

ELISHA THE PROPHET.

– 2 KINGS 2:12-24. – *OCTOBER 2.* –

Golden Text: – "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."
– 2 Kings 2:9.

THAT Elisha was the son of a wealthy Israelite is evidenced by the fact that his father's farming was done on a large scale. At the time that Elijah, under divine direction, first approached him and indicated his call to special service by symbolically laying his mantle upon Elisha's shoulders, the latter was plowing his father's fields with twelve separate yoke of oxen under servants, he accompanying the twelfth. That he was of a religious family not affected by the idolatry introduced by Jeroboam is evidenced by the name his parents gave him, Elisha signifying "God is deliverer." His call through Elijah was not to a place of honor and distinction but to become a servant of the Prophet, but he entered upon the service joyfully, esteeming it as done unto the Lord. He was thus with Elijah for more than ten years, until the latter was separated from him by the chariot of [R3428 : page 279] fire and was taken up by the whirlwind. His relationship was really that of a serving son, and between the two a deep affection had evidently sprung up, for he seemed not only to reverence Elijah as the Prophet of the Lord but also to love him as a father.

It is at this point that our lesson opens. Elijah had asked Elisha what blessing he would most desire at his hand before their separation, and in the language of our Golden Text the latter had requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit. This does not signify his desire to have twice as much as Elijah enjoyed, but rather was the familiar way of expressing an elder son's portion – a double portion as compared with other members of the family. Elisha aspired to have of the Lord a recognition as the Lord's special representative instead of Elijah when the latter was gone. The answer was that his request would be granted if he should see Elijah at the time of his taking: this

seemed to imply that circumstances or conditions would tend to separate the two, and if they were separated from any cause Elisha would fail of the blessing desired. We remember that after this promise, when the Lord would take up Elijah, he led him by a circuitous route, and at the various stopping-places suggested that Elisha tarry; but to have suffered anything to have separated him from Elijah would have excluded him from the desired blessing, and we recall that Elisha clung closely to the Prophet, allowing nothing to detain him or hinder his being with him to the very last.

Doubtless there is a typical significance in this, for although the Scriptures do not conclusively show that Elisha was a type, we have definite, positive assurance of this kind respecting Elijah; and, again, the lesson through both these prophets seemed to be typical so far as the Gospel Church is concerned. It was not until after their day that the Lord provided for the written prophecies, such as those of Isaiah, [R3429 : page 279] Amos, Malachi, etc., which have come down to us with important teachings applicable to spiritual Israel.

When Elijah was taken up in the chariot Elisha did recognize the fact and shouted, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." This was his good by salutation, and indicated that he fully recognized that the God of Israel had taken his servant by his own mighty power. As a prophet he probably expressed more than he himself understood. We have already seen that the translation of Elijah taught in a typical or pantomimic way the change of the last living members of this Gospel Church, the antitypical Elijah.* The taking of Elijah was the matter of a moment, but the change of the living members of the Church, which is the body of Christ and the antitype of Elijah, is a work of years, already in progress since 1878. Since that time we understand the Scriptures to teach that the overcomers of the Church in dying do not sleep, but are changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to the heavenly glory, the spiritual conditions of the first resurrection. Ours is the real deliverance by chariots of victory and divine power from death, from weakness, from

imperfection, to glory, honor and immortality. Elijah's experiences were merely typical. He was not changed to the spiritual or divine nature, for he was not an heir of the heavenly promises, living before the time of their promulgation; but he was an honored servant, and used of the Lord for the setting forth of a typical lesson representing the experiences of the Church of the First-born down to the very end of its journey, including its change.

**See MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. II., Chap. viii.*

Elijah's mantle, symbolical of his authority and dignity, did fall to Elisha, as was prophetically implied ten years before when he was invited to become Elijah's servant. Elisha took off his own outer garment or mantle and tore it in two parts, an act in that day symbolical of grief, sorrow, mourning, and then instead of his own he appropriated Elijah's mantle.

These incidents took place "on the other side Jordan" – on the eastern side, presumably not far from the river, possibly on Mount Pisgah, or in the neighborhood of the place where Moses took his last view of the promised land. Elisha, calling upon the name of the Lord, returned by the same route which they had come, arriving at Jordan, and used Elijah's mantle as a rod to smite the waters of Jordan, knowing that if the power of God was with him, as it previously was with Elijah, then the same results would follow in his case and the waters would divide at his command as they previously had done at Elijah's. His faith was undoubtedly made stronger by the manifestation of divine favor in connection with the separation of the waters, while he passed across to the western side of Jordan where the "sons of the prophets" awaited him.

As already stated, nothing in the Scriptures positively assures us that Elisha was a type; but if his experiences from the time Elijah was taken away were typical, it would appear to us that they were in some sense double – that he represented two classes.

(1) He would seem in the first part of his experience, accompanying Elijah and serving him and yet being separate from him, to represent what we designate as the second company, the class that in Revelation 7:9-14 is described as a great multitude whose number no man knoweth, who are – not the Royal Priesthood but the antitypical Levites – consecrated to service but not going on to share in the Priesthood by sacrificing all the interests of this present life. If Elisha be a type of this class, it would appear that there should be a close affinity of heart, of spirit, between these and the sacrificing Royal Priesthood, so that nothing will shake their devotion nor hinder them from fellowshiping with and serving the Elijah class down to the time of their change. The spirit of devotion [R3429 : page 280] previously manifested by the little flock would thereafter be manifested by those who had hesitated and refrained from a consecration of themselves and all their interests in the fullest degree. This would imply that the remainder of their lives would be of the same character as that of the little flock, although it would then be too late to gain a part and place in the Elijah class, or a share in the glory, honor and immortality which the Lord has prepared for them. With this view, Elisha's recrossing Jordan might be understood as representing their faithfulness, their testimony, and their passing over the Jordan of death without being overwhelmed by the waters – that is to say, that the death of this Elisha class would be a passing over without "sleep," a change from human to spirit conditions, though not to the conditions to which the Elijah class will attain.

From this standpoint we would be inclined to view the remaining experiences of Elisha after he had crossed Jordan as typifying still another class – a restitution class amongst men under the restitution conditions which we believe will begin to obtain from October, 1914 A.D., and onward, represented probably in the ancient worthies, who will then, as the earthly representatives of the heavenly Kingdom, begin to exercise a guiding and controlling influence in the affairs of mankind.

The suggestion of the sons of the prophets that messengers be sent to see whether or not Elijah had been dropped down somewhere on the mountains, would, from this standpoint, represent an expectancy on the part of the well-meaning but uninstructed people of the time that the Gospel Church would be reinstated. It would indicate on their part a slowness of perception of the change to the new order of things, in which the ancient worthies (represented in Elisha) would have the guidance and direction of earthly affairs and through whom blessings must thereafter be expected. The wait and search for Elijah may represent a period of three years, in which the world may fail to receive the blessings it might enjoy by reason of a failure to exercise faith in the new institutions of that time.

As soon as Elisha was recognized as beyond all question the successor of Elijah, his work – totally different from anything Elijah had done – began. It was in many respects a restitution work – and a judgment work. An illustration of both these phases of his ministry are furnished in the present lesson.

Jericho was quite a prosperous city and favorably located, except that it had a poor water supply. The spring of water which supplied the city, and from which apparently the surrounding country was irrigated, was brackish – contained some mineral property that had the effect of causing the products of the land to drop off before they reached maturity, so that the land brought no fruit to perfection. The word Jericho signifies "his moon" or "month," and this in turn reminds us that the moon was a symbol of Israel, as the sun in the Scriptures is the symbol of the Gospel Church. There is this bare hint that the people of Jericho perhaps in this picture represented natural Israel, and the fact that they will be the first to recognize the restitution class and to look for relief to those ancient worthies who will then be in control under the guidance of the glorified Church, the heavenly Kingdom. From this standpoint we can see that natural Israel, for now over eighteen hundred years, has been striving to bring forth fruitage, but has been unable to do so. That people indeed have

clung to the promise of God and have attempted to bring forth the fruits of obedience, worship, reverence, etc., but they have brought forth no fruit to perfection because by the deeds of the Law can no flesh be justified in God's sight. The Law, represented in the symbolical picture by the brackish water, was in itself just, perfect, good, yet it lacked something necessary to make it a blessing to that people. That something was the work of Christ in fulfilling the Law and thus removing its curse or condemnation from those who were dependent upon it.

From this standpoint the appeal of the men of Jericho to the restitution Elisha would represent the appeal of the Jews to the ancient worthies to know why the blight had been upon them so long as a people, and what would be necessary to the correction of their difficulty that they might have the full blessing of the Lord. As the request of the people of Jericho was granted, so the request of Israel will be granted, for the ancient worthies (the restitution Elisha) will take a new earthen vessel with salt therein – representing the new institutions, the new conditions, the new views respecting Christ and the glorified spiritual Israel ("Ye are the salt of the earth"). And this construction placed upon Israel's Law, this application and instruction and showing of its true import and fulfilment, etc., will mean to those who desire that knowledge and blessing the healing of their stream, and henceforth to Israel the Law will have a new meaning and bring forth in their hearts fruitage acceptable to the Lord, the righteousness of the Law being reckoned to those who accept the Redeemer who recognize him in connection with the Law and seek to obey his voice.

It was following this that Elisha on the way to Bethel was disdained and insulted by a mob of young lads [Leeser] who shouted after him, "Go up, thou bald head," etc. It is claimed by some that this expression, "bald head," was a particularly opprobrious epithet at that time, and that the lads were from the city whose waters had been healed; and if the matter be typical it would seem to indicate that amongst the people of natural Israel will be some who would

appreciate the new condition of things while others would despise it. Elisha looked behind him and declared them "evil in the name of Jehovah" [Young's translation], and forthwith two she bears attacked them and more or less scratched or tore forty-two of them. So far as the literal incident was concerned, it served to teach a lesson of respect for the Lord through his representatives, not only to the boys but also to their parents, who had failed of their duty either by misinstructing them or failing to instruct them. If viewed prophetically, symbolically, it would typify the judgments of the future upon any who will disregard the instructions of the earthly representatives of the Kingdom, or fail to render to them a proper appreciation of the dignity of their office as chosen agents of the heavenly Kingdom.

These two incidents illustrate well the conditions **[R3430 : page 281]** which will prevail throughout the whole world during the Millennial age. Those desiring a blessing will be granted it, and those despising the Lord's arrangements and violating proprieties will receive judgments or punishments. Thus we read that when the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

We can readily see that when God shall thus interpose his power to reward every good deed and to punish every transgression it would not take the world a great while to learn the difference between right and wrong, and very speedily the majority surely would be prompted to render obedience to the right and to abstain from the wrong. At first this might only be an outward obedience and loyalty to the Lord and to the principles of righteousness; but as years and centuries roll around and the benefits and blessings of righteousness are manifested and the evils and punishments of unrighteousness are seen, the lessons would touch the hearts of all such as the Lord purposes may have eternal life, so that at the great harvesting at the end of the Millennial age all who love righteousness and hate iniquity in their hearts would be able to stand all the testings of that time, and thus

would be accounted worthy of the eternal life and blessedness beyond the Millennium throughout eternity; while the others, demonstrating that they had refrained from evil merely because of the fear of punishment, would in the Lord's judgment have had a sufficient experience with his mercies and would be cut off in the second death – as unworthy of any further opportunity or blessing.

