elisha were very different.

Elijah, the Tishbite

A consideration of the life of Elijah compared with Elisha's, his successor, will be of interest. Elijah appeared on the pages of Israel's turbulent history without introduction or announcement. His first recorded message was as dramatic as his appearance. His message was one that presaged dark days for Israel. "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" was the letter of introduction with which Elijah introduced himself to Israel as a prophet of God.

We do not know just how much instant acceptance of the prophetic message there was with Ahab, the king, when the message was first received, but the lack of rain soon proved Elijah to be a true prophet of God. The country was searched for this messenger of calamity, but he could not be found. He was an instrument of God, and God protected him.

Elijah's ministry was one that fought the flagrant and wholesale vice and sin that was engulfing Israel, the chosen people of God. He stands out on the pages of the Word of God as a monument of integrity, and a fiery apostle of God's anger against sin. It has been said that when a prophet of God arrives

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

to declare a message to the people, often the judgment of God is but a step behind. It seems to have been true of Elijah.

Elijah was much of the time a solitary soul, for he appeared only from time to time from some obscure hiding place to denounce sin. He did not seem to move much in the daily life of Israel, and was on the scene only occasionally. Elijah's messages to the people were often stern reminders that God will not at all acquit the wicked; and as often as not, the fiery judgment of God fell upon sinners as a terrible warning to others.

The prophets of Baal felt the power of Elijah's God, and they lost their lives in the encounter for daring to defy the God of Heaven. Ahab and Jezebel were both denounced by Elijah for their terrible wickedness, and the judgment of God was pronounced upon them. While Elijah did many kind and considerate acts for the people of Israel, his primary purpose seemed to have been the overthrow of idolatry.

To carry on such a denouncement of sin, it was necessary for God to have a man who was very intense in his feeling for God's righteousness and God's cause. Elijah was a man whose person and character were such that they lent themselves readily to that calling. Be that as it may, we know also that Elijah "was a man subject to like passions as we are" (James 5:17). Elijah loved God deeply, and because he did love God with all his being, he must have loved the people of Israel as well. If a man loves God he will love the souls of men as well, because the love of God is so deeply concerned with the souls of men.

It might be supposed that Elijah could not have loved the people of Israel very deeply and still have called the terrible wrath of God down upon them time after time. The answer to that question is that the tolerance of sin is no evidence of love. "God is love" and yet God is the chief enemy of all unrighteousness.

The removal of sin by God is a kindness that can hardly be reckoned in earthly values. The widespread practice of idol worship was the damning sin that brought God's displeasure against the nation. There was only one remedy for such a situation, and that was the eradication of the practice of idolatry. Elijah desired the true worship of God to be restored, and was very zealous to perform such work. There could be no rain in Israel until there was a turning of the people's hearts again toward God. It is paradoxical that the hand, which the Lord uses to strike the hardest against sin, is motivated by the truest kind of love and charity for the one who is struck. That such motives are misunderstood is not uncommon, and the one who may be the most zealous for the worship of God may be accused, as was Elijah, of being the chief troubler of the people.

Elijah was not insensible to the criticism and opposition he faced, for he had a period of despondency and discouragement after his great victory over the prophets of Baal. Still, it is not the one who has run well for a season that shall be saved, but rather he that endureth to the end. Elijah emerged the victor over his discouragement, and we may do the same.

How God did honour and bless this precious man of God! His end was one of the most triumphant and glorious of any recorded in the Word of God. Caught up in a whirlwind to meet his Lord, surrounded by heavenly hosts! "There appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, . . . and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Who would not want to go in that way? Israel lost a great champion when Elijah was taken Home by his

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*

Lord.

Elisha, the Son of Shaphat

Elisha was chosen of God to be Elijah's successor. It is not given to any man to do all the work of God. Each of us is called to some phase of God's work that we can do if we will. Elijah had striven hard for the restoration of the worship of God in Israel, and his ministry had a telling effect upon the people. He had struck some mighty blows for God, but now the time had come to anoint his successor.

In the work of the Lord, it is each man to his own calling. A certain phase of the work of God was accomplished by Elijah, and then his work was done. Elisha then succeeded Elijah and carried on the work of God from there, although in a different manner. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (I Corinthians 12:4-6).

It is debated sometimes who was the greater, Elijah or Elisha? This borders on being a useless and unlearned question, which Paul advises us to avoid. **(2 Timothy 2:23 ²³ But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. 1 Timothy 1:4 ⁴ Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.)** They were both great men of God, each in his own calling and manner. The saint of God should desire to follow them in their examples of piety and holiness, and not strive to be great over his brethren, or greater than any of his brethren.

Elisha is remembered as much for his desire to have a "double portion" of the Spirit of God as he is for anything else. Elisha dared to ask much of God, and the consequences were that he received much from God. Elisha's ministry is more in keeping with the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, and the outpouring of the Latter Rain, than with the age of the prophets. The beginning of his ministry might be described as a typical of those who seek and receive power from on High through the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Elisha lived a life of complete victory, and we have no record of any period of despondency such as Elijah passed through. He performed miracles as great as those of Elijah, and performed more of them than any prophet other than Moses.

Resurrection Power

The death of Elisha was not a triumphant parting such as he had been a witness to when Elijah was taken into Heaven. Elisha died of a sickness; but even though his passing was not a spectacular one, there was much that was not commonplace with him after his death. A man who was about to be buried elsewhere, was hastily thrust into the sepulchre of Elisha because marauders were near. When the dead man's body came into contact with Elisha's bones, the man came to life. It was by the resurrection power that was in that saint of God.

Jesus said unto Martha: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). Again we read: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

QUESTIONS

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

1. Relate several miracles that Elijah and Elisha did that were similar.
2. How did Elisha's personality compare with Elijah's?
3. How do we know that one person cannot do all the work of God?
4. How did Elisha's departure differ from Elijah's?
5. What do we learn from the fact that a dead man was brought to life by touching Elisha's bones?
6. In what respect was Elisha's ministry typical of the dispensation of the Holy Ghost?

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.