

ELISHA, THE PROPHET—A TYPE

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(A symposium lesson following Bro. Ted A. Smith who spoke on Elijah as a type. Phoenix 1972)

Dear Brethren, it is a pleasure to be with you in convention and to consider added features of God's Divine Plan. When I first received notice of this assignment, I was concerned as to whether or not I could accept the service. This was due to the fact that those who have known my ministry over the years have known that I have upon the platform avoided speculation or considering features of the scriptures that are not clearly taught. Before my study on this lesson I had considered that Elisha in antitype was in the nature of speculation. However, when considering the writings of the Pastor on the subject, I learned that the subject could be treated from certain known facts. My lesson will develop from this aspect.

May we turn in our scriptures to 1 Kings 19th chapter. We are introduced to Elisha after a mighty scene God gave to Elijah. In V. 11 we read: “And He [God] said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.”

As Bible Students we have learned that this is God's dramatic picture of the events in the earth that will bring this old order to a complete end and fully establish the Kingdom on earth. Since 1914 we have been in various aspects of this picture and as the antitypical Elijah class we are hidden by God in the mount to view the unfolding features of the time of trouble. We believe the scriptures to teach that when the still small voice is heard in the earth by mankind, the Elijah class will be fully beyond the veil or glorified. In V. 13 of this same chapter we read, “When Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in the mantle.” This may suggest that the true church is then beyond the veil. This seems to be suggested from the account of Rebekah when she entered the field upon her camel and with her was her bridesmaids or damsels along with the servant of Abraham. In V. 65 of Gen. 24 we read, “For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, it is my master: therefore she took a vail and covered herself.”

This would suggest that when the Rebekah class has fully met the returned Lord, who has entered the Harvest Field and when the journey has ended, the church will be beyond the veil. This is shown in Rebekah dropping her veil. Rebekah is then married to Isaac in the tent of Sarah who had died. The Sarah covenant has ended or died.

God then speaks to Elijah and requests that he go down and return on the way of the wilderness of Damascus to anoint two kings and Elisha, the son of Shaphat. One king was Hazael of Syria and the other Jehu as king over Israel. A strange contrast of kings. In 2 Kings 8:15 we read of the murderous act of Hazael in order to become king. The question we may naturally have is why did the Lord permit this final anointing of faithful Elijah to include Elisha the prophet to follow Elijah, a Syrian king who obtained office by murder, and Jehu as king of Israel who later destroyed all the descendants of Ahab? In fact the Bible dictionary states, "He [Jehu] then entered on the work of extermination hitherto unparalleled in the history of the Jewish monarchy."

In considering Elisha as a type we have learned through the writings of the Pastor that this prophet clearly pictures two separate features of the unfolding of God's plan. One, is a type of the Great Company, and the other a type of the Ancient Worthies.

As to what the Lord may have desired to portray by this act of Elijah, we will need to consider the facts of the setting. If the foregoing picture of the final phases of the time of trouble as viewed by Elijah in the mount and hearing of a small still voice is remembered, it may suggest that the work of anointing represents the full establishment of the Kingdom. The two kings may represent two parts of the earthly condition of mankind, Hazael, a large portion of mankind that have not followed the ways of the Lord but fully influenced by the spirit of Satan, and, King Jehu representative of the nation of Israel as it is brought into the harmony of the Kingdom. Elisha, in this setting could represent the Ancient Worthies as they must work between the extremes of human society. At this setting, Elisha could not represent the Great Company since the Elijah class does not call or anoint this company. The anointing in V. 16 only suggests what the Apostle Paul declared of the Elijah class in Heb. 11:40, "for they [Ancient Worthies] without us shall not be made perfect."

Our study then takes us to consider V. 19 of 1 Kings 19. Elijah found Elisha in the field plowing with a yoke of oxen in a field that had another eleven yoke of oxen. In all there were 24 oxen. The number 24 has been attached to the 24 prophets, so Elisha having the mantle of Elijah cast upon him may suggest that the spirit that has motivated the faithful class of the Gospel age will be seen in the actions of the Ancient Worthies in the Millennial age.

However, the Heavenly Father, in making record of this account no doubt desired to show another side of Elisha that gives support for also considering Elisha as typical of the Great Company. When Elijah cast his mantle upon Elisha, we read, "he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." Does this not suggest a failure to fully respond to the call of the Lord?—a desire to look back—a disposition to draw back. Our Lord suggested this attitude in

considering Lot's wife. She desired to look back and was concerned about earthly things and family. Our Lord has warned us by saying, "remember Lot's wife". Contrast this with Rebekah, a type of the Lord's faithful bride, when she was asked, "Wilt thou go with this man?" Her reply was not that she would need to first kiss her father and her mother, but rather an immediate, "I will go." No doubt the indecision upon immediate response to principles of truth and error and upon right and wrong forms the difference in one aspect of the Lord's faithful from the Great Company. As the account in V. 20 then records Elijah's seeming indignation at the lack of appreciation by Elisha by saying, "Go back again: for what have I done to thee?" Brethren, may we take a very personal lesson from this account. Do we parley when a decision between truth and error is presented? Do we fail to make a proper move because of personal associations? "Let me kiss my father and my mother." We then read that Elisha killed his oxen and ran after Elijah who had kept on going his way—the Great Company finally overcome.

We will continue with our study by turning in our scriptures to 2 Kings 2. We believe the Lord has set a new stage in the opening verse of this chapter by showing the two prophets picturing the period of the Harvest and the end of the age. Elijah is the dominant figure and Elisha with knowledge of the course of Elijah follows along from place to place knowing that only after Elijah is removed will he receive a blessing. This surely represents the faithful church with the Great Company following after.

In our mentioned text we read, "And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said to Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel." In the Second Volume, beginning with page 249, the Pastor outlines that the prophetic coming of the Elijah was before the great and dreadful day which would begin at 1874. This begins at Gilgal. They tarried there and then went on to Bethel. This stop was next and seems to suggest the event of 1878. In Reprint 5772, Bro. Russell gives us the key for the value and meaning of the three stops preceding the smiting of Jordan. He draws to our attention that discouragement was represented by the tarrying and the actual events in the Harvest period has shown that 1874, 1878, 1881 and 1914 each were special trial periods to the church. In the 1916 Reprint, page 4 [R5824], is the key that unlocked for me the value of types being considered. It is in the light of this article that this lesson is considered and therefore it can be free from speculation of future events.

From Bethel the two traveled to Jericho and again they tarried. This stop suggests the period of 1881. Of this event the Pastor states, "We have seen too, that when Elijah's time for translation came, he was sent from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho and from Jericho to Jordan: and these different points were measurably disappointing; yet that Elijah and Elisha were not discouraged but went on—Jordan representing the end of the Times of the Gentiles, 1915. As Jordan was the last point to which Elijah was directed so

1915 is the last point to which the Church has been directed. As Elijah went on, not knowing any future place so the true Church is going on without any definite time points before it.”

Dear brethren, we are many years beyond 1915 and great things have occurred in the affairs of the earth and in the affairs of the Elijah class but we still travel along without any known date before us. We marvel at the accuracy of Brother Russell concerning these evident facts.

Reading further in 2 Kings 2, beginning V. 3, we read, “And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha and said unto him, knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head today? And he said, Yea I know it, hold your peace.” This statement was made while at Jericho. This seems to suggest the Great Company class during the time of the Harvest are both knowledgeable concerning the welfare of the Elijah class, but also travel along as companions. This may be one of the hidden lessons of the type. Then in V. 7 we come to the important point of the type when we read, “and they two stood by Jordan.” We have come to the 1914-15 period and the ending of the times of the Gentiles.

Then we read, “And Elijah took his mantle and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.” In harmony with the view suggested by our Pastor, Elijah and Elisha in antitype came to Jordan in 1914. It would be that then we would expect to see a work in the earth that clearly divided the people—not all people—but those that would be affected by religious messages. If we would choose to suggest that both Elijah and Elisha stood by Jordan, after reaching it, for some time and then years later did a work of smiting Jordan we would need to find a work since 1914 that would suggest a fulfillment of the type. We know of no work following the death of Bro. Russell that would fit a smiting work. We have one other choice if we believe that neither 1914 or any date since was Jordan smitten and that choice would be to suggest that it is still future. One look at the fast decreasing number of brethren who value truth in the purity of the Harvest message—as suggested by the mantle of Elijah; and we must wonder where could a work of that suggested by dividing Jordan come from.

In my study on this subject, the comments of the Pastor, and the facts of the 1914-16 period, I am satisfied that when Elijah and Elisha reached Jordan in antitype in 1914, that then Jordan was smitten. Let us look at the type. We read, “Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters.” We must contrast the manner in which Elisha later smote the waters. We read in V. 14, “and he [Elisha] took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters.” With Elijah the mantle was prepared by planning and direction—suggested by wrapping the mantle together—to do a work. The result was a hard direct blow upon the waters, peoples. Not so with Elisha.

What were the facts that would suggest that Elijah's mantle did a great work in 1914 and never equaled since—nor are there any evidences that it could be in the future? In the Dec., 15, 1914 Tower [R5591], Bro. Russell gives his annual report for the work of the brethren that year. Read the article carefully and you will share with me the realization that caused Brother Russell to write, "In God's providence the present year has been the most wonderful one in the history of our Society. We believe that the Lord has used it mightily in pulling down prejudice, superstition and error. It seems as though this year we had the grand climacteric of all previous efforts on the part of God's consecrated people to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light."

We will now review some of the work set forth in the 1914 annual report and when we do, think with me of an interesting text concerning Elisha found in 2 Kings 3:11, "Here is Elisha son of Shaphat which poured water on the hands of Elijah." Why do we believe the Lord caused this simple incident of Elisha pouring water on the hands of Elijah to be recorded? No doubt to show that the antitypical Elisha class brought some measure of assistance to the Elijah class in times of need. Since this event must have occurred prior to the chariot of fire, it may suggest that some of the work of the Harvest came by some support from those who were of Great Company disposition.

Brother Russell gives his account of the 1914 work: The newspaper sermons were being published in about 1000 newspapers with readers greater than ever. The estimated weekly readers were five million five hundred thousand. Tracts were printed in 30 languages and were measured by the ton. "We do not stop to calculate how many car loads of paper went into tracts." In the United States and Canada alone there were 47,610,000 tracts. Letters received were 199,139 and letters sent out were 428,273. The output of Studies in the Scriptures was 2,000 daily or 701,000 copies annually.

We are reminded that the great bulk of the distribution of the Studies in the Scriptures was door to door by colporteuring which meant that many thousands more short witness sermons were given where a Volume might not have been accepted. In addition there were 70 pilgrims employed which gave 3,217 public meetings and 2,931 semi-public meetings. Too, we recall of that period that public meetings would normally always be attended to a complete filling of an auditorium. That was the high period of the Harvest, and the end of 40 years. Then the final phase of the work that could never be repeated on the same level was the Photo Drama of Creation. Some 8 million Creation Scenarios were handed out that year which meant large audiences saw the story of the Divine Plan or read about it.

We must now hurry along with the final travels of Elijah and Elisha. After crossing Jordan, Elijah asked Elisha what would he desire of Elijah before they were parted.

Elisha asked for a double portion of the spirit that Elijah possessed. Elijah stated that he had asked a hard thing. We understand the double portion was the firstborns' portion and not twice as much. Does this not remind us of the parable our Lord gave as found in Matthew 25? In the parable of the ten virgins we will recall the foolish came to the wise with a question that was "hard" to grant. This was when the foolish "said unto the wise, give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out." Did the wise then give of their oil? No! They told the foolish to go to the market place and buy their oil. So we seem to have a direct parallel between the two types, or pictures. Elijah as the wise virgins could not then give of his oil. Only after his departure, would Elisha or Great Company come into a zealous activity for the Lord—but the door to the marriage would be closed.

Then came the fiery chariot of separation with horses of fire. The meaning of the chariot as suggested in Isa. 21:7 would be a religious organization or organizations. The same is clearly identified in the prophecy of Habakkuk 3:8. There can be little doubt that the Lord desired to portray this thought in our type, since horses of fire were attached to the chariot of separation. Following the work of smiting in the period mentioned and shortly after the death of Bro. Russell, we soon saw an organizational chariot pulled by fiery horses of false doctrines separate the brethren into two sides of the issue of what was the Truth. Elisha declared it to be the chariot of Israel and its horsemen—suggesting that this was permitted of the Lord. We believe it and other chariots that have come along since were also permitted. But the fact remains that it was Elisha that recognized the chariot and not Elijah. Elijah was now out of the picture. Surely this is an accurate illustration of the events in the Bible Student movement since 1914.

Then we come to V. 14 of our study, "And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, 'where is the LORD God of Elijah?' and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elijah went over."

Upon this text we seem to have two possible different fulfillments. One, that Elisha as representative of the Great Company does a second smiting work in the spirit of Elijah. If so, then we would expect to see that possibility now existing among those who knew Elijah and his hopes and even walked with him, but did not share at the time his mantle. We recognize this is the thought of some brethren.

When beginning this lesson, brethren, I indicated that I desired to avoid speculation upon this subject, and use only the suggested thoughts of Brother Russell. I will continue with this objective.

After crossing Jordan, Elisha now assumes a different role in our picture. A new work unfolds and new living conditions absorb Elisha. In a series of articles beginning in 1904, page 278 to 286 (Reprint pages 3428 to 3440), Bro. Russell draws to our attention that Elijah was a prophet that lived in the wilderness, typical of the true Church class, and

Elisha (2 Kings 2:19) lived in a pleasant city but the waters were bad. This suggests that the Kingdom is fully ushered in and the city, government, is established. So Elisha would now represent the Ancient Worthies at work. Let us follow their work as we draw our lesson to a close.

It was the whirlwind that finally took Elijah into heaven in type. This was an act of short duration in the picture, but in the antitype it may represent a work by the Lord of many years. As stated on page 279 of the 1904 Tower, “The taking of Elijah was the matter of a moment, but the change of the living members of the Church, which is the body of Christ and the antitype of Elijah, is the work of years already in progress since 1878.”

Now in V. 19 we read in portion, “Behold I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren.” This suggests the early hours of the Kingdom when it begins toward mankind—to us, the living members of the Church, it has begun and for many years. The city—government is set up but at its beginning the doctrines of men are polluted and the earth of itself is unproductive. It needs the direction of the representatives of the Lord in the earth—the Ancient Worthies. So the first work of Elisha was to heal the waters. In V. 21 we read, “And he [Elisha] went forth unto the spring of waters, and cast the salt in there [influence of the exalted salt class], and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters: there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day.”

Time will not permit our reviewing each incident in the activities of Elisha, but we do desire to consider that of 2 Kings 4:1-7, or the event of the widow’s vessel of oil. We recall that because of her poverty she could not pay her debts and her two sons were to be sold into slavery for payment. Elisha asked of her what he might do and learning of her problem asked what earthly goods she had. All she possessed was a vessel of oil. She was asked to go out and borrow from her neighbors all the vessels she could and bring them to Elisha. Then God performed at the hand of the prophet another miracle of filling all these vessels from her own vessel. As olive oil represents the Holy Spirit, in scriptural language, so this no doubt represents the pouring out upon all flesh that will receive it, the spirit of God. The Ancient Worthies will assist mankind to become empty vessels that they might be filled. This will be a great work.

Finally, Elisha, as the hand of God, brought life back to the son of the Shunammite. The faith of a mother in the ability of God and confidence that Elisha was a servant of God, restored life to a son known to God. So the whole world will experience the power of God in the resurrection phase of the Kingdom. Then in the end, the Elisha class will declare, “We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.” Zech. 1:11.