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ELISHA, THE MAN OF GOD

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study #2 The Spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha

Reading: 2 Kings 2:1-18

My dear brethren and sisters and young people.

We went with Elijah from mount Horeb, we followed him right up the peninsula of Sinai, up the Arabah or the Jordan valley, as it's better known, up to the north part of Odeli, to the meadow of the dancing, where of course, he called upon that very young man, Elisha, to follow him in the work of the truth, and reminding him of the privileges and responsibilities of that wonderful calling, and he received an immediate response. And that young man left all of this world's goods, burnt them, and followed in his master's footsteps and became associated with him for those 10 years, silent years as far as Elisha was concerned, because we hear nothing of him during those 10 years, but this we know, that he was ever there and was known as 'he who poured water on the hands of Elijah'. An intimate, and very faithful servant, one who grew very close to his master and despite their differing personalities and circumstances of life, the two of them had welded such a bond of friendship, b&s and young people, that it took the Spirit of God to divide them finally, that He might take one away and leave one to carry on the work to which he'd been called. And we reviewed some of those characteristics of these two men, and no doubt many of you were somewhat surprised to see the great contrast that existed there; and it was the influence of the still small voice of truth, of course, that welded those two men together. And they needed welding together, because there was a great work to be done; and I believe, b&s, that Elijah's instructions to Elisha, in those ten years, would have been an immense value to Elisha because Elijah, remember this, at that stage had been divinely educated in the principles of the still small voice, he now knew where the real power laid, and although it was too late in his ministry to put that in effect, he would have carefully and studiously inculcated those principles into that young man, who stepped into his shoes and had done such a marvellous work in upholding the truth, in a difficult age. And we're going to talk about that age now because I want you to have a look at what was going on around them, in order that we may appreciate, b&s, the difficulties that faced these two men, particularly Elisha.

You know the times of Elijah, when the prophet Micah in his 6th chapter and 16th verse said, 'for the statues of Omri are kept and all the works of the house of Ahab' and because of that says the prophet, 'reproach hath come upon my people'. The statutes of Omri and the works of the house of Ahab, and of course, Omri, b&s, was the father of Ahab. He commenced a new dynasty in Israel, he moved the capital of the kingdom

from Tirzah to Samaria which, of course, commands the central lands of the Land of Israel, the central highlands of Israel there! He moved the capital to Samaria and if ever you could go to Samaria as I had the privilege to do, you would understand why Omri moved his capital there, and although Omri taught these statutes which tore the heart out of Israel, nonetheless b&s, according to this world's wisdom, he was not lacking in it. He was a very industrious man, was Omri, a very cunning man and he chose the hill of Samaria which is isolated from the other hills of Samaria by broad valleys, and commands a position of strategy north, south, east and west, second to none in the hills of central Samaria. And having moved his capital there, he strengthened his kingdom, and along comes his son Ahab and inherits that strong position. Brought his girlfriend, Jezebel, there and introduced into Israel dynamite! and tore the heart out of that nation.

And, b&s, that influence didn't stop! With all the miracles of Elijah it didn't stop; and if the still small voice was a power for good, Jezebel was a power for evil, second to none! She was absolutely dynamite, and those of you who were here last year and saw how her character was painted by the Word of God, would understand what sort of a woman she was. Not even a dog would touch her hand, her feet or her head, a dog wouldn't eat her! and we went through the scriptures on that and showed what the scriptures said about dogs, how that a dog will return unto his own vomit but it couldn't come to the hands of Jezebel. Now that's one of the most awful indictments upon any person that you'll find in the scriptures of truth, that a dog wouldn't touch her hands, her feet or her skull because her hands were there to shed innocent blood, her feet were swift to run to mischief, and with that brain that she had, she thought up all those terrible schemes, b&s, that tore the heart out of that nation. And there's no more blazing indictment anywhere in the Word of God than the fact that dogs wouldn't touch those three parts of her body. And Ahab brought that into Israel; and the influence of that woman didn't stop because Elijah performed a few miracles. She was too crafty for that! and whilst many of the nation might have been frightened, b&s, into obedience temporarily, she never gave up hope and she worked insidiously behind the scenes and saw that the works of the house of Ahab were still done.

And this was the situation into which Elisha walked, and he ministered mainly in the reign of her son, Jehoram. And when you come to this period of history, following on the decease of Ahab, and then the short reign of his son, Ahaziah, who only reigned for 2 years. He was the king who sent down to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, the lord of flies; the lord of flies, an Israelite sending to the lord of flies to be healed, and with his messengers being stopped by a man with a shaggy mane who said, 'Listen, isn't there a God in Israel that you can go to that you should go to the lord of the dung heap?' And that's as wild as that house had got; he was the one that Elijah indicted, and who fell through his roof and died. And then Jehoram came upon the scene, he was not the son of Ahaziah, he was his brother, he was the son of Ahab, because Ahaziah had no children. And Jehoram succeeded him and reigned for 12 years. And in this period it is easy to be confused because down in Israel strangely enough the son of Jehoshaphat who was contemporary with Ahab, when Jehoshaphat removed himself from the scene, of course, Jehoram his son reigned. And there was a Jehoram in Judah and a Jehoram in Israel; and there was an Ahaziah who followed Jehoram as well as an Ahaziah in

Israel. Why do they have the similarity in names? Why do you find those similarities in names? There's a good reason for that, I should say a reason, it's not a good reason, but there's a reason why there's a similarity in names there and we will see that in a moment.

So there in the reign of Jehoram of Israel, and Jehoshaphat and Jehoram of Judah, Elisha, of course, performed the main part of his miracles, the main part of his ministry was in the times of those kings. And these kings Jehoram, b&s, he followed on in the works of the house of Ahab. Ah, of course, he made some reforms, his name means 'Yahweh hath exalted' Jehoram, Yahoram, Yahweh had exalted him, Elisha had another name for him, he called him 'a son of a murderer'. That's what he called him, the son of a murderer and that's what he was, and that's how Elisha addressed him. He had little time did Jehoram; we'll see later on when Jehoram approached him about a certain problem, Elisha said to him, 'get to the prophets of your mother or your father and see what they've got to say about it'. That's the amount of respect that Elisha paid a man like that; but he made some reforms as we read in 2 Kings in chapter 3 and in verse 2 concerning Jehoram, 'that he wrought evil in the sight of Yahweh; but not like his father and his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made'. He made some attempt at reform, b&s, for what reason we know not because although he put away the image of Baal which his father had made, Baal worship flourished in his age and generation. So by the time Jehoram's reign finished, the whole of Israel was saturated with Baal worship, and the whole time he was on his throne, he had as his advisor, his illustrious mother, Jezebel; he was the son of a murderer. And she was a murderer and Ahab was a murderer, and that's what Elisha called him, and he followed on in the ways of his father and his mother, not to the same extremes because he wasn't as good at it as they were! And he took away the image of Baal but everywhere all over that land, there was Baal worship.

There were times, b&s, however, that he seemed to get on very well with Elisha, and like his father Ahab, who was a wobbler, that's how the scriptures describe him, 'a wobbler', he didn't know which way to go, he sort of had a feeling the truth was the truth, you know, but then there was his wife, and that was another question, and he didn't know, you know, he was moved by the truth but then of course, there were times when he was moved by his wife. And he became halting between two opinions and Jehoram was like that! Oh, yes, he took away the image of Baal but he had no intentions of removing the immorality in Israel. There were times when Elisha showed him no respect whatsoever, and yet there were times, b&s, when he and Elisha were on the best of terms, and I believe Elisha would have done all in his power to help him; and we learn from several references and the inferences that are there, that Elisha was on the best of terms at times with Jehoram and could have influenced him, had he been a man ready to be influenced. But he wasn't, and you know, b&s, he met his end in a most remarkable fashion; he only reigned for 12 years and as I said before, it was during his reign of 12 years that Elisha performed most of his miracles. But he met his end in accordance with the terms of the prophecy of Elijah and you remember the occasion when Ahab having murdered Naboth was walking in his vineyard, probably taking in all the fragrance from the occasion, when suddenly he came across Elijah in that vineyard.

And that awful prophecy of doom was put upon him that where the blood of Naboth had been spilt, there the dogs would lick his blood; and in the garden with Ahab was a man called Jehu who overheard all of that! And in the end of the life of Jehoram, b&s, it was the man Jehu who was raised up by God to remove the house of Ahab from Israel, that finally brought Jehoram to his end. When Jehoram had gone down south to fight a war with his nephew, Ahaziah, and they teamed up together, Ahaziah of Judah and Jehoram of Israel and they'd been fighting a battle together and Jehoram was wounded. And of course, being wounded he took to his chariot and went to Jezreel, and Ahaziah came up to see him, to see how he was getting on, they were wonderful friends, they believed the same things. They were in unity, it wasn't a unity of BASF it was a unity of Ef-baal, of the Phoenicians, for greed, a wonderful religion (do as you like, licence to do anything, immorality was one of the rights of this religion); they didn't have any disagreements, and of course, Ahaziah went north to see his relation up there lying on a bed of sickness and they were in Jezreel.

And they were in the spot where the awful words of Elijah had hollered over the head of Ahab; but Ahab's blood wasn't licked up, b&s, in Jezreel, they took Ahab to Samaria and they washed his blood in the pool where the harlots washed. That was fitting; they washed his chariot out in the pool where harlots went to wash and the blood of Ahab was mingled with the desecrations of that crowd; that was fitting, but his blood wasn't licked up by the dogs in Jezreel because he humbled himself, and Yahweh said, 'I will not bring it to pass in his days but in the days of his son. And here comes Jehu driving across the fords of Jordan and up the plain leading up to the plain of Jezreel, up past Beth Shan up with mount Gilboa and Tabor on the right, and driving up that plain he came to Jezreel, and the two kings see him coming. They send a messenger out, 'is it peace?' PEACE, PEACE as long as your mother lives? Never', and they went to meet him in order that they might bring about a peaceful settlement. Jehu said, 'I'll give you a peaceful settlement' and as soon as they saw him draw his bow, Jehoram pulled his chin up and ran in the opposite direction! Too late, too late, and the arrow of Jehu went through, b&s, straight through him. PLUNK! and they took him back and he died in the plot of Naboth's vineyard, and the dogs came and licked his blood. And the awful words of Elijah were fulfilled. Ahaziah got a bit further but not far, and Jehu caught up with him too! and in one fell swoop, b&s, he just took the house of Ahab out of Israel and Judah, like that! And there was the man that Elisha had to deal with, in all his dealings in Israel.

Now, b&s, down in Judah there was a good king on the throne, Jehoshaphat, who of course, was contemporary with Jehoram for a good deal of time. And it is absolutely remarkable to see how that time and time again, Jehoshaphat got himself tangled up with the house of Ahab. Now you can't understand except on this score, that Jehoshaphat was a big-hearted man; he was a warm-hearted man, he loved Yahweh and Yahweh loved him and they worked together in co-operation. He was a tremendous man of faith, b&s, he went out to face an army, a confederated host enormous in number, and he went out to fight them with trumpets. With trumpets, mind you, because he thought by playing the music of the psalms and singing and praising Yahweh, that Yahweh would fight his battles, and He did! and he won wonderful and notable victory

because he was a man of faith. But he had incredible failings in the way that he got tangled up with the house of Ahab, and in that way was brought into relationship with Elisha. I want you to have a brief look at some of the things that Jehoshaphat did, and let us learn this lesson, that he that thinketh he standeth, take heed how he falls. Look at the way he got tangled up with the house of Ahab.

Now in 2 Chronicles 18 and verse 1, b&s, we have a remarkable statement, now I want to illustrate in these few references the way that Jehoshaphat foolishly compromised his position with the house of Ahab. He had no need to, b&s, by the way, Jehoshaphat's name means 'the judgment of Yahweh', Jehoshaphat, Yahweh's judgment; and you know, when he was brought into relationship with Elisha, Elisha was introduced to him as Elisha the son of Shaphat, deliberately introduced in that way, because when he was standing with Jehoram on a certain occasion and they wished to speak to Elisha, and Elisha showed no respect for Jehoram, he was introduced to Jehoshaphat as Elisha the son of Shaphat. In their names they had the same name as far as Elisha's father was concerned in the latter part of Jehoshaphat's name, 'the judgment of Yahweh', and here is 'the salvation of God' coupled with 'the judgment of Yahweh'. And he was introduced quite deliberately in the record as Elisha the son of Shaphat to Jehoshaphat. Now look what this man did, with all his faith and knowledge, look what he did in 2 Chronicles 18 and verse 1 we read, 'Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab'. Now when you look at that word, 'joined affinity' b&s, the word literally means 'he married him'. He married himself to Ahab, now later on marriage came into it, but not at this stage, and yet the word of God says, 'he married into the house of Ahab'; he did this of course, through one of his sons, but ever before that happened, he had made a contract of marriage with the house of Ahab, and that's how Rotherham renders that verse, he joined with Ahab in marriage, says Rotherham. And you know, b&s, in the 7th chapter of Deuteronomy and at verse 3, Moses warned the children of Israel that they were never to contract marriages with the people of Canaan, and Ahab was worse than the people of Canaan, because he was in the truth! He should have known better, and this man joined affinity with him. He was big-hearted, he wanted to do what was right doubtless, he wanted to try, I suppose, to weld the nation together, but he didn't understand, b&s, the awful power of Jezebel. He didn't understand that, he didn't see until the latter part of his life, that she had a desperate hold on Judah and it was all that he could do to hold that nation together, let alone make contracts with the house of Israel. And when, of course, Ahab went into battle and he said to Jehoshaphat as they went to run off Gilead into battle with the heathen, Ahab invited Jehoshaphat to go and Jehoshaphat said, 'my people are as thy people, my horses as thy horses'. What a foolish statement and he was rebuked by that, b&s, in the 19th chapter of this book and the 2nd verse by a man named Jehu (not the Jehu who slew Jehoram) but Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to king Jehoshaphat, 'Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate Yahweh? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD'. Shouldest thou help them that hate the LORD, shouldest thou join affinity with the ungodly, says Jehu, Jehoshaphat you ought to know better but he didn't you know, and what happened at that battle, b&s? Ahab lost his life and all Israel was scattered upon the mountains like sheep having no shepherd, in accordance with the prophecy of Micaiah and Jehoshaphat was sent home

in frustration. It ended in ruin as far as he was concerned, bar they that came out of that, came right out of that; he never learnt that lesson, b&s.

We come to 2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 35 we read here, 'And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel who did very wickedly. And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-geber. Then Eliezar the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish'. So he entered into a commercial enterprise and look what he did! He entered into a commercial enterprise with the northern kingdom to build ships down in Ezion-geber, which of course, meant that the industry of the north was coupled with the industry of the south because Ezion-geber is right down south, which meant that the technicians of those days, the ship builders, the mariners, people that are involved in this work would be moving through Judah (dangerous people) tainted with Jezebel and all her works. But Yahweh broke that fleet in half, broke it to smithereens, and Ahaziah came back and said to Jehoshaphat 'what about having another go at it?' Oh, no! once is enough! and he wisely put that aside. You would have thought that he would have learnt, b&s, but he didn't!

In the 21st chapter of 2 Chronicles and verse 5, it speaks of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat of Judah, 'Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife'. The daughter of Ahab to wife, he had a daughter of Jezebel mark you! and now, b&s, the house of Jehoshaphat is literally married to the house of Israel. And what was the result of that? Let the Christadelphian community take this into account! We state strongly on occasions and brethren say 'they're extremists you know! You know, they sort of exaggerate, it's not necessary to do this or that!' Isn't it? Let's be warned, b&s and young people, look what you've got here, have a look at this camp. Who wants to lose it? this is the grandest thing on the earth as far as we're concerned; not simply this camp but camps like it. There are other good gatherings in this land at this time of the year, all splendid gatherings on the basis of the truth, who wants to lose them? Well, if you want to lose it, just invite a few Athaliahs in! and believe me, there are plenty of them! and this woman Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, the beauty queen of Jezreel, who thought she could overcome the wrath of Jehu by painting her face (as if cosmetics could do the job!) She...aware of it, and this woman was no different, and the result of that marriage, my dear b&s and young people, was absolutely horrible. You've got no idea until you read that record and what happened, because when her son Ahaziah, Jehoram married Athaliah, and when her son Ahaziah reigned on the throne of Israel for 1 short year; (and they were slain, of course, with Jehoram together, they were slain by Jehu), it left the field wide open for Athaliah; and she sat upon the throne of Judah, could you imagine it, and she sat over the house of David! over the royal kingdom of Yahweh, Athaliah, and for how long? 6 years. It could have been 6-6-6 for that matter, and in that 6 years that woman put to the sword, everybody that would threaten her power. And had it not been for the intervention of Yahweh, my dear b&s and young

people, had it not been for a merciful God who was determined to keep His purpose moving in the earth, by hiding a little baby boy behind a curtain, she would have slain the whole of the seed royal, and the line of David would have come to a sudden end. And where would the promises of God have been? but the providence of God was too much, and the slender thread, the life of a little boy, Jehoash, hidden by his nurse, as that brutal, murderous woman swept through the house of Judah. He was saved alive but for 6 devastating years, that woman wrought havoc in the house of Judah, and all the time, b&s, all the time Hazael, 'God was seen', but it was by the 'salvation of God' Elisha; 'Nimshi' pulling out of all that, people who were to be saved, the 7,000 in Israel who hadn't bowed their knees to Baal. And the weapon He was using against that onslaught of fleshly power, was the still small voice in the mouth of Elisha, pulling them out of this dreadful holocaust that was sweeping through the Land. What a shocking business it was, b&s, at that time.

You know, Jehoshaphat never learnt the lesson then, because Jehoram was co-regent with him when he married Athaliah; and Jehoshaphat and Jehoram reigned together for two or three years. And it was during that time, b&s, that once again Jehoram in the north invited Jehoshaphat to join him in battle, and he went again! You wouldn't read about things like that, but you do in the bible, but he went again, and again he came to a sticky end where everything ended in frustration and disaster, as Jehoram invited him to go to battle against the Moabites. Jehoshaphat almost lost his own life, and the life of the men of Judah; the battle finished in frustration and they went home without accomplishing its purpose. And once again he was rebuked, b&s, this time by Elisha but the implication was he was rebuking Jehoshaphat for the foolishness of joining affinity with the house of Ahab. And there's a lesson here for us! You come with me to 2 Chronicles chapter 17, come back a few chapters.

When Jehoshaphat first came to the throne what did he do? 'And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and he strengthened himself against Israel' (a very wise policy). 'And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken'. And when Jehoshaphat came to the throne, b&s and young people, he strengthened himself against Israel, but what did he do? he went and built physical forts, he built forts around the northern aspect of his kingdom so that he stretched a line of forts right across the north here; he had all these forts right across between Israel and Judah, and he was going to keep Israel out. And he was going to keep Jezebel out by force of arms, by bows and arrows; but she's not worried about bows and arrows, she came through the best door! And he let her in, and what was the good, b&s, of all these forts upon all the mounts of Judaea, what was the good of them? when Athaliah got in the back door, married his son, and devastated the land! And we do the same thing, we strengthen ourselves as a community and today we have to do it more than ever before, we're always saying this, and because we're always saying it, of course, exhortation falls upon deaf ears. We're being told again, b&s, it's coming; it's coming, there have been waves of it through the brotherhood, there's always been trouble. There will always be trouble until the coming of our Lord; who wants to lose this Easter camp? who wants to lose our young people? Who wants to lose what we've got? I don't! I reckon this is grand; well

then, b&s and young people, we've got to strengthen ourselves but it's no good; it's no good holding up the bible as a fortress, if the book is closed. It's no good saying we meet on the BASF if nobody understands what's inside the covers of the BASF! It isn't any good brethren saying, 'Ah, we all agree on the same thing', if nobody understands what that same thing is. We've got to get down and open that book; we've got to get down and understand what are the principles of truth, so that every member of our community, as far as the fundamentals of the truth are concerned, know and accept them as a way of life in baptism, but are re-educating themselves all the time on those principles, that immediately there is any deviation in whatsoever form, they recognize it for what it is, and fight with all their strength to convert the person first, and if they can't do that, make sure they don't influence others. And if that's taking a party line, I'm guilty! We're jealous, b&s, of what we've got, because God has given it to us; we haven't done it! He's given us a wonderful heritage; we've got a marvellous heavenly Father, an absolutely wonderful heavenly Father, b&s, we don't appreciate that, He's given into our hands the jewels of truth, He's given us each other; He's given to us on loan, all these brethren and sisters. You're mine and I'm yours and we're going to be jealous of each other! And there are movements all over the world and in the brotherhood of Australia that will divide us on questions, far bigger questions of faith than here in this city can accomplish, and we're going to be on our guard, b&s, that we know what the principles of truth are! and like Jehoshaphat, learn the lesson of Jehoshaphat. Never mind about building forts to shoot people to death, we're going to get down to educating ourselves in the Word of God, and to make sure that we're not going to introduce into our ranks that which will tear us apart. But by all means within our power, as much as lies within our power, what we're going to do is this; we're going to build up a community who knows what they believe, who recognizes truth for what it is, and the value of it, and who knows error and the danger of it, and who are going to jealously guard that, and at the same time, are going to go out of their way in kindness to others, to shuffle them into a position in Israel where everybody has protection. And within the orbit of those majestic fundamentals, we'll grow up together as a community, that's tremendous! And that's how I see the truth, I don't know how you see it; as our eyes see it, b&s, and I spend my hours thinking about that, that this is what I want; I'm a single man, I do a lot of things wrong, but I want that! because I need you and you need me, we all need each other, and we're going to guard that, and let's learn the lesson of Jehoshaphat, and we're not going to make marriages, that are going to be detrimental to the things for which we stand. We're going to do the right thing!

And what did Elisha do? That was the background in which he worked, so he came along with a different spirit than Elijah; Elijah came along and thought, 'now if I get a bulldozer and start from Dan to Beer-sheba and push them all into the Mediterranean, then I'm cleaning the land up, and we can have peace! But it didn't work, see, because no sooner had he run the 15 miles from Carmel into those gates at Jezreel in triumph, than the next day he was running for his life from a woman! See, it didn't work; but Elisha didn't tackle the problem like that, b&s, no more should we tackle the problem like that! We know what we've got to do, and Elisha knew what he had to do; so what did he do? You find him immediately in association with a group called the sons of the prophets, and who were they? Well, first of all, let me introduce to you their leader, the

man who initiated a group called the sons of the prophets, and who undoubtedly set this machinery going, as a little study group in Israel. And that man, of course, was Samuel.

Now I want you to have a look at some of the references, b&s, concerning Samuel. In the 3rd chapter of Acts and verse 24 we learn this about Samuel, we read, 'Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken have likewise foretold of these days'. Notice the phraseology here, all the prophets from Samuel, was Samuel the first prophet? No; Abraham was a prophet, the record of scripture says that, and there were prophets before Samuel, but there's something about Samuel that starts off a chain of prophets; he was 'all the prophets from Samuel and onwards'. Now you take a look at the 13th chapter of Acts and verse 20 where we read, 'And after that He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet'. We know that Samuel was the last judge, but here the apostle says that He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet, so from judges we move to prophets. There's something new about this, take the 11th chapter of Hebrews verse 32 which says, 'What shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets'. And in those three references that I've quoted to you from the New Testament, b&s, there would seem would there not, to be indicated to us that Samuel stood as it were, the head, the federal head of the prophets, why? Because I believe, b&s, that he commenced an order in Israel known as the 'sons of the prophets; he initiated that movement, he nurtured it, he built it up until it became a powerful knit community in Israel, and they were organized into a group, and they were dedicated to withholding the spread of immorality and apostacy in Israel and they were dedicated to the study of the Word of God, and it's amongst those people that Elisha worked. And he saw that it was no good fighting Jezebel on Carmel; no good fighting Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth, no good calling down fire upon the 50's of Ahaziah; this was the way to fight the warfare of the truth, b&s, not to kill people but to make some people alive! And so this great band, the sons of the prophets came into being.

In 1 Samuel chapter 10 we have an introduction to them and at verse 9 we read, 'And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart, and all those signs came to pass that day. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?' And there, b&s, we have the occasion when Saul came to the prophets there, and in another place in Samuel we read that Samuel was head over them, and in that influence Saul was influenced; do you see what can happen? Here was a madman, eaten out with jealousy, he was on the verge of insanity was Saul, eaten right out from head to toe with jealousy, and yet b&s, in that atmosphere the spirit of the truth swayed him momentarily. And it can sway us and if we stay long enough in that atmosphere, it will so permeate our existence that we won't go out of the truth, we won't deviate from the truth, and this is what Samuel was trying to inculcate. And we find, lo and behold, that Elisha's work is with this people, and in 2 Kings chapter 4, we have the activities of the

sons of the prophets depicted before us. We read at verse 38, 'And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him', and there's a phrase, b&s, they were sitting before him and the phrase means as the Hebraism has it from Deuteronomy 33 and verse 3 and also in the New Testament where the apostle speaks of him sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, the idea was that they were sitting listening to him. He was their teacher, and there were the sons of the prophets and there was Elisha and they were sitting before him; and they had organized meetings. Look at verse 23 of this chapter! When the woman of Shunem wanted to go to Elisha, her husband said unto her, 'Wherefore wilt thou go to him today? it is neither new moon nor sabbath!' why go to Elisha today, it's not the new moon and it's not the sabbath. The new moon, b&s, of course, brought about the beginning of each month, the sabbath, of course, was weekly and so it obviously the custom of these people, the sons of the prophets to come weekly and monthly as an extra meeting, to sit at the feet of Elisha and the woman of Shunem was in that! She was in that lot! and what a woman of faith she was, you wait till we come to her story; she towers on the plain of Jezreel where she lives like mount Tabor; she lived under the foot of Tabor, she was a tower on that plain, she was in that and they met weekly. And they met monthly and when we come to that section of the Word, I want to show you what they would have done on the new moon and the sabbath in accordance with the Law, and you'll be amazed! and you'll see what it was that Elisha was going to do with those people because there were special festivities on those occasions of the sabbath and the new moon. And they were very similar, and there Elisha was trying to teach these people what they ought to do to withstand the things of this world. And there were special sacrifices offered on those two days, more than any other sacrifices, and those sacrifices spoke, b&s, of absolute dedication to the truth. And Elisha chose those days of all days, to hold his meetings, and you can imagine him sitting down there or sitting above them, and they're sitting at his feet, and he's telling them about the new moons and the sabbaths and the principles involved in the Law of Moses as we'll have a look at them later, and inculcating into their minds absolute dedication to the truth.

Now I ask you, what time do we give to the truth? What time actually do we give to the truth? You think about that and we're going to have a talk about this when we come to that section. They gave a lot of time to it, and that's why, b&s, they're all rushing around with axes and hammers, to extend the meeting place, because those meetings were well attended. Because the spirit of Elijah was resting on that man, and he had in his grasp the still small voice and he used it effectively, and they were lovely people, they were truly meetings, and that was the community with whom Elisha was associated. But the day came in 2 Kings chapter 2 where Elijah would depart, and because of the lateness of the hour, b&s, we are just going to speak about the first few verses, and then perhaps in the exhortation tomorrow morning, we'll bring out, I believe, some of the most grand principles that is in the whole story of Elisha, as when he crossed over the Jordan. Ah, look, it's absolutely majestic, the principles that were involved in that, and you'll thrill to this, that the day has come, the hour has come when the time that he should ascend (and it says in Luke concerning the Lord, He was to leave, and He's going to leave His disciples with a lesson that they'd never forget, for all time) and the hour has come, b&s, for the mighty Elijah to depart. And Elisha knows it, the sons of the

prophets know it, it had been communicated all through the Land, I don't know how, but right through the land it had been communicated to the sons of the prophets; they were all apprised of the situation, the great leader, the man who lead them all into obedience, the man they respected, the man they stood aside for, and bowed as he went past; the father of Israel, the chariot of Israel, the horsemen of Israel was going, b&s, and the burning question in the minds of all the sons of the prophets, was who was going to take his place?

And it agitated their minds obviously, and in the record we read and we see that it agitated their minds and they must have come to this conclusion when Elisha went with Elijah from Gilgal; He was going to take him up in a whirlwind. The word 'whirlwind' indicates a 'storm cloud', he was going to go up in the spirit in which he was living. And God took him out of the way in a storm cloud, and when we come to the section where he was taken, I want to show you something that's absolutely remarkable too, that God left something behind (it wasn't the mantle of Elijah that He left behind; He left something behind with Elisha that meant more to Elisha than life itself.) But in a 'storm cloud' He was going to take this man out of sight; wherever that was, we won't go into that, we won't have any questions on it, because you've got your opinion and perhaps I've got mine, no need to concern ourselves with that, it is the principle of the thing that we're concerned with. What we are concerned with, is the work that had to go on once that man was taken, and you know, they commenced a remarkable journey; they went to three centres. They went from Gilgal to Beth-el to Jericho and then they went to Jordan, and do you know, that three times in those short few verses of 2 Kings chapter 2 it is said, three times in verses 2, 4 and 6, 'the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el in verse 2; the LORD hath sent me to Jericho in verse 4 and the LORD hath sent me to Jordan in verse 6, and this was, of course, characteristic of the life of Elijah; he never moved unless God drove him there! And he was the chariot of Israel, b&s, and the driver was God and He moved him, He moved him and Elijah moved in every direction that God sent him and he went to Gilgal, he went to Beth-el, he went to Jericho and then he went to Jordan. And how remarkable that is because in all those centres, the sons of the prophets were there! The sons of the prophets were there, they had a centre in Gilgal, they had a centre at Beth-el, and they had a centre at Jericho, and there's no doubt about why the LORD sent him to those three places on his way out! because he was going to strengthen the things that remained. He was going to strengthen the things that remained, but the remarkable thing about it is this, b&s, that when you come to the prophecies of Amos and of Hosea, who set forth before us, blazing indictments of Israel, what are the centres that they indict? know what they are? Gilgal, Beth-el and Jericho! Now work that out!

Look at the 4th chapter of Hosea, look at this! in verse 15, and this is not isolated in this prophecy, by the way, this phrase and these phrases are mentioned again and again, and here Hosea says in verse 15, 'Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come ye not unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven (which is of course, Beth-el, Beth-el meaning the house of God but Beth-aven meaning 'the house of shame') nor swear, Yahweh liveth. For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now Yahweh will feed as a lamb in a large place. Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone'.

And there was Beth-el and Gilgal, b&s, the very centres of idolatry and do you know, again and again Amos and Hosea particularly, in speaking of these places after Elijah had left the scene, they showed that the very apostasy which had swept that nation of Israel, had centred themselves, of all places, in Gilgal and Beth-el and there right in the centre of those places was Elijah and Elisha with their little schools around the Word of God. And Yahweh was doing what He told Elijah He would do, He was pulling people out of it! Pulling them out, Nimshi, He was going to pull them out of that, and it's absolutely remarkable when you go through the record of the scriptures and you see how that those two places, Beth-el and Gilgal particularly, were indicted by God because Christadelphians flourished there because they were compounded together on the principles of the Word of God, b&s, and that's what we've got to do today. And where are we? We're right in the middle of Sodom and Gomorrah; we talk about America, we talk about other places in the world, if some of the girls that walk around this place in Adelaide, walked in the streets of Los Angeles they'd raise their eyebrows! Don't believe me? Ask the young couple sitting in front of me if it's not true! we're sitting in the middle of Sodom and Gomorrah and we've got to get down together, we've got to draw together on the basis of the principles of the truth, and see that we inculcate these things and God will pull us out of this community, right out of it. Not literally, we'll still be here but can you imagine, you go through before you go to sleep tonight, you read through the prophecy of Hosea and see what he says about those two localities and yet, that's where those bible schools of Elisha were flourishing. It's incredible but it's a standing testimony, b&s, to the power of that book. And it is a power, it's a wonderful power!

Now let's have a brief look at these places in conclusion, before we move on in the next session to the ascension of Elijah. Let's have a look at one or two of these places; now you take for example Gilgal. Now this is rather a strange thing that there were two Gilgals in the scripture. You remember when Israel crossed the river Jordan they came to Gilgal; you remember that don't you? then they moved to Jericho and finally they came in the campaigns of the central highlands, to Beth-el. They came, of course, to many other places too, than Beth-el, but they moved in that general direction; they went from Gilgal to Jericho to Beth-el. Now Elijah and Elisha went from Gilgal to Beth-el to Jericho, and you know, it's absolutely remarkable, b&s, that as Elijah fades from the picture and is taken by God in the storm cloud, he takes the opposite route to Israel! and there was a Gilgal in the highlands of Judaea just above Beth-el; there were two Gilgals because you see, they couldn't go down from Gilgal to Beth-el if this is the Gilgal in the Jordan valley; they'd have to go straight up, and you've never seen such an ascent in all your life! it goes from almost below sea level up to 2 or 3,000 feet above, literally. But you see, they went down from Gilgal to Beth-el and it was obviously in the central highlands, and I believe, what God is doing here is showing us that Elijah was taking an deliberate route which was the opposite to Israel.

Now when Israel came to Gilgal, you remember, that Joshua circumcized the people, and they called the name of the place 'Gilgal' which means 'a wheel or roll away' because the right of circumcision, b&s, is an act of cleanliness, performed on the part of the body that in itself speaks eloquently of the lusts of the flesh, and in which the people

of Canaan were steeped. If there's one word which covers the religion of Canaan which incorporates all the religions of Canaan, in a nutshell, that word is 'sex'. And you don't reckon that we live in Canaan today? That was the religion of the world, sex. You turn up Rotherham's translation and have a look at the foreword he's got for the book of Judges, but don't read it aloud to your wife. And that was the religion of the Canaanites; and Israel circumcised their men children and they rolled away the reproach of Egypt. And they went up through Jericho, a Gentile city into the central highlands, to Beth-el, the house of God.

And now Elijah was going from Gilgal back to the house of God, down to Jericho, across the Jordan and away! And b&s when he went, he took his mantle off, the scripture says 'he wrapped it together', and the Hebrew word there is only used in that one place in all the Old Testament, and it means 'he wrapped it up together, he rolled it up tight' and he smote the waters of the Jordan and the rolling up of that mantle, I believe, symbolized in Elijah's mind that this was it; there was the ministry of the prophets, the symbol of the prophets rolled right up tight; it was all over, he was going (I, I only am left!) he smote the waters of Jordan, and he went across and I suppose Elijah thought, 'well, for all the power that Elisha had and for all the instructions that he gave him, he knew, b&s, that it was going to be an enormous task and perhaps in his mind he thought, 'well he'd roll it up as a symbol of smacking that water, and he went out the very reverse that Israel came in. But he didn't understand fully that Elisha was going to come back to that very place, and pick up that mantle and unroll it and say, 'Where is Yahweh Elohim of Elijah'. And found Him! he found Him because he saw Him; and the waters parted again and he commenced that course all over again. He went to Gilgal of the Old Testament where Joshua was, through Jericho, through Beth-el and finally came and sat down on top of mount Carmel, to meditate upon the principles that he had been taught by Elijah.

And it's remarkable, b&s and young people, how the two men moving out like that and yet God bringing one of them back, and demonstrating before all the sons of the prophets that all was not lost; the great mantle of Elijah had been rolled up, but now that it had fallen from him, it had spread itself open, the waters of Jordan had been parted again, and through that water came another man; and he went back through that journey and he was going to take these people back again, and he was going to bring them to the house of God, to Beth-el. And he did! in a remarkable fashion he did, and tomorrow morning, we hope, b&s, with the mercy of God, to demonstrate to you by the power of the Word of God, just what it meant when Elisha the great prophet came through that river, and what it meant to him and what it meant to the sons of the prophets, as a symbol as a great symbol in the way that Yahweh magnified his servant and brought to pass, the fulfillment of His Word, that he would be the salvation of God to all Israel, if ever they would learn to sit at the feet of that prophet and to understand the input of the still small voice! And as we look at that section, b&s, I'm quite certain that all of us will be thrilled as we witness, the grand entry of Elisha into the spirit and power of his master Elijah.