

ELIJAH'S SUCCESSOR, ELISHA.

– *AUG. 7. – 2 KINGS 2:6-15.* –

"How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask it!" – Luke 11:13.

IT WOULD appear that the lesson which the Lord taught Elijah by the wind, the earthquake, the lightning, and the still, small voice, was appreciated and acted upon. Elijah had expected the Reformation word to go forward like a terrific windstorm or like the earthquake, or like the fiery lightning, and when it did not take such form, he fled, discouraged, from the scene of his efforts, and wished to die. Now, he was to understand that the reformation was to work more secretly, more quietly, in the hearts of the people, before it would give great outward manifestations. The Lord's inquiry of him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" evidently gave him to see that he had discontinued the Lord's work, and for the time was out of the service; but, under the Lord's direction, he returned, and began again his work in Israel, following more closely the lines indicated by his lesson, seeking to have the people hear "the still, small voice," the [R2341 : page 221] Lord's message to their consciences. Nor can we doubt that he was greatly encouraged to reengage in this work, by the Lord's assurance that altho his people were not courageous, not bold in defence of the truth, and in opposition to evil, but rather lacking in firmness and courage, nevertheless there were yet seven thousand persons in Israel who had not been so weak-kneed as to bow to Baal.

After attending to his commission, to anoint Hazael and Jehu, and Elisha, the prophet seems to have given his special attention to the founding of "schools of the prophets" in various parts of the land of Israel. These would appear to have been prophetic schools, gatherings of religious men, faithful to Jehovah, who desired to learn his will and word and law more particularly. And these in turn, we may suppose, exercised in their various communities a wholesome

influence for righteousness, and the worship of the true God. Thus the "still, small voice" was operating. The gain in influence and respect for the true worship, as opposed to idolatry, is manifest from the fact that Jezebel, altho still as bitterly opposed as ever, seemingly made no effort to interfere with Elijah, or with the schools of the prophets; whereas, before, she had caused the death of a similar class. Public opinion, altho not very pronounced at that time, nevertheless had to be respected, and that in proportion as the truth set the people free from the superstitions of error.

There are many profitable lessons for us of the present day, along these same lines. The great antitypical Jezebel, "the mother of harlots," alarmed the reformers of the sixteenth century by her threats, and caused them to flee and to desert many of the prominent principles of the Reformation, for fear of the consequences; yet in the Lord's due time the antitypical Elijah – the Church – was refreshed in spirit, and learned the lesson that God's revolutions were not to be expected along the lines of wholesale conversions from sin to righteousness, from ignorance to knowledge, from error to truth; but that the truth was to be inculcated gradually, and was to do its work among the people, as the "still, small voice" of righteousness, of conscience, of God. It is along these lines that the truth has been progressing for the last three centuries.

Moreover, in connection with the present "harvest truth," many of us have been at first inclined to expect powerful reactions, social upheavals, lightning-like transitions "out of darkness into his marvelous light," as it is now shining. And the failure of such expectations is inclined to send us away into the wilderness, discouraged, as was the case with our prototype, Elijah. We, like him, are to learn lessons, that the inculcation of truth, according to the Lord's plan, is to be a gradual work, and we, like him, are to perseveringly engage in its gradual spread. Now, as then, "those who fear the Lord speak often together" – **[R2341 : page 222]** come together as schools for the study of prophecy, – for the study of the

"good, acceptable and perfect will of God." Now, as then, these schools or gatherings of persons sufficiently interested to desire to know the will of the Lord, are on the increase.

The time came for the end of Elijah's work, and for Elisha to take his place and do the Lord's work along slightly different lines. Elijah and Elisha were men of totally different types; Elisha was an influential and comparatively wealthy farmer, as is indicated by the large number of oxen working under his supervision, and presumably upon his own farm – twelve yokes of oxen. We may presume him to have been a man of considerably more personal refinement than Elijah, and that he dressed differently accordingly. Elijah was known as the man with the leathern girdle about his loins, and a mantle, which sometimes he wore, and sometimes he removed, – generally living in wilderness places; and, we may presume that he had rather a rustic and wild appearance.

Elijah's method of announcement to Elisha that he was invited to become an associate in the work, and his intimation that he might be the successor in the office of servant of the Lord, as prophet, was indicated by throwing his mantle over Elisha's shoulder, Elijah removing the mantle again, and continuing on his journey. Elisha understood the matter, and quite evidently was whole-hearted, inasmuch as we see no evidence of halting between two opinions. He decided at once that he would accept the opportunity; telling Elijah that he would be with him directly, as soon as he had bidden farewell to his parents. Then, by way of manifesting to the Lord and to the people his appreciation of this call to the service of a prophet, he made a feast to the people, and shortly after joined Elijah.

As Elijah represents the Church of this Gospel age, so we understand that Elisha represents the successors of the Church of this age, the class which will take up the work of the Lord as successors to the Elijah class, after the latter has been joined to the Lord in the invisible heavenly Kingdom – "changed," translated, become spirit

beings, according to the power of the first resurrection. In harmony with this view, we find that Elisha was not called until about the close of Elijah's service – "when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven."

Our lesson shows that, while Elijah had called Elisha according to divine direction, and while Elisha had started to keep Elijah company, yet the latter seemed bent on separating himself from Elisha, requesting him frequently to tarry at the different schools of the prophets which they visited, namely, at Gilgal, at Bethel and at Jericho. But no argument persuaded Elisha to desert Elijah; he seemed to understand that the degree of his blessing would depend upon the closeness of his company with Elijah, and this evidently was the truth, and the attempts to have him stop at the various places on the journey were with a view to testing his earnestness and fidelity. Had he stopped he would not have received the great blessing which he eventually got.

Applying this as a type at the present time, we see that the time for the taking up of the Elijah class, "the overcomers," "the little flock," of this Gospel age, has arrived. An Elisha class mingles with the overcomers, yet is a separate class; and various trials, disappointments and siftings are encountered, the design of which is to have these, if they will, turn back, separate themselves from the Elijah company, and those who are sifted out by the way will neither be of the one class nor the other, according to our understanding of this type and also of the general Scriptures.

Elisha's special desire, above all things, was to have a large measure of the spirit of the Lord, the same spirit which had operated through Elijah, and this was his prayer: "I pray that a double portion of thy spirit may be upon me." Elijah's answer to this request implies that the faithfulness of the Elisha class will have to do with the measure of the Elijah spirit which will descend to it. So we understand it will be with all who become the successors of the Gospel Church

as representatives of the Lord and his cause in the end of this age. The larger the degree of their sympathy and fellowship with the overcoming Church, the larger will be the blessing which will come to them consequently and the larger will be their future privileges in connection with the work of the Lord.

A chariot of the Lord, with horses as of fire, parted Elijah from Elisha. It is easier to understand the type than to fully comprehend what its antitype will be. The chariot of fire undoubtedly typified the chariot of glory – the change from human to spirit conditions, which will separate the little flock from humanity, and by which the Lord will receive them unto himself. But it may also signify more than this, for fire and brightness are not only used as symbols of glory, but also as symbols for the trials and difficulties by which the Lord's people are prepared for glory: thus, the Apostle speaks of "the fiery trials which shall try you." The chariot of fire may therefore signify also, that the *last members* of the Gospel Church will be separated from the world under very trying circumstances, fiery trials; but that these, nevertheless, will be merely the agencies, the chariots by which the Lord will receive them to himself.

Furthermore, the record is that Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind; and applying this to the last members [R2341 : page 223] of the Church, would seem to indicate trouble also, because whirlwinds are used symbolically in the Scriptures to represent trouble. We will, therefore, not be surprised if the last members of the Church, the body of Christ to be taken to the Lord, should be taken in the midst of fiery trials and a whirlwind of trouble. This seems to be indicated by another type of the same class, given us in the Scriptures – John the Baptist, who was imprisoned and finally beheaded.*

*See MILLENNIAL DAWN, [VOL. II., Chap. 8.](#)

Having seen Elijah to the last, Elisha understood that his request was to be granted, and that a double portion of the spirit of the Lord, which was with Elijah, should be upon him. He took up the fallen

mantle of Elijah as his own, and coming to the river Jordan, smote it with the mantle, as Elijah had done, saying, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" That is to say, Is not the Lord God of Elijah with me? If so, then the same power of God exercised through Elijah will be exercised through me. And his faith was rewarded, for Jordan was divided, as for Elijah. Thenceforth he was the chief teacher in the schools which Elijah had established, and was so recognized.

We do not understand that Elijah was taken to heaven, in the same sense that the Gospel Church will be taken to heaven. Elijah was taken up into heaven physically, while the Church is to be "changed," because [R2342 : page 223] "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." But Elijah was flesh and blood, human; Elijah had no change of nature; he lived before the time of the call to the divine nature; which began with the Gospel age. He therefore did not go to heaven, in the sense that the Church will go to heaven. He was not greater than John the Baptist, of whom our Lord said, "There hath not arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist, and yet I say unto you that the least one in the kingdom of heaven is *greater* than he." The Kingdom of Heaven class was not started until our dear Redeemer's first advent, when he gave himself a ransom for all, and began the selection of the little flock, the Kingdom class. And it was his own testimony through John, centuries after Elijah's day, that "No man hath ascended up to heaven save he which came down from heaven, even the Son of Man." (Jno. 3:13.) Elijah, therefore, according to the Scriptures, could have no higher position than that of the other prophets of his time, including John the Baptist, all honorably mentioned by the Apostle (Heb. 11:38-40): "of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth,... and these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise [the things promised]: God having provided some better thing for us [the Gospel Church], that they without us should not be made perfect." Elijah, as one of these prophets, will be honored and blessed after the antitypical Elijah (the Gospel Church) has been glorified.

Nor does the fact that Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration have any bearing upon the case, or in any manner or degree prove that he did not die; for, as we have already shown, the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration was a vision (see Lesson in TOWER, April 1). If there were anything to prove that Elijah had not yet tasted death in the full sense of the word, it would still not prove that he had been changed to spiritual conditions, but merely that he had been carried physically away from the earth, and miraculously preserved elsewhere for a season or time: but inasmuch as we see nothing to be accomplished by this, it is our understanding that, while he was taken up from Elisha in the chariot of fire, he no doubt was buried somewhere by the Lord, just as Moses was buried secretly.

The story of Elijah, and especially of the record of the end of his career can only be understood properly when recognized as being typical of the matters connected with the Gospel Church, and the close of its career. Let each one who hopes to be of the glorified body of Christ seek to be faithful to the Lord, after the example of Elijah, and according to the instructions of his Word, and the leading of his spirit, to-day; that we may be among those who shall be accounted worthy to be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in death. Faithful is he who has called us, who also will do for us all that he has so graciously promised, ultimately transforming us to the perfection of his own divine nature. – 2 Pet. 1:4.
