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ELIJAH TAKEN IN A WHIRLWIND.

– 2 KINGS 2:1-11. – SEPT. 11. –

Golden Text: – "He was not, for God took him." – Gen. 5:24.

THE words, "When the Lord would take up Elijah," suggest that Elijah had a specially protected life – that it was not subject to the power of his enemies – that he was wholly under divine control. And this is true also of the antitypical Elijah class of this Gospel age. It was true, we remember, of the great Head of this class, Jesus in the flesh. The scribes and Pharisees made many attempts at his life before the successful one, but could not harm him previously because "his hour was not yet come." So with every member of his body in the flesh, every member of the Elijah class – not even a hair of their heads could fall without divine notice and permission. These are not to esteem that any of their affairs are accidental, for being fully consecrated to the Lord and fully accepted by him, all of their affairs, great and small, are under divine supervision – their health or sickness, their rights or privileges, their joys or sorrows.

We are not in this wishing to intimate fatalism, but rather a divine supervision. If trials and disciplines and corrections, either of poverty or sorrow or ill health, be necessary for the correction of these they will surely have them; and some or all of these may [R3416 : page 251] come to them even though not as chastisements, but as lessons of experience necessary for their development for places in the Kingdom or for their usefulness in the Lord's service in the present time – as was the case with our Lord. Those who are of the Elijah class, fully consecrated to the Lord, will be glad to have this divine supervision of their affairs and will rejoice in it. This, however, would not mean that they may not and should not do whatever would appeal to them as being wise and reasonable for the maintenance of their health or its recovery, for the satisfying of their hunger or thirst, or for the betterment of their temporal interests. But while using what to

them may appear to be reasonable means, [R3416 : page 252] they will consider that these also are all in the hands of the Lord, and, if successful, that they are his provision, to be accepted with thankfulness; while, if unsuccessful, they will be willing to accept the results without murmuring – with full assurance of faith that God is able to make all things work together for their good.

AT THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS.

Elijah and Elisha were at Gilgal, one of the cities at which was located a "school of the prophets," where piously inclined young men sought instruction respecting the divine Law under the supervision of those who were recognized as prophets, and with a view to become doctors or expounders of the Law of God in the various cities in which they lived. Elijah and Elisha had been at this place for some time, and now Elijah proposed a journey, suggesting that Elisha go not with him. The latter, however, would not forsake the older prophet, whom he styled his master, and toward whom he performed the duties of a body-servant. So they went together to Bethel, at which was located another "school of the prophets." We are not told how long was the stay at Bethel, nor what the prophets did or said at the school, but we do know that the pupils, known as the sons of the prophets, came privately to Elisha and in confidential whispers asked him if he was aware that the Lord was about to take from him his master Elijah.

Elisha's answer was that he did know it, but did not wish to discuss the matter. Evidently he was filled with sorrow at the thought of the loss he was about to sustain, for everything indicates that during the ten years or more that he had been Elijah's servant and co-laborer in the prophetic office, a deep personal attachment had sprung up between the two men, who in some respects were very dissimilar. Again Elijah suggested that Elisha should tarry while he would go on to the city of Jericho; but again, with strong vociferations of his earnestness, Elisha declined to leave his master. When they arrived at Jericho Elisha had a similar experience, the sons of the prophets again

asking him whether or not he had heard of the Lord's intention to take up the prophet, and again he refused to discuss the matter. For the third time Elijah suggested to him that he tarry while he would go farther under the Lord's direction, not to a city but to the river Jordan, but Elisha would not tarry and they went on.

These visits to the schools of the prophets before Elijah was taken away doubtless had a beneficial effect upon these students of the Lord's Word, who well knew the aged prophet and his allegiance to God and God's power manifested through him. This last visit would be impressed upon their minds and go with them to the various cities of Israel in due time. Meanwhile the revelation which had been made to them, that God intended to take Elijah by a whirlwind, would prepare them for this final miracle and attestation of him as a servant of the Almighty. Apparently the prophets of this last school, fifty in number, while modestly refraining from following with Elijah and Elisha, nevertheless were deeply interested in the event they knew was about to take place. They went to a prominent point near Jericho, high above the river Jordan and overlooking it, and there witnessed what transpired. In the distance they beheld Elijah take off his mantle and roll it into the form of a club, and therewith smite the waters of the river Jordan, dividing them so that the two passed over as the Israelites had previously done by the miracle which the Lord wrought through Joshua at very nearly the same point. On the prophets went, up the steep hillside beyond Jordan – quite possible Mount Nebo, where Moses died. – Deut. 32:49,50.

HARVEST SIFTINGS TYPIFIED.

There has been considerable speculation respecting this account of the three times and places at which Elijah invited Elisha to part company with him: that Elijah was too modest to desire many witnesses of the final manifestation of God's favor toward him, or that he wished to spare Elisha the sadness of the later parting; but these suggestions are not satisfactory to us. To our mind these were a

feature of the type whose antitype must be expected in this present time. As Elijah represented the consecrated ones who will as overcomers constitute the body of Christ and become participants with our Lord in the glories of the Kingdom in the first resurrection, so apparently Elisha would represent a consecrated class of this time, in some respects inferior. These will have an acquaintance with the Elijah class, will minister to them in various ways, yet not be identified with them as members of the same death-devoted company.

In harmony with this illustration or type we shall expect that, as the present age draws to its close and the Elijah class passes away entirely, there will come various siftings or testings to this class of inferior consecration to separate them from the company and fellowship of the Elijah class. Whoever will fall away in this sifting will cease to belong to the Elisha class. Those who endure the siftings and testings will thus maintain their position in the Elisha class, and some will thus continue according to the type down to the very close of Elisha's experience, and will then in consequence of this faithfulness receive a great blessing – a double portion of the Elijah spirit.

As the two prophets went on Elijah said to Elisha, **[R3416 : page 252]** Make request what I shall give thee, as I go from thee shortly. Elisha's request for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah is not to be understood as meaning twice as much of God's power as Elijah possessed, for this would have constituted Elisha a prophet of double the power of Elijah. Besides, how unreasonable a request would it have been for him to make – that Elijah should give more than he himself possessed. We must understand him, therefore, to mean that if Elijah's spirit or power would in any wise be remaining with any prophets in the earth who would represent the Lord, that Elisha desired that he might have twice as much as any other one – not selfishly, we may assume, but that he appreciated Elijah's disposition and position as a servant of God, and desired that as far as possible he might enter into a similar work of service. His request was granted

conditionally, but he was told that it would be dependent upon his own watchfulness.

The lesson which we draw from this request of Elisha and the conditions of its fulfilment is that the consecrated class whom he represents in the end of this age will need to be on the alert if they would discern the passing away of the Elijah class, and that only in proportion as they do discern the completion of the Elijah class and its passing into glory will they become the recipients of a proportionately large measure of the spirit and zeal of the Elijah class. From the Scriptures we get the thought that after the Elijah class shall have been completed, tested, proven and glorified, there will still remain a period of time before the full ending of the "present evil world" or dispensation – before the full inauguration of the Millennial glories. During that period the class which we believe Elisha represented – namely, a consecrated class, but lacking in some measure the full spirit of devotion exhibited by the Elijah class – will be quickened and energised by the change of dispensation and the evidences of the fulfilling of the divine plan, so that thereafter they will be practically as devoted and self-sacrificing and zealous every way as the Elijah class had been.

The receiving by Elisha of power from the departed Elijah seems to correspond in considerable measure to the "foolish virgins" getting their oil and being able to trim their lamps after the "wise virgins" have gone in to the wedding and the door is shut. As the foolish virgins were not evil but good – "virgins" – so Elisha was not an evil man but a good man and a prophet: as the foolish virgins lacked something that the wise virgins possessed, so Elisha lacked something of what Elijah possessed, and that lack, which was supplied to the foolish virgins in the oil, is represented in Elisha's case in the mantle and blessing.

As the Parable of the Virgins does not go on to show what happened to the foolish virgins except that they failed to enter into the

marriage because the door was shut, so the Elisha picture merely shows that Elisha did not accompany Elijah, but on receiving his benediction and power he continued for a while the work that Elijah had been doing. So it is our thought that during the great time of trouble there will be a consecrated class who had not a sufficiency of zeal in self-sacrifice to be counted of the Lord as members of the Elijah class or body of Christ, who nevertheless will experience a great time of refreshing and become thoroughly devoted after they realize that the Church has been glorified – after they begin to see also the fulfilment of various Scriptures respecting Babylon. This class, whom we understand to be represented in the Scriptures as the "great company," whose number no man knows, who wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and eventually come up to spirit conditions, though not to be of the Royal Priesthood in the throne (Rev. 7:9-17) – these are represented as recognizing by and by that the little flock, the Bride class, the Elijah class, have **[R3417 : page 253]** passed beyond the veil and they are shown to rejoice accordingly, saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to God, for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready!" This class in turn, though not worthy to be the Bride, the wife, is invited to participate in the great marriage feast which is to take place shortly after the glorification of the Church. – Rev. 19:7-9.

ELISHA, IF A TYPE, A DOUBLE ONE.

We might here remark that although we are treating Elisha as a part of the type as well as Elijah, yet there is nothing in the Scriptures that positively intimates that this is the case – it is a mere inference. In Elijah's case, as we have already pointed out in a previous lesson, there is no doubt; beyond peradventure Elijah was a type of the elect Church *in the flesh*. But if Elisha was a type, we believe that we are justified in considering him a type of two classes. First, of the class already suggested, who are with the Elijah class and who maintain relationship to the close of Elijah's period and who then become

partakers of his spirit. And this type would seem to extend as far as Elisha's re-crossing the Jordan, smiting it with the mantle of Elijah. If the crossing of Jordan into the land of Canaan be taken to represent death, then the picture should be read as indicating that this "great company" will all pass through death, which is just what the Scriptures elsewhere seem clearly to show – that in order to be on the spirit plane at all it will be necessary for them to "all die as men."

In this view of the matter we assume that Elisha, [R3417 : page 254] after crossing the Jordan and entering Canaan, would represent another, a different class, namely, the earthly phase of the Kingdom – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets, the beginning of the restitution class. Elisha's work after crossing Jordan was restitution work in many respects, and in this particular would well correspond to what we may expect of the earthly phase of the Kingdom after its establishment – after the great time of trouble. But again we remind the reader that the typical character of Elisha is not beyond question, as it is nowhere affirmed in the Scriptures, but merely inferred by us because of his association with Elijah.

CHARIOTS OF FIRE AND HORSES OF FIRE.

The record is that Elijah and Elisha were separated by chariots of fire, but that Elijah was taken up not by these but by a whirlwind into heaven (margin). We might draw different inferences from this, but feel safer to adhere closely to the wording of the text. The fiery chariots and horses we infer to be a part of the type, and shall not be at all surprised to find the fulfilment in severe persecutions which will come upon the last members of the Elijah class – persecutions unto death possibly. If this be the correct interpretation of the type there would be a special significance attaching to Elisha's seeing the departure of Elijah. It would seem to signify close personal friendship and loyalty between them down to the very close, and that the effect of these fiery trials would be to energize those who had previously been less energetic in the carrying out of their consecration.

The whirlwind in the type should be interpreted, in harmony with general Scripture usage, as signifying a fierce trouble – a trouble, too, which would agitate the heavens or ecclesiastical powers as an earthquake would represent disturbances of the social conditions. Thus read in advance of the fulfilment the type seems to imply that the end of the Elijah class will occur amidst great ecclesiastical commotions, accompanied by fiery trials – thus we think probably the change will come to the last members of the elect "body."

"HE WAS NOT, FOR GOD TOOK HIM."

Our Golden Text relates to Enoch, but is not inappropriately applied by the Lesson Committee to Elijah, for what was true of one was apparently true of the other also. Enoch, the faithful prophet of old, whose only prophecy recorded is his announcement of the second coming of the Lord to execute righteousness in the earth and to convince the gainsayers (Jude 14,15), suddenly disappeared from amongst men, and the inspired record is that he was not found because God had taken him; and so likewise Elijah, having served his mission, disappeared from amongst men for God took him. True, the sons of the prophets suggested to Elisha afterward that perhaps the Spirit of the Lord, which had taken him up, would drop him down to some other portion of the world, but there is nothing to confirm such a supposition. "He was not found, for God took him."

The question arises, Where did God take these two prophets of old? and there is no answer to the question. True, in Elijah's case it is stated that the whirlwind took him up into heaven, but the word heaven here is used to represent the sky, the circumambient air, and has no reference whatever to the heaven which is God's dwelling place. That neither of these prophets went to the latter place we have the very best evidence in our Lord's words, "No man has ascended into heaven save he which came down from heaven, even the Son of man." – John 3:13.

We can only conjecture respecting these two prophets, and our conjecture is that they were not only taken away in order that their disappearance from the earth might be typical, but that possibly the Lord has taken them to some other suitable habitation, perhaps some other world, that in due time he might bring them back to earth and possibly thereby impress upon mankind some lessons which could not otherwise be so forcefully taught. For instance, he might thereby give the lesson of his abundant ability to fulfil any and every promise ever made to mankind. We have no thought, however, that Elijah has ever yet returned to this earth – we have no thought that he was present on the Mount of Transfiguration with the Lord and the apostles as already shown; we accept the Lord's testimony respecting the spectacle on the Mount – that it was a vision merely. – See our issue of April 1, 1904.

"DEATH PASSED UPON ALL MEN."

Some may be inclined to argue that Enoch and Elijah must have died, because the penalty of death was against them as well as against all the other members of our race, and because the Apostle reiterates this penalty, saying, "By one man's disobedience sin entered the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all for all are sinners." (Rom. 5:12.) We reply that nothing in our view, in our judgment, is in discord with this sentiment of the Apostle. The death sentence passed against Enoch and against Elijah as well as against the remainder of Adam's children, and wherever they are they must still be under that death sentence; they cannot be released from it until the full close of the antitypical atonement day – which will close synchronously with this Gospel age, which is its antitype. Wherever these two venerable prophets may be they are not perfected [**R3417 : page 255**] because, as the Apostle points out (Heb. 11:38,40), God has provided for us – the Gospel Church, the body of Christ, – some better thing than he provided for any of the ancient worthies, and they without us shall not be made perfect. We are confident, therefore, that Enoch and Elijah, wherever they may be, are not yet made perfect –

they have not yet escaped from the bondage of corruption. They are still under the sentence of death and will be until that "curse" shall be lifted in the dawn of the new dispensation.

From the divine standpoint every one is dead who is either under the sentence or whose life to any extent has been impaired as a result of the curse. The whole world in this sense of the word is dead, and Enoch or Elijah can only be thought of or spoken of as alive from the standpoint of faith, even as we speak of ourselves who are accepted of the Lord as members of the body of Christ and as having passed from death unto life – namely, by faith, by hope. As we speak of ourselves and each other as alive toward God through faith in Christ, so we may speak of Enoch and Elijah as alive through the merit of the great sacrifice at Calvary, of which they shall partake actually in due time, becoming actually alive and being made actually perfect.

**"CHANGED IN A MOMENT, IN THE TWINKLING
OF AN EYE."**

As for the change of the Church, the Elijah class in the flesh – precursors or forerunners thus of the anointed body in the Spirit – the change of these members at this time the Scriptures clearly indicate to be one which the world will not recognize. As the Scriptures declare, although we are sons of God, sons of the Highest, nevertheless we must die like men – we must go down like the great Prince, Jesus, into death, and must be raised to the newness of life, to spirit conditions, to the divine nature. The Apostle assures us that those living in the end of this age, during the *parousia* of the Son of man, will not need to sleep – to tarry in the death condition – for the moment of their death will be the moment of their change to glory, honor and immortality, the divine nature.

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