

THE SPIRIT OF ELISHA

The prophet Elijah, and the spirit of Elijah, are spoken of much by believers, and rightly so. There is a wealth of truth and symbolism connected with that man of God. However, there seems to be little emphasis placed on Elisha who came after him, even though Elisha was the greater prophet, as we shall presently see, for I am convinced that even as Elijah stands as a foreshadowing of John the Baptist, who would be the messenger sent before the face of the Lord, so also this man Elisha is a mighty foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Himself, and a pattern for those who will attain to the adoption of mature sons in the age to come.

OPEN HEAVENS BY THE RIVER JORDAN

Let us first turn our attention to the two events by the Jordan that run parallel to each other. Firstly, we have Elisha seeing Elijah taken to heaven, before receiving a double portion of the prophet's spirit:

And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?"

Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."

¹⁰ So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." ¹¹ Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

¹² And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. ¹³ He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over. (2 Kings 2:9-14)

In the New Testament, we see another instance of the open heavens by the River Jordan, as Jesus is baptized by His forerunner, and the Spirit of God alights on Him.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

¹⁵ But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

¹⁶ When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He^[c] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and

alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-17)

It is important to note that from this point, John the Baptist decreases and Jesus increases, in a similar way that Elisha took up the mantle of Elijah. Up until this point, it could be said that the oracle of God was being given through John, but after this, the Word was truly among us.

John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ ²⁹ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease. (John 3:27-30)

THE ANOINTING

After Elijah has left the scene, we come to an event in the life of Elisha that has more than one parallel to Christ, that of the miraculous supply of oil:

Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; do not gather just a few. ⁴ And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones.”

⁵ So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured it out. ⁶ Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.”

And he said to her, “There is not another vessel.” So the oil ceased. (2 Kings 4:3-6)

This bears more than a passing resemblance to the miracle of turning the water into wine that was performed by Jesus, but with the liquid in question being oil in the Elisha account, I believe this more fully applies to the filling of the Spirit.

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord^[a] in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

THE LIFE GIVER

Continuing the prophetic foreshadowing of the coming Messiah, we see Elisha restoring life to a child:

When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. ³³ He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. ³⁴ And he went

up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm. ³⁵ He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. (2 Kings 4:32-35)

This of course is reminiscent of a later event in the life of Jesus:

When He came in, He said to them, “Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.”

⁴⁰ And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. ⁴¹ Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, “Talitha, cumi,” which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” ⁴² Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. (Mark 5:39-42)

THE HEAVENLY BREAD

Another sign that Elisha performs is that of miraculous provision, a prophetic picture of Christ, the true bread from heaven that is sufficient to feed every man.

Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, “Give it to the people, that they may eat.”

⁴³ But his servant said, “What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?”

He said again, “Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: ‘They shall eat and have some left over.’” ⁴⁴ So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD. (2 Kings 4:42-44)

This, of course, is also very similar to Jesus miraculously feeding the five thousand and then the four thousand, and His words concerning Himself as the fulfillment and antitype of the manna that was given in the wilderness.

Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

³⁵ And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. (John 6:32-35)

THE PURIFIER

We then come to another symbolic act in the life of Elisha, that of the cleansing of the leper:

Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean." (2 Kings 5:9-10)

Needless to say, this finds its New Testament parallels in both the washing of the blind man to restore his sight, but also in the cleansing of the ten lepers.

Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. ¹² Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. ¹³ And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

¹⁴ So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. (Luke 17:11-14)

But more than this, we know that the washing itself, shown also by the type of baptism, is a symbol for the removal of the filth of the flesh, those things that defile us spiritually. It speaks of sanctification and purifying.

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean." (John 8:8-11)

And in Ephesians we find that this washing is accomplished by the Word of God.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

THE HEAVENLY HOST

An extremely wondrous event in the life of Elisha is the revelation of the angelic hosts protecting him and his servant when the Syrians surrounded them at Dothan, which the servant is allowed to see:

And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”

¹⁶So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” ¹⁷And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:15-17)

The spiritual hosts were also for the service and protection of Jesus in the days of His flesh:

Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? (Matthew 26:53)

Not only this, but Christ Himself captains all of the armies of heaven:

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had^[e] a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean,^[f] followed Him on white horses. (Revelation 19:11-14)

THE RESURRECTION

In a final parallel, and one which is similar to the raising of the dead child, we find the bones of Elisha giving life even after he is dead:

Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the raiding bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year. ²¹So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band of raiders; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet. (2 Kings 13:20-21)

This, of course, foreshadows the triumph of Jesus Christ over death, the grave, and all things, and us receiving life by His sacrifice:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:20-22)

THE MATURING SONS

Beloved, in addition to all of the foreshadowing and parallels between Elijah/Elisha and John/Jesus, I believe there is a deep spiritual reality that applies to those who will overcome and receive placement as mature sons.

For surely the reality of Elijah and John is that even as they were messengers and forerunners of those who came after, surely they also are a symbol of the message itself. The message is received by us in the wilderness, even as John walked in those dusty places:

As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. ⁹ But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ For this is he of whom it is written:

‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’^[b]

¹¹ “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³ For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear! (Matthew 11:7-15)

There are times in the wilderness walk that it seems we are left utterly alone, as Elijah himself expressed when He spoke with the divine voice while in his own wilderness:

And he said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.” (1 Kings 19:14)

But what is it the Lord answered to this complaint?

Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” (1 Kings 19:18)

It is always a remnant that have not bowed the knee to Baal, and always a remnant that seeks to follow on to the fullness. It is indeed also a remnant that shall inherit the promises and partake in the honor of the first resurrection. This message received and processed in the wilderness is that of the overcoming sons, the promise of sharing fully in the inheritance of Jesus Christ and sitting with Him on His throne of glory. Christ Himself is the promised land, and the message is given in the wilderness, and the unclean nations of the flesh are thrust out that we may inherit the promises by faith:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give it.’ ² And I will send My Angel before

you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. (Exodus 33:1-2)

I am convinced that while we have the Spirit by measure, in the present age, and walk in the promise of the message we have received, we are as yet in the Elijah experience, and we await the open heavens and Spirit without measure that shall come in the fullness of time, which is the double portion of Elisha symbolizing the transcendent reality of the full manifestation of Christ in His body of sons, fashioned unto His likeness, the exact imprint and character of our divine Father. Amen!