

Where is the Lord God of Elijah

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[0 : 00] We turn to our readings in 2 Kings, and we may look again at verse 14 of chapter 2. 2 Kings chapter 2, verse 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.

Now, we are concluding our study in Elijah this evening. And of course, the name Elijah means Jehovah is God.

And Elijah's mission was to vindicate the supremacy of Jehovah, and to bring back the land of Israel to its former allegiance to God.

And he sought to burn this truth into the consciences and hearts of the nation, the supreme end for which he put forth his strength, that they might acknowledge God.

[1 : 11] He sought to convince the people of their unfaithfulness, of their apostasy, that they might throw off the constraints of the yoke of Jehovah and the worship of Baal.

And you see, the true authority of God had been disowned. His majesty had been insulted. And therefore, it was necessary that God's honor should be vindicated.

And that's what Elijah set out to do, to make the nation realize its guilt, to seek to bring the nation back to God, and to see that God's name would be vindicated.

I have been very jealous, he says, for the name of the Lord God of hosts. And Elijah had stood alone against a tremendous combination of forces.

Elijah, you could say, had been sent to break up the fallow ground. He had been sent to awaken the nation's conscience.

[2 : 18] He was the John the Baptist who was going before Elisha. Remember how it's said of John the Baptist, he came in the spirit and power of Elijah, as the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, to break up the ground, to prepare the way.

So in a sense, Elijah himself is the forerunner for Elisha. Remember how he had that revelation of God in the desert, and how God came in a tornado, or how the tornado came, and then there came the earthquake, and then the fire, and God was in none of these things.

And then there was a still, small voice. And God was in a still, small voice. And immediately Elijah is told, Go return, anoint Hazael king of Syria, anoint Jael king of Israel, and anoint Elisha prophet in your stead.

You see, Elijah's ministry had to do so much with judgment. And he was preparing the way for the ministry of Elisha.

And for ten years, they work alongside one another. For ten years, they seek to establish the schools of the prophets. And perhaps these ten years were the most productive part of Elijah's ministry.

[3 : 51] God was telling him that although he had to announce these judgments, on a nation, there was other work to be done. God doesn't work just in the miracles, and in the judgments.

God is working in a quiet way. And the ministry of Elisha is going to be a much quieter ministry. But Elijah had to prepare the way.

He was the forerunner. He was the one who was breaking up the ground. And alongside this preparation for a gentler ministry, there is still this thread of vindication.

We saw last week how, in the case of Naboth's vineyard, God visited in judgment on Jezebel and Ahab. And here in chapter 1 of 2 Kings, we again have one of these incidents where God is still speaking in judgment to the nation.

We see them, chapter 1, that Moab was moved to rebellion against Israel. And King Ahaziah fell down, we are told, from the lattice of his house and injured himself.

[5 : 10] And he didn't die immediately. It would seem as if God was giving him space to repent. But what does he do? Well, he says to his servants, Go inquire of Baal Sebeb whether I shall recover from this injury.

A god of Ekron, the lord of the flies, as he could be translated. He went to ask, or sent to ask, if this God would tell him whether or not he was to recover from his injury.

And he's acting as if there's no God in Israel. When you think of this man brought up in Israel, how could he think of sending to this heathen God to find out whether he was going to live or not?

And so he sends this delegation off to this God in Ekron. And as this delegation is going to this God in Ekron, the angel of the Lord instructs Elijah to meet the delegation.

In verse 3 of chapter 1, the angel of the Lord said to Elijah, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel that you go to inquire of Baal-sebub, the God of Ekron?

[6 : 42] They are going to this place in Ekron to find out for the king what's going to happen to him. Now therefore, thus saith the Lord, thou shalt not come down from that bed in which thou art gone up, but shall surely die.

Elijah announces this message and the delegation goes back to the king and they tell him about this man who has met them on the way.

And of course, from the description of this man, Isaiah recognizes it is Elijah the Tishbite. And so when he recognizes it's Elijah the Tishbite, he wants to do to him what his mother Jezebel had failed to do and that is to kill him.

And so he sends a delegation, he sends a leader of 50 soldiers together with his 50 soldiers and he sends him to Elijah to capture him.

Then the king sent unto him a captain of 50 with his 50 and he went up to him as he sat on the top of a hill and he spake unto him thou man of God the king hath said come down.

[8 : 01] And Elijah answered and said to the captain of 50 if I be a man of God then let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and I 50. You see what is behind the words that are used by this captain is an insult to the messenger of God and to God himself.

he insults not only the messenger of God but he insults God himself. And you see when people take on the messenger of God or the ambassador of God then they're fighting against God.

And that fire that came down from heaven was not magic that Elijah had conjured up. it was God vindicating his cause vindicating his servant and so another captain with his 50th ascent and the same thing happens to him and then a third captain and his 50th ascent and by now they've learned a lesson and the third captain instead of saying what the first two said he falls on his knees and Elijah is persuaded to go down to King Ahaziah and he tells him the same message and Ahaziah dies according to the word of God.

And you see right throughout this story of Elijah we're always seeing the conquest of the word of God. He died according to the word of Elijah.

God is in charge. Jehovah's word is king. God's word is dependable. It's dependable in its judgments.

[9 : 55] It's dependable in its promises. And throughout the whole story of Elijah there's this dependability of the word of God. And here once again the word of God comes through.

The word spoken through Elijah he died according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken. And now Elijah's work is over and God is going to take him to himself.

And it came to pass when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And so as he prepares to leave this world Elijah visits the places that were so precious to him.

He revisits some of the places where he administered. And he begins at Gilgal the first stopping place of Israel after they crossed the Jordan.

He goes on to Bethel the house of God the place of hallowed memory where God had visited Jacob and made himself known to Jacob and then they go on to Jericho and then ultimately they cross over the Jordan.

[11 : 15] And in each place Elijah tries to persuade Elisha to stay in that place. Stay here. And yet he goes on with him.

What is Elijah trying to do? Does he want to be alone before he departs from this life? Or is he testing Elisha?

Perhaps that's the reason. He's testing Elisha's resolve. Is he going to continue with his master? And he does.

I will not leave you. And at each place in Bethel and Jericho the sons of the prophets those men at Elijah and Elisha had been training.

They say do you know that your master is going to be taken from you. And of course Elisha knew he had been told that Elijah was going to be taken from them.

[12 : 14] And the two of them go right down to the Jordan. And there at the Jordan Elijah takes his mantle and he rolls it up and he strikes the water and the Jordan is divided.

It recalls for us what Moses did at the Red Sea. it recalls for us what Gideon did when the children of Israel first of all crossed the Jordan.

And here is Elijah coming to his Jordan and there he stretches forth his mantle the symbol of his official office and the waters are divided and Elijah and Elisha cross over on dry land and he goes over to the other side of the Jordan to the plain where Moses had gone up to Mount Pisgah and he lands on that plain and as he stands on that plain Elijah as it were makes a last will and testimony he asks Elisha if you would like a parting blessing before I'm taking from you is there anything you would like and Elisha answers this please let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me he doesn't ask for riches he doesn't ask for greatness he doesn't ask for power he doesn't ask for fame what he asks for is a double portion of

Elijah's spirit and no doubt there's a reference back to the portion of the first born the first born share of the inheritance was a double portion and that's what Elijah is looking for that's what his request is for a double portion of Elijah's spirit and why is he asking for that not because he wants to be greater not because he wants to have more fame than Elijah had no because he is conscious of his own weakness he's conscious of his own shortcomings and he's conscious that he needs more than Elijah needed because of his own weakness and helplessness and also because of the great need of the day you see he was going to minister after Elijah had gone and his ministry was going to be of a different sort it was going to be that quieter ministry it was going to be an intense ministry but it was going to be concentrated more on teaching and healing and things like that and there was going to be a great going forth of spiritual power in the ministry of

Elijah and therefore he says let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me and what would be the proof that Elijah's request would be answered well the proof would be this the sight of Elijah translation into heaven if he saw Elijah being translated if he saw Elijah taken up to heaven that would be the sign that his request was agreeable to the word of God and to the will of God but his eye must be fixed on his master and as he's looking at his master as they're walking on over the Jordan behold there appeared a chariot of fire and Elijah is taken up in a whirlwind to heaven and he enters glory without going through death he's like

[16 : 14] Enoch he walked with God and he was not for God took him and what a vindication of this man who had stood for God and for the things of God in this life and many people mocked at what he was saying and many people didn't believe in the reality of it but now God rewards this man he's highly honoured there is a future state there is a world to come there is the reality of spiritual things because this man who has served God upon earth is taken into the glory taken into that spiritual world taken up in a whirlwind for people to recognize that verily there is a God in heaven and so it was a vindication for Elijah but it was also a blessing for

Elisha how it would have strengthened Elisha's faith how it would have strengthened him as he saw this vivid demonstration of the spiritual world how he would depend more as he went out on his ministry on the presence and power of God he had a little glimpse into the unseen world he saw something of the glory and power of that world in the translation of Elijah and it would be a blessing to Elisha as he went out on his new ministry but he said there was something else and that was the consciousness of the great loss look what he says in verse 12 and Elijah saw it and he cried my father my father the chariot of Israel and the horsemen are off and what does he mean when he says that well he was his father he was his leader he was his master and what did he think of his master well this is what he thought of his master

Elijah was more to the nation of Israel than the whole army of Israel and his removal meant more than the removal of Israel's army my father my father the chariots of Israel and the horsemen are off you see the taking up of Elijah is a greater loss to the nation than if his whole army had been taken

and you see what it tells us is this the real strength of a nation doesn't consist in its armies doesn't consist in its wealth doesn't consist in its navy it doesn't consist in its wisdom the wealth of a nation consists in its holy and God fearing men and women the religiously instructed and praying people are the strength of any nation we've known that some days past when

God has delivered this nation in a most remarkable way when he delivered us from the armada and the invasion of popery it was God's hand that did that and was God's praying people that brought about that and even in more recent times when we were delivered from the threat of invasion in the last war surely this was the strength of our nation and this is the strength of any nation her praying people her godly people and what Elisha is saying here the cause of God the work of God has been shorn of its greatest earthly defense and glory this man was more to Israel than all her armies a praying man a godly man taken from a nation taken from a people what a loss and so he laments the taking of

Elijah but any other thing we see here is that the mantle of Elijah fell on Elisha that badge of his distinctive office as he was taken up as he was translated as he was brought into glory the mantle that belonged to Elijah fell on Elisha he had that anointing of the Holy Spirit he had that double portion that was promised him or that he requested and was given to him and he took up that mantle and he went forth with that mantle and he came back to the river Jordan on the other side of the river Jordan and he holds up that mantle that Elijah had used already and he says where is the Lord God of Elijah where is the

[21 : 46] Lord God of Elijah and what happened the Lord God of Elijah answered to his name he answered to his name the waters were divided just as they had been divided at the word of Elijah so now they're divided at the word of Elijah and you see the great and important thing is this that Elijah linked his own ministry with that of his predecessor you see it's not the messenger that matters but the God who sends the messenger it's not the messenger that's important it's a God who equips the messenger and a God that had been with Elijah is the same God who is going to be with Elisha you see our feebleness and our weakness is no barrier to the exercise of his power where is the

Lord God of Elijah he doesn't say where is Elijah no Elijah is gone but the work of God goes on the messenger is taken and the messenger changes but what matters is the God who has sent the messenger where he says is the God of Elijah it's that God that made Elijah great it's that God that made Elijah useful it's that God that had taken up Elijah and made him an instrument of power in his hand how did Elijah become an instrument in God's hand because he was an ordinary man and James emphasizes that he was subject to like desires as we are there was no difference Elijah was a very ordinary man there's no doubt about that and on top of that he was a rustic he was unkempt he was unpolished he had come from the country but you see where did his power come from well his power began in prayer his power began in a righteous and godly life his power began in a heart that was undivided and because

God was strong in him he was able to do great things for God and you see it's when a person becomes weak and recognizes their weakness and calls upon God that they become strong and it was in prayer that Elijah prevailed and what is prayer prayer is recognizing our own weakness and taking hold on God's strength and that's the secret of Elijah's power and that was why Elijah succeeded because God was with him God was with him in his weakness and God became his strength and he prepared a way in the consciences of the nation for a work that Elijah his successor was to continue remember how as I said already it is said of

John the Baptist that he came in the spirit and power of Elijah now although there was among women there was none greater among those born of women there was none greater than John the Baptist yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he how can you reconcile that here is John the Baptist coming in power preaching the doctrine of repentance preparing the way for the Lord a mighty man none greater than he born of women and yet he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he what's the difference well a difference is a matter of privilege you see we're living in the gospel age the Holy Spirit has been poured out Pentecost has taken place and that power that was evidenced in the life of

Elijah and that power that was evidenced in the life of John the Baptist can be evidenced in your life and mine and that's the power we need and that's the help we need you see it's evidenced in Elijah's prayer life and what we need today more than anything else is to recapture that power in our lives James says prayer that is energized by the Holy Spirit and laid on the heart of a righteous man is powerful and effective have we forgotten that prayer that is energized by the Holy Spirit and

laid on the heart of a righteous man is powerful and effective and it doesn't need to be a great man it's a man who's conscious of his own weakness as

[27 : 34] Elijah was he was conscious of his utter helplessness and he laid hold upon God's power and upon God's grace and Elijah was the same he asked first of all and foremost where is the Lord God of Elijah and you see that's the question we need to ask today where is the God of Knox and Melville and Chalmers and McChain we're linking ourselves to the past when God did great things among his people when God sent reformation and revival to his church he can do it again but only he can and we're asking not for these men to return to this earth any more than we're asking for Elijah to return to this earth no we want the spirit and power of these men we want the spirit that was manifested in these men a spirit of prayer a spirit of holiness a spirit of dependence upon

God and God can do it he can do it through weak and helpless creatures like we are if we surrender ourselves to him and to his power if we seek his Holy Spirit and if our praying is energized by the Holy Spirit and if our life is holy then the God who spoke through Elijah is a God who can speak and work through us he's the same God may our prayer tonight be where is the Lord God of Elijah what a difference he will make not Elijah but God the God who used Elijah may he be the God who uses us in our prayer life and never despise that as humble as you may be as insignificant as you may be what an influence you can have on the kingdom of

God and the work of God by your prayer life where is the Lord God of Elijah let him appear let him manifest himself let him manifest himself in us in each one of us as a God who is working by his power and is able to transform our situation and the situation of our churches and of our nation may God bless our meditation let's pray our gracious God we praise and bless thee for the power that thou art giving someone high we thank thee in weakness we are made strong and we thank thee for thy servants we thank thee for those who are made conscious of their deep and utter need and who waited upon thee for the strength that thou canst give them and we pray that in our day we might look to thee the God who has done such wonders and great things for thy people in days past come again amongst us we pray thee in thy power to demonstrate that thou are

God and a saving God a God of salvation working salvation in the midst of the earth glorify thy name we pray thee and grant that thou bless our souls and do us good for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake amen