

A Double Portion

2 Kings 2:1-15

May 23, 2010

Intro

We come now in our study through the Bible to 2 Kings 2. This is the famous story of when God took up Elijah to heaven. We say that God took up Elijah to heaven because Elijah is one of only two people who never experienced death. The other is Enoch. The Bible tells us that Enoch walked with God and was no more.

The story here is also about Elisha. He had been walking with Elijah for perhaps six or seven years. Elijah had placed his mantle, or his cloak, upon him while Elisha was plowing his field one day with 12 pair of oxen. Elisha immediately recognized it as an invitation, went back to kiss his father and mother, sacrificed the oxen with what he was plowing and burned up the plow to do so. There was no turning back with Elisha.

As the story in Chapter 2 unfolds, it becomes clear that Elijah's departure is well known. At least it is well known by the sons of the prophets in Israel. In verse three, the sons of the prophets came to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from you today?" "Yes I know," Elisha responded, "be still."

There is great personal application for us in this story because God reveals to us the workings of the Holy Spirit through these verses in the lives of Elijah and Elisha. We also see their heart revealed and so we gain great insight in that as well.

I. Be Watching and Waiting

- Elijah was taking one last journey and the route he took was very significant. They start out from Gilgal, travel then to Bethel, from Bethel they traveled to Jericho, and then from Jericho to the Jordan River.
- Each of these locations has significant spiritual meaning in the history of Israel and we will look at each of them, but it's important to note that as they traveled from Gilgal they were met by the sons of the prophets at each place.
- There was at each location a school of the prophets and each group, called the sons of the prophets, knew that Elijah's day had come.
- Finally, after crossing the Jordan, Elijah turned to Elisha and said, "Ask what I shall do for you before I'm taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."
- "You've asked for a difficult thing," Elijah said, "nevertheless, if you see me when I'm taken from you, it shall be so for you."
- Be watching, be waiting, is what Elijah was telling him. And there are great spiritual applications for us as well.

A. What would change if you knew the hour?

- It seems as though everyone in this story knows the day that Elijah will be taken up. Whereas regarding the rapture of the church, no one knows the day or the hour.
- Something interesting to consider, however, is this; what if you did know the hour and it was

many years distant in the future. How would you live your life?

Illus – If the day was far distant, I think many people would procrastinate in preparing their lives, just like many did in school, waiting to the last minute to even begin a project. Spiritual laziness could set in.

- What if you did know the hour and the day and that day was today, this very day? How would you live your life today?

Illus - What would you eat for lunch? What would you throw out of your house?

- Many commentators see the taking up of Elijah as a type for the rapture of the church. That is a future event of which the scripture says we should be watching and waiting.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-9 Be sober, be alert.

- We do not know the day or the hour, but we should be watchful for the "signs of the times," as Jesus said in Matthew 16...

Matthew 16:2-3, “When it is evening, you say, ‘it will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?”

- The signs that we see in the world today should tell us that the time of Christ's return is drawing very near. Therefore, we should be watching and waiting and preparing our lives

Mark 13:33,36-37, “Take heed, be on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come... Therefore, be on the alert - in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”

B. Be faithful in your walking

- At each of the places Elijah traveled on his last earthly journey, he turned to Elisha and asked him to stay behind. And each time Elisha gave him the same answer, "I will not leave you."
- It appears that God was doing something here in both Elisha and Elijah.
- It's interesting to compare these events to an earlier time in Elijah's life when he was at a spiritual low point. Running for his life, he came to Beersheba where he left his servant behind, traveled another day's journey into the desert and wanted to die.
- He then went alone to Mount Horeb and when God asked him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Part of his answer was, "I alone am left." Part of God's response to Elijah was to tell him that he was to anoint Elisha; he would never be alone again. This was part of God's encouragement to Elijah. God demonstrated His faithfulness to Elijah again and again.
- And the faithful qualities of Elisha cannot be missed. Elisha had faithfully followed Elijah as his servant since the day that Elijah threw his robe over him and he was determined to be

faithful to his calling to the very end. "I will not leave you," Elisha said over and over.

- Here is a faithful servant. God's leaders begin as good servants and God's leaders are faithful to continue as servants - servant leaders.

1 Corinthians 4:2, In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

- It is Elisha's faithfulness that brings the opportunity for great blessing on Elisha's life. After they crossed the Jordan, Elijah asked Elisha, "What shall I do for you before I'm taken from you?"
- Here, Elisha asked for a wonderful thing; "please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."
- Though this was a difficult request, Elijah promised that it would be granted if Elisha would see him when he was taken by God.

**App – what a great question; what is it that you desire?
What is it that you want God to do for you?**

Elisha's answer showed that not only was he a faithful servant, his heart was set on spiritual things, not on earthly things.

C. Don't set your heart on the things of the earth

- Many people set their heart and their eyes on the wrong things. Elisha wanted a double portion of the spirit of Elijah. He had set his heart on a great spiritual thing.

- The apostle Paul wrote to the young Timothy about a man who had shipwrecked his life spiritually...

2 Timothy 4:10, for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me...

- Many people have their eyes set on earthly things, but the end of those things is emptiness and death.
- There are so many great scriptures that give us great insight into what God wants us to understand where we set our heart.

Romans 8:5-6, For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

2 Corinthians 4:18, While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Illus – When I was young a pastor challenged me to consider my priorities. What did I want to accomplish with my life?

- In other words, what are your life goals? To amass stuff or to make a difference for eternity?

Matthew 6:19-21, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in

and steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Illus – This is one of the reasons we are given a look into the holy city, the New Jerusalem, in the book of Revelation, to have our hearts set on eternal things.

II. Desire the Spirit of Elijah

- What Elisha asked for was a double portion of the spirit of Elijah. That leads us to the question, what is the spirit of Elijah?
- While we're asking that question, another question immediately follows; can we ask for the spirit of Elijah?

A. Ask for a double portion

- First, it's important for us to understand what scripture means when it uses the phrase, "double portion."
- Elisha was not asking to have the spirit of Elijah times two. He wasn't asking for twice as much as Elijah had. He was asking for an inheritance of which he would have a greater portion.

Deuteronomy 21:17, "But he shall acknowledge the firstborn... by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn."

- Next, we must understand that the spirit of Elijah was the Spirit of the living God. Elijah had no power of his own, all that he did he did by the

power of the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that is given to us as a pledge of our inheritance.

Ephesians 1:13-14, You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given us a pledge of our inheritance,

- Next, it's important for us to understand that God wants us to ask for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our lives.

Luke 11:13, "If you then... know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

B. Make ready a people for the Lord

- When we look at the spirit and power of Elijah, we must also look at the Gospel of Luke where Zacharias was told that his wife Elizabeth would have a son whose name was John.

Luke 1:15- 17 He will prepare a people for the Lord.

- It's interesting that John did not do miracles; that apparently is not required for the spirit and power of Elijah. But what John did do was to call people to repentance with boldness and strength. He made ready a people prepared for the Lord.
- It's also important to see that Elijah's faith failed, yet God used him. God didn't give up on him, he strengthened and encouraged him.

Illus – Didn't the disciples also have failures of faith? How many times did Jesus call them, "O ye of little faith"? Yet, by them God turned the world upside down.

Acts 17:6, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here also."