

Lesson 29 (Mini-Episode): “He Took Up ... the Mantle of Elijah”

Class Member Reading: 2 Kings 2; 5; 6

Elijah Ascends to Heaven

2 Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ²Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.’ But Elisha said, ‘As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So they went down to Bethel. ³The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, ‘Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?’ And he said, ‘Yes, I know; keep silent.’

4 Elijah said to him, ‘Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.’ But he said, ‘As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So they came to Jericho. ⁵The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, ‘Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?’ And he answered, ‘Yes, I know; be silent.’

6 Then Elijah said to him, ‘Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.’ But he said, ‘As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So the two of them went on. ⁷Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.’ Elisha said, ‘Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.’ ¹⁰He responded, ‘You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.’ ¹¹As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. ¹²Elisha kept watching and crying out, ‘Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!’ But when he could no longer see

him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

Elisha Succeeds Elijah

13 He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, 'Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?' When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

15 When the company of prophets who were at Jericho saw him at a distance, they declared, 'The **spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.**' They came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. ¹⁶They said to him, 'See now, we have fifty strong men among your servants; please let them go and seek your master; it may be that the spirit of the LORD has caught him up and thrown him down on some mountain or into some valley.' He responded, 'No, do not send them.' ¹⁷But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, 'Send them.' So they sent fifty men who searched for three days but did not find him. ¹⁸When they came back to him (he had remained at Jericho), he said to them, 'Did I not say to you, Do not go?'

Elisha Performs Miracles

19 Now the people of the city said to Elisha, 'The location of this city is good, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful.'²⁰ He said, 'Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.' So they brought it to him. ²¹Then he went to the spring of water and threw the salt into it, and said, 'Thus says the LORD, I have made this water wholesome; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.' ²²So the water has been wholesome to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.

23 He went up from there to Bethel; and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, 'Go away, baldhead! Go away, baldhead!' ²⁴When he turned round and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. ²⁵From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and then returned to Samaria.

The Healing of Naaman

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favour with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. ²Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³She said to her mistress, 'If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.' ⁴So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ⁵And the king of Aram said, 'Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.'

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. ⁶He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, 'When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy.'⁷When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, 'Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.'

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, 'Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.'⁹So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. ¹⁰Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.'¹¹But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, 'I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy!¹²Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?' He turned and went away in a rage. ¹³But his servants approached and said to him, '**Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, "Wash, and be clean"?'¹⁴**So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant.'¹⁶But he said, 'As the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!' He urged him to accept, but he refused. ¹⁷Then Naaman said, 'If not, please let two mule-loads of earth be given to your servant; for your servant will no longer offer burnt-offering or sacrifice to any god except

the LORD. ¹⁸ But may the LORD pardon your servant on one count: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the LORD pardon your servant on this one count.' ¹⁹ He said to him, 'Go in peace.'

Gehazi's Greed

But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, ²⁰ Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, 'My master has let that Aramean Naaman off too lightly by not accepting from him what he offered. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something out of him.' ²¹ So Gehazi went after Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he jumped down from the chariot to meet him and said, 'Is everything all right?' ²² He replied, 'Yes, but my master has sent me to say, "Two members of a company of prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim; please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing."' ²³ Naaman said, 'Please accept two talents.' He urged him, and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and gave them to two of his servants, who carried them in front of Gehazi. ²⁴ When he came to the citadel, he took the bags from them, and stored them inside; he dismissed the men, and they left.

²⁵ He went in and stood before his master; and Elisha said to him, 'Where have you been, Gehazi?' He answered, 'Your servant has not gone anywhere at all.' ²⁶ But he said to him, 'Did I not go with you in spirit when someone left his chariot to meet you? Is this a time to accept money and to accept clothing, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves? ²⁷ Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you, and to your descendants for ever.' So he left his presence leprous, as white as snow.

The Miracle of the Axehead

6 Now the company of prophets said to Elisha, 'As you see, the place where we live under your charge is too small for us. ² Let us go to the Jordan, and let us collect logs there, one for each of us, and build a place there for us to live.' He answered, 'Do so.' ³ Then one of them said, 'Please come with your servants.' And he answered, 'I will.' ⁴ So he went with them. When they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. ⁵ But as one was felling a log, his axehead fell into the water; he cried out, 'Alas,

master! It was borrowed.’⁶ Then the man of God said, ‘Where did it fall?’ When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick, and threw it in there, and made the iron float.⁷ He said, ‘Pick it up.’ So he reached out his hand and took it.

The Aramean Attack Is Thwarted

8 Once when the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he took counsel with his officers. He said, ‘At such and such a place shall be my camp.’⁹ But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, ‘Take care not to pass this place, because the Arameans are going down there.’¹⁰ The king of Israel sent word to the place of which the man of God spoke. More than once or twice he warned such a place so that it was on the alert.

11 The mind of the king of Aram was greatly perturbed because of this; he called his officers and said to them, ‘Now tell me who among us sides with the king of Israel?’¹² Then one of his officers said, ‘No one, my lord king. It is Elisha, the prophet in Israel, who tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchamber.’¹³ He said, ‘Go and find where he is; I will send and seize him.’ He was told, ‘He is in Dothan.’¹⁴ So he sent horses and chariots there and a great army; they came by night, and surrounded the city.

15 When an attendant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. His servant said, ‘Alas, master! What shall we do?’¹⁶ He replied, ‘**Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than there are with them.**’¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed: ‘O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.’ So the LORD opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.¹⁸ When the Arameans came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, ‘Strike this people, please, with blindness.’ So he struck them with blindness as Elisha had asked.¹⁹ Elisha said to them, ‘This is not the way, and this is not the city; follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.’ And he led them to Samaria.

20 As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, ‘O LORD, open the eyes of these men so that they may see.’ The LORD opened their eyes, and they saw that they were inside Samaria.²¹ When the king of Israel saw them he said to Elisha, ‘Father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?’²² He answered, ‘No! Did you capture with your sword and your bow those whom you want to kill? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink; and let them go to their master.’²³ So he prepared for them

a great feast; after they ate and drank, he sent them on their way, and they went to their master. And the Arameans no longer came raiding into the land of Israel.

Ben-hadad's Siege of Samaria

24 Some time later King Ben-hadad of Aram mustered his entire army; he marched against Samaria and laid siege to it. ²⁵As the siege continued, famine in Samaria became so great that a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and one-fourth of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver. ²⁶Now as the king of Israel was walking on the city wall, a woman cried out to him, 'Help, my lord king!' ²⁷He said, 'No! Let the LORD help you. How can I help you? From the threshing-floor or from the wine press?' ²⁸But then the king asked her, 'What is your complaint?' She answered, 'This woman said to me, "Give up your son; we will eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow." ²⁹So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, "Give up your son and we will eat him." But she has hidden her son.' ³⁰When the king heard the words of the woman he tore his clothes—now since he was walking on the city wall, the people could see that he had sackcloth on his body underneath— ³¹and he said, 'So may God do to me, and more, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat stays on his shoulders today.' ³²So he dispatched a man from his presence.

Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. Before the messenger arrived, Elisha said to the elders, 'Are you aware that this murderer has sent someone to take off my head? When the messenger comes, see that you shut the door and hold it closed against him. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?' ³³While he was still speaking with them, the king came down to him and said, 'This trouble is from the LORD! Why should I hope in the LORD any longer?'

Additional Reading:

Other Reading: