

2 Kings 2

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 05 September 2016 15:43

The difference between God's reasoning and actions, and ours, is like the difference between east and west... the two do not meet. Here we see God acting in His might and power, and doing something that will horrify liberal 'Christians' who want God to act more like themselves!

We should be thankful that God does not act more like us... if He did act like us, we would never be saved and never know God's presence. Whatever He does is for a reason, a reason we often cannot know or understand. We are finite and he is infinite. How can the lesser possibly know what the greater is doing? It is like a man who did not pass lower school grade arithmetic pretending to understand the complexities of post-university mathematics! Even with intellectual capacity, Man can only make $2 + 2$ equal five! In terms of God, we should learn to know our place – we are creatures, not the Creator.

Verses 1-3

1.

And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

2.

And Elijah said unto 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.

3.

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 to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

Elijah knew his time on this earth was almost finished, and he went to see Elisha. God was to take up Elijah "*into heaven by a whirlwind*". Elijah had a special place in God's mind, for only three men were taken straight to Heaven: Enoch*, before the Flood; now Elijah, between the Flood and the birth of Christ, and Christ Himself.

2 Kings 2

Written by K B Napier

Monday, 05 September 2016 15:43

(*Enoch: *"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."* Hebrews 11:5. Note that he was 'translated', which means he was transferred to Heaven but changed, just as all believers must be changed before they can enter Heaven).

"Take up", in context, means to literally carry up or away. "Heaven" can refer to the sky, outer space, or the abode of God. Taking Elijah upwards just to be in the atmosphere makes no sense, so the meaning has to be God's abode. "Whirlwind" means whirlwind or mighty storm/hurricane, a physical expression of God's presence (as in Job 38:1, 40:6).

Elijah told Elisha to stay where he was, while he went to Bethel (two places had this name in those days). Elisha, however, refused to stay, so both went to Bethel. When they arrived, the *"sons of the prophets"*

met them and spoke to Elisha. That is, the school of the prophets in or near Bethel. They warned Elisha that God was going to remove Elijah that very day from earth.

"from thy head"

means to remove from his company. Elisha, though, told them to stay quiet, for he already knew. Elijah's conduct shows us that he, too, knew he was to be taken up that day. Every Christian should live as if he or she were to be removed from earth by God in the next moment. None of us knows when our lives will be ended. In this way we would all live to His glory and be as we should be in God's eyes.

Verses 4-6

1.

And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.

2.

And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

3.

2 Kings 2

Written by K B Napier

Monday, 05 September 2016 15:43

And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

When Elijah had finished his business in Bethel, he got up to go to Jericho, as God had commanded. Once again he told Elisha to stay behind and wait. And, once again, Elisha refused and accompanied Elijah to Jericho. Here, too, was a school of prophets, who came to Elisha with the same advice he was given in Bethel.

Elijah told Elisha that God was sending him to Jordan. That is, to the river Jordan, which was not very far from Jericho. Again, Elisha refused to leave his master, and both went to the river (whose name means 'the descender', as it came from a higher spot and flowed into the lower Dead Sea). Elijah aimed for the ford across the river, el-Urdun (today, el-Sheri'ah), which had been used for centuries by Israelites to cross the Jordan. The place is also known as the 'watering place'. The river was about five miles east of Jericho.

Both men walked to their new destination. Was Elijah given specific tasks to perform in each destination? Or, was this God's way of seeing his faith in action, as He had done with Abraham? We are not told. But, obedience is the key to his journeys.

Verses 7-10

1.

And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

2.

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.

3.

And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

2 Kings 2

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 05 September 2016 15:43

4.

And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

Elijah and Elisha knew what was coming (though perhaps not the details). So did all the prophets they met. Fifty prophets wanted to witness God's actions that day, and they stood some way from Elijah and Elisha as they tarried by the river crossing. The fifty stood far enough away so as not to intrude, but close enough to witness what happened.

They saw Elijah removing his cloak and rolling it up. He hit the river water with the rolled up cloak, and the waters divided so that the two could cross on dry land to the east of the river. This was indeed a miracle, for though the river ran its course every day, when it divided, the river bed was dry as a desert (charabah).

Facing Elisha, Elijah asked if his companion wanted anything before he left. Admirably, Elisha asked if he could have double the portion of the spirit that Elijah had. Note that he asked for "his" spirit – thus, his spiritual strength and work. Elijah said that it was a difficult thing to give (because only God could do so). Elijah told him that if he, Elisha, saw what happened to Elijah, then his wish would be granted. This reminds me strongly of when Saul saw Christ, but his companions on the road did not. This implies that if Elisha saw what happened, then he had to be of one mind with Elijah, and so worthy of God's gift. This is another example of a true miracle.

Verses 11-14

1.

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

2.

And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two

2 Kings 2

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 05 September 2016 15:43

pieces.

3.

He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;

4.

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 Elisha went over.

After this conversation, the two men walked on, talking. Suddenly, a “*chariot of fire, and horses of fire*” came down in a whirlwind/hurricane, sweeping between the two men so as to part them physically. It picked up Elijah and he was taken upwards “into heaven” (The atmosphere and then to God’s abode which, of course, is not in the created sky, but in a spiritual dimension).

The word ‘chariot’ includes any horses and drivers, and we read that there were heavenly drivers with the chariot. The chariot, horses and drivers, were of “fire” – fiery to the sight, being surrounded by divine fire, which meant a fire that did not consume Elijah (as the fire in the bush did not consume either the bush or Moses: Exodus 3:2,3), and which displayed the brilliance and glory of God. Have you encountered such an amazing but true phenomenon? Do you view these accounts as real or as ‘psychological’? Note that the words in this text directly refer to something physical, with a spiritual cause. The incident was indeed real.

When this happened, Elisha exclaimed to the disappearing Elijah that he had seen the chariot, horses and drivers! In his spiritual excitement, Elisha tore his own clothes into two pieces, before picking up Elijah’s mantle/cloak, and putting it on. He then returned to the crossing over the river Jordan, and stood.

Elisha took the cloak off again and repeated what Elijah had done – rolled it up and hit the river water. Elisha called out “Where is the God of Elijah?”, and the waters divided for him to walk

2 Kings 2

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 05 September 2016 15:43

across dry land. And so Elisha became the prime prophet of Israel. Do you call upon God to show Himself when you have a real need?

Verses 15-18

1.

And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

2.

And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.

3.

And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not.

4.

And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

Elisha began walking back to Jericho, and was met by the fifty prophets, who immediately saw that God had chosen him as a special prophet. It is possible that what they saw was something emitting from Elisha, or, their own spirits recognised God's presence with him. Either or both applied, and this is why the fifty bowed low to him as the prime prophet in Israel instead of Elijah. Do you recognise when a man has God's spirit upon him? Do you see it in his life, or hear it in his words? Do YOUR words and actions reflect the spirit of God?

Strangely though, the fifty had the idea that perhaps Elijah was somehow lost in the desert, so they said they would go and find him! But, Elisha knew what he had seen and stopped them. The fifty repeated their wishes until Elisha gave in to the pressure, and so the prophets began

2 Kings 2

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 05 September 2016 15:43

their journey, to find Elijah. From this we know they had not witnessed the chariot, just as Saul's companions had not witnessed Christ talking to him. They were prophets, genuine, but they were not of the same class as Elisha.

The men searched for three days, but, of course, did not find Elijah. When they found Elisha, he simply said 'I told you so!' At times a man of God will let fellow believers do what they want to do, not because he thinks they are right, but because he knows they are wrong, and they need to be shown it. This has happened in my own ministry.

Verses 19-22

1.

And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren.

2.

And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him.

3.

And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.

4.

So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

The men of the city, probably merchants, wanted Elisha to live there, but warned that though the city was built in a lovely part of the country, the water supply (being five miles from the river Jordan) was "naught, and the ground barren". The rivulet providing water was nasty to the taste and the ground desert-like.

2 Kings 2

Written by K B Napier

Monday, 05 September 2016 15:43

Elisha, not hesitating (proving a godly prompt), asked to be given a jug with salt in it. He then went down to the spring, which was at the bottom of a small hill, and threw the salt into the waters. Elisha told the people watching that God had now healed the water of its foulness and so the surrounding land would no longer be barren. Salt, of course, was used as a cleansing agent. Even to this day the small spring provides good water.

Verses 23-25

1.

And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.

2.

And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

3.

And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

From Jericho, Elisha went back to Bethel. We see that Elisha was bald – and a group of rude children mocked him for it. Elisha uttered a curse upon them, and two female bears came out of the nearby woods and attacked or killed 42 children for their taunts. From there Elisha went to mount Carmel, before returning to Samaria.

The incident seems shocking if we look at this through the eyes of emotion rather than of God's might. We must remember that God does not see any difference between children and adults when it comes to His holiness. It is a sad fact that sin in very small children is often laughed at and excused. This should not be found in homes of Christian parents, who must show due reverence for the Lord, and demand it from their children from birth. Otherwise the children may stand cursed by their growing boldness and sins.

God demands reverence even from small children. If this is not shown, trials will come to both

2 Kings 2

Written by K B Napier

Monday, 05 September 2016 15:43

family and child. Elisha was the prime prophet in Israel and should have been shown deference as God's man. That the taunting crowd was composed of young children (up to age 12) makes no difference to their need to show respect. Even today packs of youngsters run loose around housing estates, causing trouble and swearing disrespectfully at their elders. This is not normal activity, but a wickedness that adults and police do nothing about. The same applied in Israel, and God used Elisha to utter a curse upon the children, which came about in the most startling way, giving the adults of Bethel a grave lesson in how to approach a man of God and thus God Himself.

Just as old age does not excuse a man's sin before God, so very young age does not excuse a child for being sinful. Rather, the mere fact of its birth is enough to send it to hell, so when he adds to this sin by being disrespectful, to parents or to men of God, God will punish the child if it does not stop. Christians must look at children through God's eyes, not through their own indulgence. Sin is sin, and must not be encouraged or laughed at.

Toddlers who stamp on the ground and yell because they cannot have something, are sinning before God; no adult should laugh at these antics or allow them. When they shout defiance at their parents, it is sin. When they throw objects in anger, it is sin. Need I give more examples of budding sin in youngsters? It must always be stopped and warned against, otherwise adults who do not do so are likewise guilty of sin. Bear in mind that God did this, not Elisha acting out of personal anger. I have no doubt that Elisha's authority, nor God, were scoffed at again by Bethel!

© January 2016

---oOo---

{loadposition btm_address}