

Where is the God of Elijah

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[0 : 00] I want for the rest of our service to focus our attention on words which are found in 2 Kings 2 at verse 14. 2 Kings 2 at verse 14.

The well-known words of Elisha after the passing of Elijah.

Then he took the cloak or the mantle that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water. Where now is the Lord the God of Elijah?

Where now is the Lord the God of Elijah? This question of Elisha was not an utterance of unbelief or of despair.

But a cry for help which issued from the very depth of his being. Elijah, that great prophet, that giant of a man of God, had gone.

[1 : 13] And Elisha was left all alone. But nevertheless, he believed that God was with him. And that is why he cried out, Where is the Lord the God of Elijah?

Now in some ways, if we look at things in a much wider timescale, Our situation today is somewhat similar to the situation that Elisha found himself in there on the banks of the Jordan.

If we look back over the centuries, over the last 400 years or so, We will see that God has given to his church in Western Europe and in our own land, Men who were giants.

Men who were Elijahs. Men like Martin Luther. John Calvin. In our own country. Men like John Knox and Andrew Melville. Samuel Rutherford and the Covenanters.

Men like Wesley and Whitfield. Men like Thomas Chalmers and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. We might well ask ourselves today, Where is their God?

[2 : 25] In the last century, in the days of Thomas Chalmers, In the 1830s, There was a remarkable spiritual movement throughout Scotland.

And that movement affected many parts, Including the town of Kilsaith, Which is, as we all know, Situated not very far away. And I want to read to you just a few words from The account in the Apostle of the North, That is, Dr. John MacDonald, Who was a Highland evangelist, Early in last century, Of a visit that he made to Kilsaith, And to the work there, Which was being undertaken by William Chalmers Burns.

We reached Glasgow, he said, On the Friday evening, And Kilsaith on the Saturday afternoon.

Obviously, transport was a little slower then than it is now. Here, he writes, I felt as on hallowed ground, And as if an uncommon influence from above Had lighted upon me.

The town containing upwards of two thousand In perfect stillness, And groups of people here and there Standing together, And talking of the one thing needful. The sight was truly solemn, And filled me with awe.

On arriving at the manse, Mr. Burns, the clergyman, Felt happy to see me, And sent me instantly to work. In the evening, I had to address A crowded audience in his church From John 3, 36.

[3 : 52] All was stillness and deep attention, Many in tears, Children of eight and ten among the rest. In short, A general impression from above, That is from heaven, Was evidently on the congregation.

On Sabbath, I preached in the forenoon From Romans 4, 6, 7, and 8, And in the evening from Isaiah, A 45, 55, 1.

Mr. Burns, in the afternoon, From Hebrews 3, 7, and 8. The appearance of the congregation During the whole day Was deeply interesting. It was a melting scene. No audible crying, But much silent weeping.

After coming out of church in the evening, About 150 or 200 men, women, and children Stood around me, Anxiously waiting to hear something more. I addressed them for about 40 minutes, Concluding with singing and prayer, And dismissed them, Still reluctant to go.

The scene of weeping, The stillness of the night, And the canopy of the sky Conspired to make this extra And outdoor service A solemn one indeed. On Monday, Converse during the day With several individuals in deep distress, The man crowded with such, The whole day from 10 o'clock to 5.

[5 : 06] Mr. Burns and I had each our hands Full of this pleasant work. Some of those we conversed with Have got comfort, Others are still under conviction. In the evening preached To a large congregation in church, Much melting, but no crying.

When returning numbers Gathered round me with tears in their eyes, Evidently wishing to hear more of Christ. I addressed them for about 20 minutes, Prayed with them and dismissed them. All this in the open air, Under the silence of the night.

Then on Tuesday, Occupied during the day, Much as yesterday, In the evening preached at Bantam, From Ephesians 5.14, The Spirit has evidently been poured out In the inhabitants of this place.

Numbers were in tears, And children from 8 to 14 years old. After dismissing the people, Scarcely any would retire. Almost all kept their seats, Eagerly looking to me. Addressed them for nearly an hour, And then dismissed them all, Bathing in tears.

The scene was truly affecting, And interesting. Such is the account of the three-day visit, That Dr. John MacDonald made to Kulcay, When they experienced, The revival there.

[6 : 18] Now as we look back, Over the history of the church, In the 20th century, One thing stands out a mile, And that is, As yet, We have had no, Nationwide revival, Of religion.

This is the only century, Since the reformation, Which so far, Has not witnessed, Scenes over a large area, Similar to those described, By Dr. John MacDonald.

When whole communities, And indeed the whole nation, Became conscious of God, And of its need, To be justified before him. Now as we are faced, With this situation, What is our reaction, At the beginning of 1981?

Do we shrug our shoulders, And say, Well, We must settle for a day, Of small things. It can't be, The will of God. Or do we cry out, With Elisha, Where is the God of Elijah?

Do we cry out, From the very depth, Of our heart, For a visitation, Of God's spirit, In our age, And in our generation, Such as previous generations, Enjoyed, And such as Elijah, Knew, Upon his ministry, In Israel.

[7 : 32] Surely here, Is a challenge for us. We are facing, The beginning of a new year. Elisha, Was facing the beginning, Of his new ministry, As the successor, Of, Elijah.

And it comes as a challenge, To us, Not only because, Elisha asked this question, But also because, God answered it. And we find, Elisha indeed, Receiving a double portion, Of Elijah's spirit, And being used, As a prophet of grace.

In the service, Of the Lord of hosts. And so we have here, In this chapter, What we might call a study, In the conditions of receiving, Spiritual power.

And that surely, Is the great need of the church, At the beginning of 1981, To receive spiritual power. Because we have lived in a century, Which has witnessed so far, Successively throughout its years, The church shrinking, The church losing its influence, In the community.

The number of people, Professing to follow Jesus Christ, Becoming smaller and smaller, As the years go by. And surely we need to cry, From the depth of our heart, To the living God, Where is the God of Elijah?

[8 : 55] A cry not of despair, A cry not of unbelief, But a cry of faith, A cry for help, An urgent cry, To the Lord.

In verse 9, We read that Elijah, Elijah invited Elisha, To make a request, One last request, Tell me, What can I do for you, Before I am taken from you?

And Elisha's request was, Let me inherit a double portion, Of your spirit. Elisha had no doubt, As to what he required, He required the spirit, Of the Lord, Which had anointed Elijah, And enabled him, To rescue the nation, Of Israel, From the hands of Jezebel.

And Elijah, Under God alone, Stood up, And rescued his generation, For God, And for his glory. And Elisha's, He faced the awesome task, Of succeeding that giant of a man, Recognized that without God, He could do nothing.

And so he requested, He prayed, He asked, For a double portion, Of the spirit, Which Elijah, Had known. Notice that Elisha asked, For this spirit.

[10:16] And surely it is, One of the great principles, Of the kingdom of God, That the Holy Spirit, Is given, In answer, To prayer.

You remember what Jesus said, On one occasion, If you know, If you know, He said, How to give good gifts, To your children, How much more, Will God give his spirit, To those who ask him, For him.

And that is one of the most important, Principles surely, Of the Christian life, Of the Christian work, It is to recognize, And to realize, That God gives his spirit, To those who ask him, For him.

The greatest of all blessings, That God has for us, Is to be had, For the asking. I wonder, At the beginning of 1981, Have you asked for God, To give you his spirit, And all his fullness?

Have you cried out, With Elisha, Where is the Lord, The God of Elijah? Have you yearned, As he yearned, That God would move, In this year, In the power of revival, Blessing, In Cumbernauld, And throughout the whole, Of Scotland, And throughout the whole, Of the United Kingdom, And throughout the whole, Of Western Europe, You have not, Said Jesus, Because you ask not.

[11:45] It is easy for us, To make God's sovereignty, A pillow, Upon which, We take our ease, In the house of God. It is easy for us, To absolve ourselves, From our responsibility, By, Blithely saying, It cannot be God's will, But Jesus tells us, You have not, Because you ask not.

Give me, Said Elisha, A double portion, Of your spirit. I wonder, Do we ask God, To give us, His spirit? Do we ask God, To anoint us, As individuals, And as a congregation, With the spirit, Of the living God, As we seek, In his name, To face the challenge, Of 1981, Here in this town, And out with it, In the wider community, Beyond.

You have not, Because you ask not. Surely the problem, Often is that, We simply don't ask. One of the great problems, Of our individual lives, And of the life of the church, Is our prayerlessness.

That we have, We have fallen victim, To the Laodicean disease, Of feeling, That we have need of nothing, Of feeling, That if we meet, Our target figure, If our attendances, Hold up relatively well, And if the buildings, Are in good, In good condition, The youth organizations, And the Sabbath school, Seem to be taking over, That we have need of nothing else, We have need of nothing, Said the church in Laodicea.

And it may be, That we have become victims, Of what Ruskin called, The goddess of getting on, And have become devotees, Of materialism of our age. We are more concerned, With realizing our small ambitions, Than seeing the glory of God, In our generation.

[13:43] So we don't ask. And we haven't really seriously, Thought of these words of Jesus, When he said, How much more will God, Give you his spirit, To those who ask him, For him.

But our problem may be, That if we do ask, Then we ask amiss. We ask with our lips, But not with our heart. We ask with our words, But not with our spirit.

And we have yet to yearn, We have yet to cry out, As the psalmist did, When he said, He cried out for the living God, And his heart panted, After him.

And he cried, As someone in a desert, Parched with thirst, That he might see the Lord, In his glory, And in his power, As God had visited his people, In the past.

And it may be, That when we ask, We ask, To experience the day of revival, In order that we may enjoy it, Rather than that God would be glorified, And that others would be blessed.

[14:56] And we ask, As James said, To consume, The answer to our requests, Our requests upon our lusts, Upon our own desires. And so we need to learn, Not only to ask, But to ask a right, To yearn from the heart, As Elisha did, As the psalmist did in Psalm 63, And to seek, At all times, The glory of God.

And so Elisha asked, For a double portion. He was not concerned, He would not be content, Merely, To receive the spirit, That Elijah received. He wanted a double spirit.

He believed that God, Could do even more, In his day, Than he had done in Elijah's. And is there not a lesson here, For us also, That what God has done in the past, Could be as nothing, Compared with what he could do, In the future.

What he could do in 1981, In this year, Of our Lord, This community, Our nation of Scotland, The United Kingdom, Could be turned upside down, By the gospel.

And as people have been, The pundits have been, Making a forecast, Of the year in television, A new factor, Which no one has mentioned, Could come into being.

[16:16] A factor of the power of God, Which would radically, Transform, The life, Of our nation. And the life of any nation, That experiences, Is the power of God.

Do we therefore pray, For an outpouring, Of God's spirit, That will be so great, That it will be double, Anything that has gone before. Is this our vision? As we look out, Into 1981, Do we realize, The greatness of God's power, God's power, That has our God, That has our God, Shrunk in our estimation.

Just as our church attendances, And church membership, Throughout the land, Over the decades, Have shrunk. So also, I fear, Has our conception of God. And we need to recapture, This concept, That Elisha had, Of the God of Elijah, The God who was able, Then and now, To turn the tide of history, To touch, And to transform human lives, To pour his love, And his grace, Into the broken, Lives and hearts, Of men and women.

Give me, Said Elisha, A double portion, Of your spirit. And Elijah said, This is hard. This is difficult. Indeed, It was too hard, Even for Elijah.

Even for a man, Of his power. Because God's spirit, Was not his, To command. And Elijah, Teaches Elisha here, That the spirit of God, And his power, Cannot be passed on, From one believer, To another.

[17:55] Even, By a believer, So great as Elijah. Elisha himself, Had to see, The glory of the Lord. Elisha himself, Had to see, The Lord's power, And the Lord's glory.

The Holy Spirit, Comes down from heaven. He doesn't come, Through any man. He doesn't come, Through any person. He comes directly, From God. And it is to God, We must look.

Is there not a danger, That we look, To men, To leaders of the church, To evangelists, And to others, To rescue our nation. We're looking forward, To the campaign, Of the Argentine evangelist, Luis Palau, In the west of Scotland.

We pray, That God will mightily, Use that man, And that it will be, A means of reaching, Scotland for Christ. But if we're looking, To Luis Palau, Then we will look in vain.

And it's too hard, For him. Just as it was too hard, For Elijah, To give his spirit, To Elisha. No, We must look, Not to a man, But to God.

[19:10] And you and I, Must pray to him, And come to him, And not leave it, To someone else. Whether a prophet, Or an evangelist, Or whoever. We must look, To God ourselves, And experience, His power, And his glory, As Elisha did, When he saw, Elijah being taken away, In the chariot, Of fire.

And so Elijah said to Elisha, It is too hard for me, But you watch, Watch for the glory of God, And if you see that glory, Then you will receive, A double portion of my spirit.

And Elisha watched, And he saw, And he received, And so we must learn, To watch, And to wait upon God, To pray that he would give us, A double portion of his spirit, In our generation, To pray that God, The Lord God of Elijah, The Lord God of the great men, Who have gone before us, In the history of our nation, That he would become known today, We live in an age, Which dismisses God, As an anachronism, God is dead, Is the popular slogan, Of the sixties, An age which does not know God, Do we not feel therefore, The need to cry out to God, Where, Where, Is the God of Elijah, Because we live in an age, In which men and women, Don't know God, They know conception, Of who God is, And the first hallmark,

Of a revival, Of a movement of the spirit of God, Is, That men and women, And whole communities, Become conscious of God, God in his greatness, God in his holiness, And then God in his love, Whole communities, Become conscious of him, As, The apostle of the north said, When he went to Kilsai, People were out talking in the street, What were they talking about?

God, They were talking about the gospel, They were talking about the need, Of getting right with God, And of serving God, And of reaching others for God, Where then is the Lord, The God of Elijah today?

[21:28] And so I think the challenge, That we have before us here, Is a challenge to ask, To ask, This is a principle of the kingdom of God, It's a principle which even our Lord himself, During his earthly life, Lived in accordance with, He asked, He got nothing, Nothing that he did not ask for from his father, He lived a life, Of a humble believer, He laid aside his glory, He did not use his divine attributes, During his ministry at earth, He lived, A life of asking, Ask of me, Says the second psalm, Says God in the second psalm, To his son, The Messiah, Ask of me, And I will give you the nations, For an inheritance, And we find Jesus, In his high priestly prayer, Asking, Asking for the nations,

And he invites you and me, Who know him and who love him, To become priests with him, To join him in asking, Asking God for the nations, Asking God for our nation, Do you remember what John Knox said in his prayer, Give me Scotland, Or I die, Ask of me, And I will give you the nations, For

your inheritance, Ask, Do you remember what God said to Solomon, Ask for whatever you want me to give you, And Solomon asked for wisdom, And you remember what Jesus says to us today, You have not because you ask not, Ask, And you shall receive, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Ask, Give me, Said Elisha, A double portion of your spirit, Where he cried out as the Lord, The God of Elijah, As we face 1981, May God grant, That the burden of Elijah might become our burden, That his prayer might become our prayer, That God's answer to him, Might be God's answer to us, And that we might see in 1981, In this community, And throughout our nation, God's spirit being poured out, In a way which we have never ever seen before, In the history of Scotland, God is able, And God is willing, And if we end 1981, In the providence of God, Without seeing such a movement of God's spirit, The words of our Lord to us will be, You have not, Because you ask not, Let us then ask, Let us then ask from the very depth of our being, Let us ask from a broken heart, And from a contrite spirit, Let us cry out, In agony of soul, Give me, Give me, Give us, Give Cumbernauld, Give Scotland, A double portion of thy spirit, That our generation may know, The God of Elijah, The God of John Knox, The God of Andrew Melville, The God of Thomas Chambers, The God of Charles Spurgeon, But men and women, Who are now apathetic, Men and women who are now indifferent, Men and women who are now lost in their sin, Might come to realize their need of Christ, And through conviction, Wrought by the Holy Spirit, Be brought to the feet of Jesus, So that 1981, Maybe a year which will go down, In the annals, Of Scotland, That's the year in which the spirit of God was given, Because God's people, Asked, If you know, Said Jesus, How to give good gifts to your children, And all of us, Have been giving and receiving gifts, In these last days, If you know how to do that, How much more will God, Give his spirit, To those who ask you, Who ask him for it, Amen.