

2 Kings 2

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[0 : 00] Let's go with me to 2 Kings chapter 2. 2 Kings chapter 2. As we just continue to make our way through, I know we have some that are, I think went to go see the movie tonight.

We'll have some that are just out of pocket, but we are together, so thankful for it. Let's open up with a word of prayer, and then we'll get right into our text with one another. So let's pray. God, we thank you so much for this day.

God, we just praise you for every opportunity we have, that we get to be in the word of God with one another. So Lord, we pray that you would lead and guide us as we look at it with one another.

Pray that we would be encouraged by it. I pray, Lord, as we study the historical writings of Scripture, that we see the consistency of God in this. We see your work and your movement, and Lord, that we would be available for you to take part in that labor.

Lord, we just ask that you be glorified and honored in all that takes place, and we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, 2 Kings chapter 2. I'll let you know this is an account in which we are, many of us are familiar with the departure of Elijah.

[1 : 09] Chronologically speaking, this is out of order in the book of 2 Kings, so we don't get caught up in that. The historical writings in Scripture are not always written chronologically.

We know from studying in 2 Chronicles that Elijah's departure is actually later on during another reign of one of the kings of the northern tribe of Israel.

But as far as the book of 2 Kings is concerned, we are transitioning to the ministry of Elisha. So the Lord moving the author of this book, wherever it is here, put this account at this place so that we make that transition into the ongoing ministry of Elisha.

But I want you to see this evening the prophet's call to glory in 2 Kings chapter 2. We will read the chapter in its entirety just because I believe it fits better their way, a little bit more cohesive as opposed to trying to break it apart.

It tells us, And it came about when the Lord was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.

[2 : 23] But Elisha said, As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you. So they went down to Bethel. And then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?

And he said, Yes, I know. Be still. Elijah said to him, Elisha, please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho. But he said, As the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will not leave you.

So they came to Jericho. The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today? And he answered, Yes, I know.

Be still. Then Elijah said to him, Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you. So the two of them went on.

Now fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite them at a distance while the two of them stood by the Jordan. Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters and they were divided here and there so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

[3 : 29] When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you. And Elisha said, Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me. And 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. As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them.

And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. Elisha saw it and cried out, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen. And he saw Elijah no more.

Then he took hold of his own clothes and he tore them into pieces. And he also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?

And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there and Elisha crossed over. Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho opposite him saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.

[4 : 36] And they came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him. And they said to him, Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men. Please let them go and search for your master. Perhaps the spirit of the Lord has taken him up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley.

And he said, You shall not send. But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, Send. Then they sent therefore fifty men and they searched three days but did not find him.

They returned to him while he was staying at Jericho and he said to them, Did I not say to you, Do not go? When the men of the city came to Elisha, Behold now, the situation of the city is pleasant as my Lord sees, but the water is bad and the land is unfruitful.

He said, Bring me a new jar and put salt in it. So they brought it to him and they went out to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have purified these waters.

There shall not be from their death or unfruitfulness any longer. So the waters have been purified to this day according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.

[5 : 42] Then when he went up from there to Bethel and he was going up by the way, young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, Go up, you baldhead, go up, you baldhead.

And when he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore up 42 lads of their number. He went from there to Mount Carmel and from there he returned to Samaria.

Here we see the prophet's call to glory, the departure of Elijah and the beginning of the prophetic ministry of Elisha. It's amazing really there's so much in this text.

We won't go too deep into it. We'll look at it and we'll see some applications there from it. But there's so much into it in context when we realize that this very man, Elijah, not too long in our scripture prior to this has been to a place where he was isolated, isolated himself.

If you remember when he came down from Mount Carmel he came down and he fled from the threats of Jezebel and he was there to the threats of Jezebel. He went to the south as he could go in the land of Israel and he went to the south of Judah and then he left his servant there and he went a little further out and he hid himself underneath a juniper tree or broom tree and he was just begging the Lord to die.

[6 : 57] If you remember he isolated himself, he was all alone, he was there and then he ended up going all the way to Mount Sinai and it's there that God reaffirmed his call to him and God reminded him that he was not alone.

Elijah's cry, I am alone. I'm the only one here. I'm the only one faithful. It is after that that he goes and he throws his mantle over Elisha and calls Elisha to join him in a really call to discipleship that Elisha is the teacher, Elisha is the disciple.

Apparently, from everything we see in text from that point on, Elisha is never again alone. He always has the grand sweet fellowship of Elisha. We see so much of this fellowship in this passage and the fact that it just really is a fellowship that endures.

It's one that continues on to the end and it's amazing the fellowship that is between these two individuals. It appears from our text that Elisha's repeated refrain for Elisha to stay behind is kind of one that is testing his commitment or his fellowship to him and Elisha is steadfast in this reality that he's going to be present when these matters take place.

But as we see this, I just want you to see four things very quickly tonight as we look at this prophet's call to glory. The first thing we see is there is a realized departure.

[8 : 18] That is, it came about when the Lord was about to take up Elisha by whirlwind. Very clearly, Elisha knew that his time had come.

It says that they left Gilgal. Warren Wiersbe said Gilgal is a place of new beginnings. We read it in scripture. We go there every time we go back there is something new about to take place and when you leave Gilgal it's a place of new beginnings.

Some people think that Gilgal is the original home place of Elisha and it is in this region that Elisha gets the word that it is time for him to leave and therefore he leaves this place but as he is on his way to go where the Lord is leading him and directing him he tells Elisha to remain behind.

There is this refrain that is repeated three times in the text as surely as the Lord lives and you live. Now in scripture we see these refrains quite often we see as surely as the Lord lives or we see them as surely as you live but we do not see them combined in this manner very often so it is a reiteration of the commitment of Elisha to Elijah.

That's why I say we are struck by the bond that God creates between these two men. when Elijah thought that he was the only one alone he gave him one that would stay with him until the very end and it is repeated each time that Elijah tells Elisha to stay behind he says remain here please he gives this same answer as surely as the Lord lives and as you live it is a double commitment to Elijah that Elisha is expressing that he will remain with him until the very end now we know this because it is not only Elijah that knows that his departure is at hand the second two places that they go when they get to the town of Bethel and then later when they get to the town of Jericho they are met in each of those locations by the sons of the prophets again it is just a reminder they are in the northern kingdom right they are in the region of the ungodly and they're moving further south for sure but it is in these regions that God always has his people and we'll see this refrain in this passage so much so that there are the sons of the prophets or the schools of the prophets that are being taught in the prophetic ministry of which

[10 : 46] Elijah was the first one to begin and these individuals come out and said to Elisha do you not know that your master will be taken from over you today is essentially saying that Elijah is the teacher Elisha is the disciple and that the teacher will be taken away now we see here Elijah knows that this is coming but also Elisha knows that it's coming and both companies of the sons of the prophets know this is coming but what we don't see in the text is that neither one of them other than the sons of the prophets coming up to Elisha and telling him something he already knows it seems that these revelations are given independently to each and every one of them so what's going on God is preparing his faithful people for the departure of Elijah right Elisha is aware of it the sons of the prophets are aware of it or those in the prophetic schools and

Elijah very much knows that it's coming God is speaking to his people and he's preparing them for this event that is about to take place this is a realized departure it is not something sure it happens suddenly as we see how it happens but it does not happen unannounced or unprepared God is speaking to his people Elisha stays with Elijah for he will not abandon him that was his cry that was Elijah's cry to God and God has met that cry that heart cry with the commitment of Elisha which leads us to the second thing there's this realized departure and since Elisha knows he's leaving he is committed even more so to him there is the removed prophet as they get to the Jordan River we have again this the Jordan river seems to be this place of testimonial signs and the parting of the waters in each place seems to be this testimonial signs right so when

Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt there's the parting of the Red Sea we have the confirmation of Joshua as he's leading the people into the promised land by the parting of the Jordan river here we now see that Elijah strikes the Jordan river with his mantle each time there's this repetition of crossing on dry ground God is affirming the reality of the succession of his faithful people and so they come to the Jordan river and they cross now the sons of the prophets the fifty men are on the other side they're watching they're on this mount and they're looking down and they're seeing from this high hill they're watching this whole event that takes place and it is here!

that Elijah asked Elisha this is a request that is in the line of the request of Solomon he's not asking for riches he's not asking for prestige he's asking for spiritual empowerment to be used of God and he asked for a double portion that just essentially means if the rest of these individuals are the sons of the prophet Elisha wants to be as the first born the first born in scripture receives!

the second born son who leaves his father and comes back and we're reading it through the book of Luke and Luke 15 and we see the parable of the prodigal son we are struck even more by the actions of the oldest son because the parable really is centered on the oldest son because he had already been given a double portion as to what his brother had yet he's pouting saying he hasn't been given anything. The firstborn in Old Testament time and New Testament time and scriptural time received a double portion of that of any other. And so what Elisha is requesting is to be in that place of succession. Having seen Elijah as his teacher and leader and he's committed himself. We are reminded when Elisha left his home, he left his inheritance, right? He said goodbye to mother and father. He killed the oxen. He burned the equipment and the implements he was using to offer a sacrifice. He left his inheritance behind. The worldly possessions probably would have been his because there were 12 yoke of oxen with him and servants, his servants with him. So he evidently, Elisha was a place of prestige according to the world standards, but yet he committed himself so much to this individual, Elisha, because of the Lord's calling. And he asked for this and Elisha says, well, that's a hard thing to ask for. Nevertheless, if you see my departure, then you can have it. If you don't see my departure, you know the account.

[15 : 45] But we are struck about how sudden this removal comes because it says, as they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared the chariots of fire and horses of fire and Elisha was taken up.

It's astounding. It's, we are again, encountering the second individual in scripture. Enoch walked with God and was not for God took him. And now Elisha is walking with Elisha as they are fellowshiping over the union that God has put between these two men and their fellowship with one another. And God took him. He is removed. So we have now this departure of God's man who has been so faithful. Now we stop right here to say, even though their fellowship was so strong and their bond was so great, there could not have been two men that were more different than Elisha and Elisha. Do not let the similarities of their names imply that they are very similar individuals. Elisha is a prophet of fire, right? He's a prophet. He kind of calls down fire all the time. People are consumed. Elisha, other than the account we have recorded for us at the end of this chapter, seems to be much more a prophet of, not of peace, but he is a much more peaceful prophet. He is not so much a prophet of judgment, but he is a prophet of word. Their mannerisms seem to be so different. Elisha doesn't seem to get caught up in, well, let's just put it this way. Elisha is the Peter drawing the sword.

Elisha is the John leaning upon the bosom of the savior. Okay. There there's your comparison, but God uses each one of them in such a powerful way in a mighty portion. Elisha, you know, the text tells us, sees this departure, proclaims it. He acknowledges it. He says, my father, my father, the church of Israel and his horsemen. And he saw Elijah no more.

So that which God had confirmed to them now was being witnessed by him. He sees this removal of the prophet. But now we come to kind of an aside that's not really in, it's in the text, but it's not of the text. And that is, we see here number three, that Elijah's departure really ensures a reserved voice. So there's a realized departure, a removed prophet and a reserved voice.

Historically speaking, Elijah leaves the scene of history here. Biblically speaking, we continue to read of Elijah over and over and over and over again. The book of Malachi tells us that Elijah would go as a forerunner before the coming savior. We are told that John the Baptist comes in the power and spirit of Elijah preparing the way of the Lord. But we hear Elijah speaking again on the Mount Transfiguration. It is on the Mount of Transfiguration immediately after the confession of Peter, when Jesus took with him, Peter, James, and John up to the mountain, he is transfigured before them. If you remember, there were two other people there. There was Moses and Elijah. And we are told in Matthew and Mark that Moses and Elijah are speaking with Jesus.

[19:00] But we are told in Luke, the gospel of Luke of what they were talking about with Jesus. And it's astounding when we see that Elijah is now speaking again. Elijah is a mount is a prophet of the mountains.

If you look, he's always up on a hill somewhere, right? And he's always near fire. So we understand this here, this radiating glory of the savior is coming on that mountain and Elijah is there and they're speaking with Jesus. So this voice has been reserved until we get to that point in the new Testament. And we hear Elijah again, it tells us that Moses and Elijah are speaking with Jesus.

And I love how the text says it in the gospel of Luke concerning his departure. He was about to accomplish from Jerusalem. So they are speaking with him concerning his departure that he was about to accomplish from Jerusalem. That is, they were talking about how he was about to leave this world.

Now there could not have been two men more fitting to speak to the savior about his coming departure. Moses, we know dies on the mountain somewhere. He dies and no one ever finds his body because the Bible tells us that God buried his body and no one knows where it is. We are told that God had hid the body of Moses. Elijah is a man who is taken and his body is nowhere to be found. Both of these two individuals had rather dramatic departures from this life. Moses won by natural way of death, but yet his body was hidden. Elijah won by supernatural taking up without seeing death. And he was taken through the, by the whirlwind with the chariots of fire and the horses of fire. Both of these are speaking to the savior about his soon coming departure in the gospel of Luke. But it is astounding when we realize that Jesus will leave, not because someone takes him, men will bury him, but he will come out of that grave, right? He will come out and he will ascend to the father after showing himself alive. So he will experience death, but he will leave alive. He will be dead and buried, but he will come back alive and leave this earth. The accomplished departure will be a departure very much alive. And he will be taken up, it says, in the clouds. And he will go to the father in heaven, which we read of even Elijah being taken up to. And we will see that he is taken there, that Jesus has taken there, and we are awaiting his return. Now, this reserved voice, I believe, is the prophet that we find in the book of Revelations, when you have the two prophets that are prophesying for a number of days.

I could be off on this, and that's okay. This is not a major stone issue. This is just one of my, this is something we can share on Sunday nights. It's not a big rock thing. I believe that when we get to the book of Revelations, that the two prophets, the two witnesses that we have that are publicly speaking, that they are slain, they're dead, and they're left out in the open for three days, and they come back alive, that those two prophets are more than, I think they're Enoch and Elijah. And the reason, I believe, is because these are the two men we have in Scripture that never see death. And the Bible tells us it is appointed unto man once to die. And so, if it is appointed unto all men once to die, and these two men never saw death, then it only seems fitting that their appointment would be at the end of the age that is in the book of Revelation. So, their death comes very much later on in history. God calls them to himself and sends them back until they experience death, much like we would. I could be wrong in that, but it seems to make sense as I study Scripture. And we can find that consistency in the reality that, again, when we open up the Old Testament, there is much speech, and there is much word about the coming of Elijah to prepare the way. John the Baptist did not literally fulfill that.

[22 : 59] He came in the power and the Spirit. But if you go to the book of Revelations, those two prophets or those two prophetic voices are literally preparing the way of the coming day of the Lord, not the day of redemption, but the day of judgment, which is in line with the prophetic ministry of Elijah.

So, why did God take him the way he did? Because he is a reserved voice. I don't believe that God is through with him, yet we know in Scripture he's not through with him because he is also standing on the Mount of Transfiguration. And he is speaking there a testimonial word about the way in which the Savior would leave. We see a realized departure. We see a removed prophet. We see a reserved voice.

But fourth and finally, we see a retained witness. Elijah has just been taken to the Father. What a great and grand voice Elijah has been. Elijah is not the first prophet, but he is kind of the founder of the prophetic ministry of judgment. He is a prophet of judgment. He is the first one that God calls to really go public in his declaration against the sins of the people and to be a prophet that not only speaks what will happen, but he is the first we meet in Scripture that God backs up what he says through the actions and the called down judgments. God affirms him and use him.

God had used him in a mighty way. And now Elijah is gone. Elijah is taken away at a very critical time in the nation of Israel, the northern kingdom, because there's still very, very much wickedness going on.

They are a number of years removed from the Assyrians coming in and leading them away into captivity. But God still is calling out to his people. He still has a word to his people.

[24 : 52] But God is not left wanting of people and men and women to use. God always, as we say over and over again, Scripture, God always has his man. We see it because Elisha is there. He sees this. He picks up the mantle. He sees what is going on and he wants to know, did God answer his prayer? Again, we go back to the Jordan River. It seems that rivers and departing of rivers is always a testimony to the individual that God is with them. And it is here that we see the reality that while Elijah may be gone, Elisha's cry, where is the Lord, the God of Elijah? And he strikes the Jordan and it parts.

Elijah may be gone, but the God of Elijah is not gone. God removes people in history. God removes people in time and space, but God himself is not removed. The same God who empowered those in the past is the same God who empowers those today. God is never left in wanting because he always retains his witness to a rebellious people. God has his witness. Though men may deny them, men may despise them, God has them. Very quickly, Elisha reaffirms for us that God still has his witness present.

He tells them not to look for Elijah as they do. There's just some side notes there that they should not have listened to him, but they did. They didn't. They wanted, they should have listened to him, but they didn't. And they kept begging him, but he knew that he was gone. But then we see again, this reaffirmation when the men of the city said to Elisha, behold, now the situation of the city is pleasant as my Lord sees, but the water is bad and the land is unfruitful. We have this purifying of the water with a new jar and salt. That is, this is being made new. And then we see this scene that seems to be odd at the end of the chapter that when he went up from there and he went to Bethel. Now, where's Bethel? Bethel is the seat of the calf worshiping in the Northern kingdom. Remember that, right? It's the seat of where the golden calf was set up and they were worshiping very close to Judah, but it's not quite there. It's actually on the way to Jerusalem, but it's here that we begin to have this false worship. And it says, and young lads came out from the city. Now, young lads, many Bible scholars tell you are defined as young boys or young men from the age of 12 to the mid thirties. Okay. So they are at the age of accountability. If we want to put it that way, they knew better, especially in that culture in that time. Scripture tells us that to be gray haired is to be wise. I'm leaning more and more on that one every day, but to be called bald headed was to be an affront and to be an open mockery. So they weren't just joking around. They were ridiculing the prophet of God, knowingly, willingly in their culture, casting ridicule upon him. And in case we fail to realize that God's power still rests upon his people, even after the departure of Elijah, we see that he looks behind him and he saw them and he cursed them in the name of the Lord. It says two female bears came from out of the woods and tore up 42 lads of their numbers. The wording here does not necessarily imply that they died.

And if they didn't die, there are at least 42 individuals who had a very vibrant memory of the reality that God still has his person. Even after Elijah is gone, there's a very visible ministry and a very visible realization to the people of Bethel that God will not be mocked. That sure, Elijah may be gone. He who could call down fire and consume the 50 and the captain of the fifties may be gone, but there's still Elisha. The retained witness is there. God still has his man in history, still has his man in time. And what we will find as we continue to read the historical works of scripture is that God continues to speak to his people until the very end. God does not leave himself without witness.

It's astounding even when we get to the book of Malachi, we enter into the intertestament time where God is silenced for 400 plus years. But even in that silence, God was testifying or testifying to his people if we look at, if we study our intertestament years, while he may not have had an individual arise and continue to speak to the people in a public fashion, the witness was still there. They had the law and the customs and the temple and the worship, all those things. They were still there. We see it. And then we see what God speaks again. One of the grandest things that I ever find when we open up the New Testament is the very thing God says when he breaks the silence after 400 years is the same thing he said last, right before he went silent. In the book of Malachi, he speaks about the coming one who will prepare the way of the Lord. Zacharias is in the temple. The angel of the Lord says to Zacharias, your wife's about to have the son and he will be the coming one who will prepare the way of the Lord.

[30 : 23] the witness is consistent. The consistency of God strikes us even though we have the change of people.

Elijah has been called to glory. Elisha has taken his place. But the consistency, these two men could not have been more different. But the consistency is found in the Lord God whom they serve. We have a God who is a consistent God who keeps his witness consistent and he does not fail to show it to a world that's living in rebellion. And we see it recorded for us here very clearly in 2 Kings chapter 2. Let's pray. We'll be out of here fairly quickly. I'm so thankful for your time this evening. So let's pray. God, we thank you so much.

We thank you for your goodness. We thank you for your mercy. And we thank you for your love. God, more than all of that, we thank you for your consistency. We thank you then in scripture.

We meet you as a faithful God, a gracious God who does not fail to give witness to a world that's even walking in rebellion. So we realize that we may be living as some say in the days of Elijah, where the world is living in open rebellion. But Lord, we also realize that in the midst of that, you still have your people, your men and women who will be witnesses to your glory, to your grace, and to your mercy. Oh God, thank you. Thank you for calling us to yourself. Thank you that the God of Elijah is just as present today as he ever has been. We thank you, oh God, that we do not necessarily need testimonial signs and wonders as we have the certainty and the confidence of scripture.

We thank you for the privilege that it is to study it together. We thank you for the communion and fellowship of the saints. Pray that you would use us and empower us this week to keep our eyes focused on the savior. Be with us, Lord. Help us to be testimonies to your glory.

[32 : 25] And we ask it all in Jesus name. Amen. Guys, thank you so much. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen.