

LESSON 29
“He Took Up the Mantle of Elijah”
2 Kings 2; 5-6

OVERVIEW:

Elisha becomes the prophet. Heals Naaman. Defeats an army from Syria.

SCRIPTURES:

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE KINGS
COMMONLY CALLED
THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE KINGS
CHAPTER 2

Elisha and the prophets know Elijah is to be translated—Elijah divides waters of Jordan, and is taken up into heaven in a whirlwind—Mantle of Elijah falls on Elisha, who also divides waters of Jordan—Elisha heals waters of Jericho—Youths torn by bears for mocking Elisha.

1 AND it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, (Elijah translated) that Elijah went with ^aElisha from ^bGilgal. (Regarding the doctrine of Translation, the Prophet Joseph Smith said: “Many have supposed that the doctrine of translation was a doctrine whereby men were taken immediately into the presence of God, and into an eternal fullness, but this is a mistaken idea. Their place of habitation is that of the terrestrial order, and a place prepared for such characters He held in reserve to be ministering angels unto many planets, and who as yet have not entered into so great a fullness as those who are resurrected from the dead...translation obtains deliverance from the tortures and sufferings of the body, but their existence will prolong as to the labors and toils of the ministry, before they can enter into so great a rest and glory.” Teaching, p. 170-171)

2 And ^aElijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to ^bBeth-el. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not ^cleave thee. So they went down to Beth-el.

3 And the ^asons of the prophets (school of the prophets) that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace.

4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to ^aJericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.

5 And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace.

6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. (These were locations where the schools of the prophets were located. Elijah was going to bid them goodbye.)

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

8 And Elijah took his ^amantle, and wrapped *it* together, and smote the ^bwaters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

9 ¶ And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a ^adouble portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be *so*. (Was it wrong for Elisha to ask for this? We are told to ask for gifts of the spirit. D&C 46:8 - 8 Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived ^aseek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given;

9 For verily I say unto you, they are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; that all may be benefited that seek or that ask of me, that ask and not for a ^asign that they may ^bconsume it upon their lusts.)

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a ^achariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and ^bElijah went up by a ^cwhirlwind into heaven. (The fiery chariot and the horses were the emblem of Jehovah.)

12 ¶ And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

13 He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;

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* ^aparted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

15 And when the sons of the prophets which *were* to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of ^aElijah doth ^brest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him. (How is the prophet selected today? What are the principles of succession in the presidency? In our dispensation, the Prophet will always be the most senior Apostle on the earth.)

16 ¶ And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; *let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master:* lest peradventure the ^aSpirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.

17 And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, *but found him not*.

18 And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

19 ¶ And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city *is* pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water *is* naught, and the ground barren.

20 And he said, Bring me a new ^acruse, (Heb dish, bowl) (It had to be new to show it belonged only to God.) and put salt therein. (Salt was the emblem of incorruption and purification.) And they brought *it* to him.

21 And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the ^asalt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these ^bwaters; there shall not be from thence any more death or ^cbarren *land*.

22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake. (Traveling in the Jordan Valley, one passes by Jericho and a well which supplied the ancient city with water and is still called the "Spring of Elisha." It is a reminder that the brackish water was healed by God through his newly appointed prophet Elisha. That water supply is still one of the main fresh water sources for Jericho today.)

23 ¶ And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth ^alittle children (Heb youths, not little children) (young men) out of the city, and ^bmocked him, and said unto him, Go up, (He traveled from Jericho to Bethel, a climb of about 3,000 feet.) thou ^cbald head (not a flattering term); go up, (This may also have had reference to Elijah's translation of going up.) thou bald head. (This was not just mocking the prophet, but open defiance of God.)

24 And he turned back, and looked on them, and *cursed them in the name of the LORD*. (There is a period after LORD. This attack may not have been immediate after the cursing.) And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them. (It was possible that the young men were responsible for the deaths of the bear cubs of these female bears who were looking for their

attackers.) (2 Samuel 17:8 - ...thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field:) (Following this event, no one opposed Elisha.)

25 And he went from thence to mount ^aCarmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

CHAPTER 5

Naaman, the Syrian, comes to Elisha to be healed of leprosy—He rejects the prophet's instruction, but relents and dips himself in Jordan seven times; he is healed—Elisha refuses to accept a reward—Gehazi accepts a gift from Naaman and is cursed with leprosy.

1 NOW Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, *but he was a* ^aleper.

2 And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

3 And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord *were* with the prophet that *is* in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

4 And *one* went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that *is* of the land of Israel.

5 And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and **I will send a letter unto the king of Israel.** And he departed, and ^atook with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand *pieces* of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have *therewith* sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

7 And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, *Am I* ^aGod, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he ^bseeketh a quarrel against me.

8 ¶ And it was *so*, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and **he shall know that there is a** ^aprophet in Israel.

9 So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, (Why didn't Elisha go in person? To show that it wasn't Elisha that would heal him, but God.) saying, Go and ^awash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be ^bclean.

11 But Naaman was **wroth**, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. (This wasn't what Naaman expected. He expected that the prophet would heal him, not Jehovah.)

12 *Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.*

13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, *if* the prophet had bid thee *do some* ^agreat thing, wouldest thou not have done *it*? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, ^aaccording to the saying of the man of God: and his ^bflesh came again like unto the ^cflesh of a little child, and he was ^dclean. (This story may have been to show Israel how easy it could be for their enemies to be converted to Jehovah by His goodness in making them fellow-believers. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley said: "The way of the gospel is a simple way. Some of the requirements may appear to you as elementary and unnecessary. Do not spurn them. Humble yourselves and walk in obedience. I promise that the results that follow will be marvelous to behold and satisfying to experience." Conference Report, Oct 1976, p. 143)

15 ¶ And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I ^aknow that *there is* no ^bGod in all earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a ^cblessing of thy servant. (Naaman is converted to Jehovah. Healing = Forgiveness. James 5: 15 And the ^aprayer of ^bfaith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be ^cforgiven him. (Joseph Fielding Smith said: If by the power of faith and through the administration by the elders the man is healed, it is evidence that his sins have been forgiven. It is hardly reasonable to think that the Lord will forgive the sins of a man who is healed if he has not repented. Naturally he would repent of his sins if he seeks for the blessing by the elders. Doctrines of Salvation, 3:177-8. James' instructions support the idea that a spirit of faith and repentance is present with such forgiveness – the sick person is to call for the elders, the prayer is to be a prayer of faith and contrition is suggested by the “confess your faults” passage. Forgiveness is predicated upon law as are all other blessings and must be assumed in this instance. But what a great comfort it is to those who are repentant to know that when hearts are right, anointings are given, and healings are granted, not only the body but also the soul is made well. Larry Dahl, Studies in the Scriptures, 6:222. This is part – indeed, the most glorious part – of the ordinance of administering to the sick. The following explanation sets forth how this principle operates: It is an axiomatic gospel verity that the Spirit of the Lord will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. The Spirit will not come to a man unless and until he is prepared by personal righteousness to have the companionship of that member of the Godhead. Thus to be worthy of baptism men must witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and precisely the same thing is involved in their preparation to partake of the sacrament. In other words, as a result of worthy baptism men stand clean before him if they fulfil the full law involved in partaking of the sacrament, for in each instance they are rewarded with the companionship of the Spirit, which companionship they cannot have unless they are cleansed and purified from sin. DNTC, 3:275. It is the policy of the Church that administration to the sick should be done at the request of the sick person or someone vitally concerned, so that it will be done in answer to faith. Those called to perform the ordinance should encourage the sick person to rely on the Lord's promises, Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you. Moro 7:26. If need be the sick person should be encouraged to keep the commandments so that he can have faith and be entitled to the blessings of the Lord. DNTC, 3:274.))

16 But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will ^areceive ^bnone. And he urged him to take *it*; but he refused.

17 And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD. (He takes some of the dirt of the area to build an altar to Jehovah.)

18 In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, *that* when my master goeth into the house of ^aRimmon (ie a Syrian god of wind, rain, and storm) to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

19 And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

20 ¶ But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, *as* the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

21 So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw *him* running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, *Is* all well?

22 And he said, All *is* well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.

23 And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in

two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid *them* upon two of his servants; and they bare *them* before ~~him~~ (them).

24 And when he came to the tower, he took *them* from their hand, and bestowed *them* in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed.

25 But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence *comest thou*, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

26 And he said unto him, Went not mine heart *with thee*, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? *Is it* a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

27 The ^aleprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper *as white* as snow.

CHAPTER 6

Elisha causes an axe to float—He reveals to the king how to conduct a war with Syria—Horses and chariots of fire protect Elisha—Syrians smitten with blindness—Ben-hadad besieges Samaria, and foodstuff sells for a great price.

1 AND the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too ^astrait (or narrow) for us. (The meeting location for the school of the prophets was too small. They must have been prosperous to have had the means to build a larger building. They ask the prophet if they can build a larger hall, he says yes.)

2 Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

3 And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.

4 So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

5 But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was ^aborrowed.

6 And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast *it* in thither; and the iron did swim.

7 Therefore said he, Take *it* up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it. (Elisha may have performed the miracle because the axe was borrowed. This was an act of pure kindness on Elisha's part.)

8 ¶ Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place *shall be* my camp.

9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. (The prophet warned the king that Syria would attack in a certain place. But when they went, the king was not there.)

10 And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us *is* for the king of Israel? (The king thought there was a spy among them giving their thoughts and plans to Israel. It was the prophet being warned by God. Alma 43:23 similar experience among the Nephites. 23 But it came to pass, as soon as they had departed into the wilderness Moroni sent spies into the wilderness to watch their camp; and Moroni, also, knowing of the prophecies of Alma, sent certain men ^aunto him, desiring him that he should ^ainquire of the Lord ^bwhither the armies of the Nephites should go to defend themselves against the Lamanites.)

12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that *is* in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

13 ¶ And he said, Go and spy where he *is*, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying,

Behold, *he is* in Dothan.

14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. (Elisha knew that the Syrians were surrounding the city by night, but he slept on anyway. He knew that He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. Psalms 121:4)

15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, (before anyone else in the city had arisen. Elisha and the servant were planning on going on a trip and leaving early in the morning.) and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them.

17 And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his ^aeyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and ^bchariots of fire round about Elisha.

18 And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with ^ablindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. (The Hebrew word does not mean blindness but blinding in the sense that one does not see the actual object, but an imaginary one. See Genesis 19:11)

19 ¶ And Elisha said unto them, This *is* not the way, neither *is* this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.

20 And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these *men*, that they may see. And the LORD ^aopened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, *they were* in the midst of Samaria.

21 And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite *them*? shall I smite *them*?

22 And he answered, Thou shalt not smite *them*: wouldest thou ^asmite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.

23 And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel. (Through the kindness of Israel, the Syrians were sent back home, and they did not come against them for many years. It was to show that Jehovah could have destroyed them if he wanted to.)

(To us all there are many lessons here: not only of the unseen, but certain presence of our God and of His help; of rebuke to our groundless fears, and encouragement to go forward; but also as concerning the enemies of the people of God and our dealing with them. How often when they have surrounded Dothan, and deemed themselves certain of achieving their purpose, have they seemed blinded, and found themselves in the midst of Samaria. How many times have arguments and measures, which were thought certain of success against the truth or the people of God, ended in quite the opposite result. And lastly, should we not learn to deal with those whom not our own power but God, has made helpless captives, not as if they were our personal enemies, but generously, while faithfully, although in meekness, instructing those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth? For, as harsh or self-asserting bearing on the part of those who may defend the truth of God would tend to injure that cause, probably more than anything else, so assuredly would it be palpably and painfully incongruous. And yet, the Lord reigneth, and He will take care of His own work. (Edersheim, Ch 12, p.5))

24 ¶ And it came to pass (This is many years later.) after this, that ^aBen-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

25 And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore *pieces* of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five *pieces* of silver.

26 And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help,

my lord, O king.

27 And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?

28 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow.

29 So we boiled my son, and did ^aeat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

30 ¶ And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he ^arent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, *he had* sackcloth within upon his flesh.

31 Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.

32 But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; and *the king* sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a ^amurderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: *is* not the sound of his master's feet behind him?

33 And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil *is* of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?

Christ was sometimes mistaken for Elijah or Elisha, since these two prophets performed similar acts to the Savior. Matthew 16:14 And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, ^aElias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. And Luke 4:24-27: 24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is ^aaccepted in his own country. 25 But I tell you of a truth, many ^awidows were in Israel in the days of ^bElias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, *a city* of Sidon, unto a woman *that was* a widow. 27 And many ^alepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was ^bcleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

The purpose for the many miracles of Elijah and Elisha was to show Israel that Jehovah was God and that they should repent and worship Him and trust in Him.

Miracles of Elisha: 1. parts the waters of Jordan 2:14, 2. healed the waters 2:22, 3. water fills the ditches 3:30, 4. multiplies a widow's oil 4:1-7, 5. raises a child from death 4:35, 6. makes poisonous food not poisonous 4:41, 7 feeds a hundred with little food 4:44, 8 heals Naaman of leprosy 5, 9. causes an axe to float 6:6, 10. Syrians smitten with blindness 6:18

Jewish tradition states that Elisha did twice as many miracles as Elijah. 16 for Elisha and 8 for Elijah.

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