

10645

ELISHA: THE MAN OF GOD 1980

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

The Call of Elisha

Reading: 1 Kings 19

Thank you brother chairman very much, and my dear brethren and sisters and young people.

Well, it is no doubt a tremendous thrill as we look out upon this very great gathering, which has gathered here this weekend, to study the Word of God as our bro. Gordon has said in his opening remarks. And I know, b&s, to me it is an inspiration to see you all here because you love the truth, and that, of course, is the great binding influence on the Christadelphian community all over the world; that those who love the truth will love those who love it. And as far as the world is concerned, bro. Thomas said we 'needn't care a rush', for we're here together, b&s, to meditate upon this glorious majestic book, with its grand principles which are able to build us up in the high calling which we have.

And who will ever forget the story of Elijah, as we poured over it last year, and saw in it the tremendous principles that were worked out in the life of that man, a man that is going to stand shortly upon the earth again, b&s and young people, and do a work for which he was called, and which he has never performed. And we've come here, this weekend, to take up the threads of that story, and to have a look at his successor, Elisha. And we're going to see, b&s, and young people, that he's the man that did the work of Elijah. He's the one that carried out the principles of the still small voice in Israel, and we have a demonstration in Elisha's life, what Elijah will do when he returns again, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and of the children to the fathers. And in this man's life, b&s, we're going to see a marked contrast with that of Elijah, and we're going to see in this man's life, something that's going to encourage us greatly in the work of the truth. And instead of leaving this camp as we left last year's camp, behind Elijah were dead bodies everywhere and the blood of the prophets of Baal soaking into the valley of Jezreel, we're going to leave this camp, b&s, with the sons of the prophets gathered together in such a fashion, that they had to knock down the walls of the meeting place because they couldn't get the people in. They were flocking in to hear the Word of God, because this man was taking into Israel what Elijah never took into Israel, he took into Israel the still small voice, and it was greater than fire from heaven, it was greater than the salt, b&s, it was greater than the chariots of Jehu, it was greater than all those things, b&s, and it accomplished miracles; it brought people together around the Word of God, in a time in history when Israel in the northern kingdom had sunk to its very lowest. But the power of that book in the ministrations of Elisha, had welded that

community together in such a fashion, that they were a bulwark against the influences of the world, and of apostasy in Israel itself. And we're going to dedicate this camp to that principle.

Now, a note of warning! We're not going to finish the story of Elisha, the reason for that is, (not that I haven't got time, I just haven't finished it) so that we're going to finish somewhere I believe, perhaps at the end of the story of Naaman the Syrian and 2 Kings chapter 5. The story of Elisha carries on to 2 Kings chapter 13, it's just too bad we didn't get time to do it, but I'm sure, b&s and young people, that what we have been able to glean from the Word of God in the four chapters that we did study, will provide sufficient material to inspire us on the way to the kingdom of God. So don't worry about it, we'll finish it some other time! We want to look into these 4 chapters and see the wonderful principles, and we're going to meet people, real people, and we're going to see in them, a reflection I hope, of ourselves. We're going to meet the gentle Elisha, the father in Israel, we going to meet, b&s, the woman of Shunan, a tremendous woman whose faith stood in the plain of Jezreel like Mt. Tabor, so great was she. We're going to meet the widow who taught she could do nothing for the truth, and found that in the finality of things, that she was feeding the nation. A woman whose two sons were sold into bondage and thought that she was at the end of the world as far as she was concerned, and was taught a tremendous lesson, that she had in her house sufficient to feed the nation, if only she realized it. We're going to meet her; we're going to meet Gehazi, a pure hypocrite, and we're going to see, b&s, what covetousness can do to our lives if we let it. We're going to meet a man like Hazael, Ben-hadad, Naaman the Syrian and a host of others, and we're going to see in the pages of God, a portraiture of ourselves, of what we can be, or what we mustn't be, what we must aspire to and what we must avoid. They're all there for their admonition and learning, b&s and young people, and we've got to absorb the lesson.

Now look, nobody can hope to understand the story of Elisha unless its wedded to the story of Elijah, for the two men in a sense, are inseparable one from the other; they're complimentary one to the other, and it's as remarkable as we will see in this particular study or perhaps the next, the journey that those two men took together as they went step by step from Gilgal to Beth-el, to Jericho across the Jordan and then Elisha came back alone. And we will see how, b&s, the Spirit parted them; at the last parted them, and took one man into the heavens, (wherever that might be) took him into the heavens apart never to hear of him again, and left another man on the earth to carry on that work. And in that man, b&s, we have a work carried on that was quite different from the work of Elijah, and we have a work of a young man (and Elisha was a very young man when he was called) who was determined to do in Israel what Elijah hadn't done, and although he acknowledged Elijah as his lord, he had the courage of his own personal convictions, and he did things that his master perhaps would not have done; he acted different in certain circumstances perhaps than his master would ever have acted, but he went out and he accomplished his purpose. And his purpose wasn't to purge the nation of Baal worshippers (in fact they multiplied in his day and generation) he didn't drive out Jezebel, b&s, she existed right through almost, his ministrations. He didn't go and try and bring down fire from heaven, he concentrated on meetings like this, and this

was his determined purpose, that people like this would be gathered around the Word of God, despite what was going on out there. And he let that go by, he couldn't do anything about that, the time would come when Yahweh would no longer tolerate that, Elisha's work, b&s, was to get into the minds and hearts of people, that whispering voice, 'the voice of the whisper' as the Hebrew has it, that that might penetrate into their innermost beings and do what fire from heaven could not do, change lives, mould characters, make young people strong, and old people more mature, and all determined one and all, to stand together against the wiles of the world, and to make the Christadelphians of that age and this age, strong in the things of God. And that's what we're going to do this weekend.

Now those who were here last year, won't mind one little bit, if we go back to Mount Horeb, will they? where Elijah was given the message of the still small voice. What was the message? Very simple, terribly profound, and you know the story, he fled from Jezebel, sat under a juniper tree and said, 'I want to die'. 'I haven't done any good for the truth, I'm no better than my fathers', and how the angel fed him, b&s, and told Elijah, 'I know where you're going, and I know why you're going there; and God is waiting for you when you get there'. God hadn't told him to go to Horeb, he'd made up his own mind about that, and everywhere Elijah moved, in the record of Elijah, the record says, 'the spirit of Yahweh says go here' or the Word of the LORD said do this', and as soon as he moved without it, he moved down to Horeb and he was going there because he'd made up his mind what was wrong with the situation and he was going to call God into question! He was going to call God into question because he felt that he had acted faithfully in the issue, 'I've been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts', but he thought that God hadn't co-operated in the way that he had co-operated. Elijah couldn't understand why it was that Jezebel was permitted flight after the slaying of the prophets of Baal; why did God let her stay in Jezreel? and why didn't God finish the judgment that He'd began on Mount Carmel? And in his confused, frustrated state of mind, Elijah thought there's one place where God cannot answer me, and that's at Horeb. He'd made up his mind about that!

And if you remember, last year, without turning up these references, you know the references we turn up, but you'll remember the principle that cannot be disputed, b&s, that what Elijah had in his mind was this, that he knew the Law was given at Mt. Sinai, and Elijah thought that all unrighteousness received its just recompense of reward immediately, and he thought that the Law was a manifestation of God's character, that God would not tolerate evil; that He'd deal with it immediately and that if anyone wouldn't believe the truth, God would force them to believe the truth! That's what Elijah thought because that thought came out in the title that he used, 'I've been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts'. You interpret that, it's the first time in the biblical record that that title is ever found in the mouth of an individual, and it's only found in one other place, LORD God of hosts, Yahweh Elohim of armies; Yahweh Elohim the covenant God and He's going to enforce that covenant by power, and that's where he made his enormous mistake, because God said, 'I'm not going to do anything of the sort'. And he stood in the cave and felt that he had alongside of him, a witness that could not be gainsaid, and that witness was Moses! it was the cave that he stood in, says the record,

and he stood there to complain against God.

And remember, b&s, how Paul picked up the principle and showed the difference between Moses and Elijah, that Elijah had not seen, and Paul says in that 11th chapter of Romans (which we don't need to turn to) 'Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah?' Elijah made intercession against Israel'; there was the fault, he hadn't understood, he'd made intercession against Israel. What did your Sunday School lessons teach you about Moses? It was in that very spot, my dear b&s and young people, that Moses made intercession for Israel, and God, had the chief witness, not Elijah, and it was by the witness of Moses that God was able to show Elijah that he had it all wrong. And He showed him by strong wind, by earthquake that shook the whole area, and by a blazing fire in a place where there was little foliage to burn at any rate; He showed him by those three manifestations of power that He wasn't in it! I'm not in it, I won't be in it, Elijah; I not going to tear Israel apart with the wind, I'm not going to shake them with an earthquake, and I'm not going to burn them up. But God was in the still small voice, and it was terribly powerful to read the Word of God, b&s, from 1 Kings 19, and to read this in verse 9, 'And he came thither unto a cave and lodged there; and behold, the Word of the LORD came to him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?' What are you doing here Elijah? And b&s and young people, the emphasis is on that word here, what are you doing in this place? HERE, here, Elijah, what is it about Mount Horeb, what is it about Sinai, Elijah, that you've come here? I know! because you feel that My character is such that I will enforce my covenant with power, and this place speaks this to you, Elijah. It's symbolic of that to you, what are you doing here? But, b&s, note this, that after the manifestations of power, physical power, we read that the still, small voice comes, and we read in verse 13, 'And it was so that when Elijah heard it that he wrapped his face in his mantle (the symbol of his prophetic office) he was humiliated as a prophet, he went out as Moses went out, the very term used of Moses, standing at the lip of that cave, and he stood at the entering in of the cave. And behold, (leave out the words in italics) a voice, what are you doing here, Elijah? (quite softly)

And the second time that question was asked, my dear b&s and young people, the voice was talking! It wasn't the Word, it wasn't the wind, nor the earthquake nor the fire, the voice was talking, 'what are you doing here, Elijah?' And when John the Baptist came in the spirit and the power of Elijah, when they came into the wilderness and said, 'who are you, the Christ? He said, no, I am not the Christ. They said are you Elijah? I am not; are you the prophet? No! Well then, who are you? Nothing; not a thing (I'm in the abstract!) I am the voice of Him crying in the wilderness; and there was the wilderness and there was the voice. Sure, John was quoting from the 40th chapter of Isaiah; where did Isaiah get it from? he's getting it from here. And you see, what God is trying to tell Elijah, b&s, is that when a man becomes in his own eyes nothing, then he becomes useful, and the more that John said, the less he said, 'I am not the Christ; I am not; No!' When they asked him again what could he say? because I am nothing, I'm a voice, and as such he was useful. And when we, b&s, become like John the Baptist, b&s, non-entities as far as their own personalities are concerned, we're useful to God! When we intrude the flesh in there, we are useless to God, and so God told Elijah in the

words of a voice, 'What are you doing here?' and Elijah had to come to realize at last, b&s, that his whole life's work hadn't accomplished very much, after all was said and done. And when Elijah turned around from Horeb and made his way back to Israel, he would have reflected upon this, and he would have thought, 'what is it then, that I have done in my life that could be accredited to the work of the still small voice? What had he life on the earth to a monument of the purpose of God? The graves of the prophets of Baal? the hole in the ground where he burnt up two sets of 50? The men and women who died because of the curse of God that he'd brought upon them? They weren't monuments to the truth, and there was walking around in Israel, b&s, only one, one monument to the work of Elijah, one only, the widow of Zarephath!

And that's what Elijah left behind him, and the Lord Jesus Christ said that there were many widows in the days of Elijah, but unto none of them was the prophet sent, save unto the widow of Zarephath and a ministry that wasn't very long; 3 1/2 years of that ministry was devoted to that woman. Bear that in mind, 42 months, 1260 days of his life was devoted to one single woman; and that was the work that God wanted him to do. And Elijah took that up, and pack a hole with people like that! because he took up the only power available to Him. And Elijah had to be driven to that woman in extremity, and Elisha took that story up, b&s, and he saw the moving power of that 'still small voice', and he saw it far transcending the power of physical miracles and he pack a hole with the widow of Zarephath, and poor Elijah departed from the scene, with the promise ringing in his ears, that he'd have to perform that work, no doubt about that! He'd have to perform it and he will perform that; powerful words aren't they? 'remember ye the Law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb; behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. That he may turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and of the children to the fathers, LEST I come and smite the earth with a curse'. And that's exactly what Elijah wanted God to do. He went down there to get God to smite the earth with a curse and here's Malachi telling us that Elijah's coming the second time, to prevent it, and he never saw it that way! He never saw it that way, 'remember ye the Law of Moses, my servant, not Elijah's, which I commanded him in Horeb. Behold, I send you Elijah!' What better man could he send to tell them about the law of Horeb, and tell them about His servant Moses? and to tell the children of Israel how that Moses made intercession for them?

What better man could He send than a man who had this dramatically set before him, b&s, and whose life was all revolving around that lesson, that when Elijah comes back, he's a fit man to put before them that lesson. But he was not permitted to do it, he was not permitted to do it in his dispensation, and he was told to go return on his way back, a man that had said, 'I, I only am left'. Oh, says God! 'Well, says God, I believe there's 7,000 and 1 in Israel, Elijah, that are left'. Him and 7,000 others; I, I only am left. No! there are people who will respond to the still small voice, b&s, there are people today who will respond to it, and despite propaganda, whisperers, back-biters, there are people who still today will surmount difficulties and prejudices, and pride and personality, who will gloat over a ton of it, if they get the still small voice into them. There's no power in the earth that can confront that; you get back, Elijah, and I want you to anoint three men, and they're going to do what you're asking Me to do, and more!

Now look at whom he was to anoint! Look at verse 15, and it says in 1 Kings 19 and verse 15, Yahweh said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria'(he never anointed Hazael, b&s, he never anointed him. In fact, nobody anointed him; the idea of anointing wasn't simply the physical act of anointing but of appointing someone to office. Elisha appointed Hazael to his office). Then anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel (he never anointed him either and neither did Elisha, it was the servants of Elisha who anointed Jehu, and you see how the work of God was extended in others, but it was all coming from Elijah) 'You're going to anoint Hazael (and he never had anything to do with him) you're going to anoint Jehu, (and he never had anything to do with him) but he did have something to do with the next one. 'And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room', and how those words would have rang in his ears, b&s, Elisha the prophet the son of Shaphat to be prophet in your place. I, I only am left; No you're not, Elijah. Elijah, b&s, like many other people, have never counted on the power of that book; they discount it. There are Christadelphians who discount that, they don't see it as a power, and if they don't see it as a power, then of course, to them things become impossible, but God never saw it that way, and He told Elijah you're not the only one that's left, I'm the only One that knows of somebody else, Elisha! the son of Shaphat, and He was telling him in two names, the purpose He had in that man for 'Elisha' means 'God's salvation'; He wasn't going to destroy Israel at all, He's going to save them, for God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. For God so loved the world, b&s, that He sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but through Him the world might believe, if they would! And Elisha, God's salvation, was the son of a man whose name means 'judgment'. And that was the man who was going to succeed Elijah.

But you know, we have in the bible sometimes, names that are strung together, and especially when you get them given in full as you have some of them here, that mean something. Some of these, I believe, get stretched like elastic, but look, I really do believe that there's really some power-packed exhortation in the meaning of these names as they are given here. For you have a look at them, here are three men who are going to do the work that Elijah wants to be done, and more. There is first of all, Hazael, then there is Jehu, who is called the son of Nimshi, then there is Elisha who is called the son of Shaphat; they are all given there names and titles here and their parentage. Now look at the meaning of their names, Hazael means 'God sees', isn't it peculiar that the king of Syria should have a name like that? but he did, Hazael, God sees. Jehu means 'Yah is He', Yah it is that sees, in other words; Nimshi means 'to pull out', to pull out and Elisha like I said before means 'God's salvation', and his father's name means 'judgment', and that, b&s, is precisely a summary of the life of Elijah. Because what happened was this, Elijah, when he heard the still small voice still had a problem.

I believe that he accepted the principle of the still small voice, but he lived with a problem; the problem was if this is so, that the still small voice has got to be put into

action, well, what about this wickedness? are we going to disregard it? Is God just going to overlook it? and if so, well, we can't do anything about it; NO, He's not going to do that but you see, what God was going to do, b&s, He was going to bring that wickedness to an end. Ah, yes, He could handle that alright, but what He intended to do, was to drag out of that community, people that He wished to save, and so He told Elijah in the names of these three men, to anoint them in order. He said, 'I've seen, Elijah, I know! Yahweh is He that has seen and He said, 'by My salvation I'm going to pull out 'Nimshi' of that community, I'm going to pull out by God's salvation that 7,000 and then I'm going to judge them'. And that, b&s, is a precise summary of the life of Elijah because that's exactly what happened. And as Elijah's life faded out, you get an outstanding picture of two outstanding things, that as Elijah's life faded out, you find these two things standing out in the bible record like lightstands; on the one hand it is said in 2 Kings chapter 10, 'that Yahweh began to cut Israel short', and my word, didn't He? You ought to read that bloodthirsty record, 'He cut them short' and we read on the other hand in 2 Kings chapter 6, we read this as to the ministry of Elisha, verse 1, 'The sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait( it's too narrow) for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye'. My dear b&s, that word 'dwell' does not indicate a house to dwell in, the word in the Hebrew literally means 'to sit before'. It's used in the 4th chapter in verse 38, where the sons of the prophets sat before Elisha; what they were saying is this, 'behold, the place where we sit before thee, we can't get the crowd in'. Look they said, we're going to have to go to Jordan, and they came from Gilgal (not the Gilgal by the Jordan but another one in the hills of Judaea) they came from Gilgal, from Beth-el, from Jericho and they joined hands together and they went down to the banks of the river Jordan. On the banks of a river where they went down cutting trees to make a bigger meeting place because they couldn't get the crowd in. And what was God doing? He was cutting Israel short outside that hall because He hadn't forgotten what Elijah had told Him, they'd killed the prophets, they'd pulled down his honour, they'd insulted his word, they'd let go the things of the truth; He hadn't forgotten that, and He was cutting them short by Hazael (God sees) and while they were doing that, there was a crowd of people on the banks of a river, packing halls up sitting at the feet of Elisha, listening to the still small voice of power, b&s, that lifted them above the things of Jezebel. Right out of this world they were, and they were a power and a force in Israel, despite the fact that the nation was going straight into doom. And that's why we're here! and make no mistake about this, we dedicate our lives to this, because we see a power and a force, we see it here, we see before us here, people who are affected by the still small voice, and come what may in the world, it's going to have its influence on the truth, enormous influence. And if you think I'm fooling, I've heard it said openly in an exhortation recently given, that Johnny Martin has a fad about this; and alright he has, and every good reason to have a fad about it.

We're living in an age of debauchery; you've never seen anything like it, and there's worse to come, b&s. There's worse to come, and I believe that as day follows day, that prayers are going to rise out of Christadelphian houses, going to be made probably for the first time in our lives in the sense of sincerity, 'O Lord Jesus come, if only for our

children's sake come and save us, from this rotten dirty age in which we live'; from this vile age in which we live. And here we are on the banks of a river, and we're going to come back here, as long as the Lord allows us, and as long as there are people who will respond to the still small voice and come and we hope, b&s, that we can extend these walls farther and farther and farther. And I'm going to tell you what's going to happen outside; it's going to get in such a way that we're going to think about running Christadelphian schools for our children. We're going to start thinking about living on a desert island, when you see what those kiddies bring home in their school bags, the textbooks, when you see what goes on in the universities, when you witness the great northern confederacy, not over Israel but over a stranger. When 1,500,000 people are being influenced in the north of this country, when the world is going absolutely mad, when the atmosphere is becoming so polluted that the temperature of this grove is being affected; when they reckon that in ten years the sea will be dead, and people won't be able to feed themselves. What do you think we'll do as a Christadelphian community? where do you think you're going to go? and we bitch and argue about things that mean that much to us. We're crazy! we need to get round this book together as a community, as moms and dads and children and teenagers, to love each other and to love that book, and so weld ourselves on the base of the still small voice, b&s, that when Yahweh cuts this world short, we're going to stand together. We're very very fond of making references to the coming of Christ, we're very fond of making references to how we're going to be taken out of this world; what brother or sister can tell me when that's going to be? and how much will Yahweh permit us to see? And I believe, that far from the prayer of 'O come Lord Jesus' the great prayer will be, b&s, not so much as the coming of the Lord Jesus, as to just how are we going to endure in this world? And what is it that our children are going to see? what are they going to see? Where are they going to go? and it's becoming such that separateness is no longer a word, separateness is no longer a theory, b&s and young people, we can no longer talk about it, it's a thing that's an absolute reality amongst us, and we're either a Christadelphian or not these days, and if you think I'm stretching things, wait! you just wait and give it time and don't give it very long; and I'm telling you straight and I haven't got a fad about this, and I've seen these things elsewhere, and I see all the signs of it right here in our fair city of Adelaide, everywhere; it's enormous, and people are going crazy! What are we going to do? By the still small voice of God we're going to pull people out of that, and there's going to be a celebration for those people, before the judgments of God fall upon them, because God sees! and that was the dramatic message that sent Elijah going back into Israel, to get hold of Elisha, that he might effect that tremendous purpose.

And he found him where God told him he would find him at Abel-meholah. Now you come back to 1 Kings chapter 19 with me, but just before we do that, we have to consider first of all, back in 1 Kings 19 (just before we leave that, something I think that's very relevant to what we've got to say, and we must consider this in its context). Now notice what 1 Kings 19 says about these three men. In verse 17 it says, 'And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay'. That's interesting, him that escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will pick him up and if Jehu misses anybody, Elisha won't! and the remarkable part about it is this, that when Elisha went to meet Hazael, and

Hazael came with a message from king Ben-hadad because Hazael was not king of Syria, he was the captain of the host, he came to Elijah with a message from his master who was sick on his bed, Ben-hadad the king of Syria, and he says 'will my master recover?' and Elijah was staring at him, until Hazael became ashamed and uncomfortable because his eyes were staring at him, and the message that Elijah gave him was, 'he will surely recover, but he won't'. It was almost a contradiction in terms, what he meant was this, if he was left alone he would recover, but he won't be left alone; someone will kill him! And as he stared at Hazael, and Hazael became embarrassed, all of a sudden Elisha burst out crying; Elijah wouldn't have done that, but this one did! And Hazael said, 'what are you crying about?' he said, 'I'm crying for what you're going to do; and what you're going to do to Israel is nobody's business'. And he then named the cruelties that this man was to exercise in Israel, and he did! The sword of Hazael, God sees! And what about the sword of Jehu? There are markings in my bible, (I guarantee, three inches long of small print of the judgment of Jehu), and Jehu waded through blood up to his neck as he went through the house of Ahab, b&s, with a shocking scourge, so much so that although the house of Ahab was the most abhorrent house in Israel; God was so horrified at the holocaust of Jehu, that in the prophecy of Hosea, He indicted him for it, and yet He brought him in judgment against Ahab, but that man so exceeded his commission, he slew everything and everybody that came across his path, in a page of blood all over Israel. Shocking!

But who did Elisha kill? Who did he kill? Well, he was responsible no doubt, for the death of 42 young men at the hand of two she bears, but apart from them, b&s and young people, who did he kill? Nobody! and he didn't come to kill people, he came to save them! Then, what was the sword of Elisha? You look at the 6th chapter of Hosea, (and you're going to be turning up Hosea the whole of this weekend) because Hosea you see, was a prophet who came immediately after the ministry of Elisha and he had a lot to say about Elisha, perhaps not naming him, but certainly quoting his history. And here is the sword of Elisha, in Hosea chapter 6 and verse 4, we can take verse 1 to the principle of the chapter where they say, 'Come, and let us return unto Yahweh, for He hath torn and He will heal us; He has smitten and He will bind us up' and in verse 4, God says, 'O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud (it goes like the wind) and as the early dew it goeth away'. That was the goodness of Israel and Judah, b&s, like a mist in the morning, you know, you get up here and see it lying in this valley and about 8 or 9 o'clock say, gone! That was the goodness of Israel and Judah, 'Therefore, says God in verse 5, have I hewed them by the prophets and I have slain them by the words of My mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth. For I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings'. And there was the sword of Elisha, 'He slew them by His prophets, He slew them by the sword of His mouth', b&s, and the great and mighty offensive weapon that Elisha flattened Israel with, was a gentle whisper! telling them that God desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings, and He slew people like that; He killed them dead, because he rid people of them-selves; he destroyed the old man of the flesh. And he got them to see that God desired mercy and not sacrifice, and He desired knowledge more than burnt offerings, and the great offensive weapon was that gentle

whisper, b&s, that swept all before it, and those that Hazael got and those that Jehu got, they got their just desserts, and what they missed Elisha picked up. And he picked up those that he pulled out for the salvation of God. Tremendous lessons!

Now we'll go back to the 1st of Kings 19, to the call of Elisha. Elisha was to be found at a place called Abel-meholah, which b&s, for those of you who can see it, is around about there in the valley of Jordan, approximately there, opposite the hills of Samaria. And you see, we're going to learn a lot about the geography of the Holy Land this weekend, the chief reason is that I'm very selfish and I love it, I've been there and I want everybody to know that, and I'm really taken up with this, and we're really going to learn a lot about the Holy Land because it has to do a lot with the record of Elisha; but Abel-meholah was in the Jordan valley, shall we say, more north than south, and we're going to learn later on that as far as the Jordan valley is concerned, the further you go north the more fertile it is, and the more fertile it is, is because of the alluvial soils that are washed down here, from the mountains of Lebanon through the waters of Galilee and right into the Jordan valley, and up the northern part here it was quite fertile, and there Elijah was going to find Elisha. Abel-meholah, the meadow of the dance, that's what it means, and the idea of the Hebrew word, of course, is a idyllic picture of agricultural prosperity, that's the idea of the word. It's an idyllic picture of agricultural prosperity, the meadow of the dance, so that Elisha, was not going to come from the wilds of Gilead, from where the plateau of Gilead over here in the mountains of Gilead, 3 or 4,000 feet above sea level, blown by the sharp winds of the Arabian peninsula, or Arabian plateau, washed by the sharp cold winds of the Arabian plateau, a region of wild, plush fields of woods and valleys; where Elijah came from, the hardness of Gilead. Oh, no, this man was going to come from the agricultural prosperity of the Jordan valley, Abel-meholah, the meadow of the dance. Straight away you've got a contrast. and wouldn't Elijah think to himself, 'well, Abel-meholah well, I, I, only am left, and there's where he's going to find this man, at Abel-meholah and when he got there, look how he found him in 1 Kings 19 and verse 19, 'So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with 12 yoke of oxen before him, and he was the twelfth.

He was some boy! he had 11 yoke of oxen before him, and he had the twelfth yoke; he had 12 yoke of oxen plowing. He had a lot of land, the drought had just broken if you remember, Elijah had promised that the drought would now be broken, the land had been washed with the rain coming across Carmel, and now to be saturated by the rains of God; and here was a young man, I say a young man, b&s, because from this point until Elisha's ministry finished he ministered in Israel for 65 years. How young was he then when Elijah picked him up? And who's the one who's going to succeed him? Why it's a young boy in a place of agricultural prosperity and he's working for his father and he's got 11 other men working for him. And that's the sort of man that's going to succeed Elijah, no doubt b&s, that's in the mind of that lonely, solitary awesome figure, there would be bewilderment as to whether that boy could match the great challenge that was put before him. Could he stand up to it? Could he stand up to the hardships of life? could he stand up to the criticisms of the nation? could he stand up to the organized oppositions of the prophets of Baal? Could he stand up to Jezebel? could he

stand up to all else that's going to challenge him? Why, that little stripling man, from this agricultural prosperity; and Elijah immediately challenged him.

But what a wonderful picture you have here, this was the work of Elijah, that Elisha was really doing, he was plowing with 12 yoke of oxen. Hosea said, and I said before that we're going to read a lot of Hosea, he said in the Word of Yahweh, calling upon Israel to 'break up the fallow ground', and He called upon Ephraim and Judah and Jacob, for three names which incorporated the whole 12 tribes in the Land; 'He called upon Ephraim to be the rider, Judah to be the plow and He said, Jacob to break up the clods, break up the fallow ground and sow righteousness'. And here was a man that Elijah found him plowing with Israel (12 yoke of oxen), and symbolically he was there before Elijah, and Elijah, perhaps, would have seen in the scene of Abel-meholah of agricultural prosperity, a man that was behind the nation, and the nation plowing before him (notice he was behind them). You see, b&s, when the Lord Jesus Christ drew upon this incident that we'll quote in a moment at length, when the Lord Jesus Christ used that incident, 'He said, he that puteth his hand to the plow and looketh back, is not worthy of the kingdom' and I'm going to show you that He's quoting from that history. And you see, the point he was making is that Elisha was last, and if you look back there is nothing. And all Israel was in front of him, but he had to keep looking ahead; not to keep his own furrows straight but to make sure the whole nation was plowing in a straight line, breaking up the fallow ground, breaking up the clods in preparation to sow righteousness. And as a man sows so shall he reap!

And that's how Elijah found him. You know, the Lord Jesus Christ on another occasion again from the gospel of Luke, quoted the incident of a young man who excused himself from a feast to which he was invited because he had five yoke of oxen. He said, 'I've got 5 yoke of oxen and I can't come', this boy had 12, and he left the lot of them. What for? a life of hardship that's what for. Not for Glenlock for a weekend, but Glenlock all the rest of his life; you consider it! Now, in the 9th chapter of Luke; now just as an exercise in the spare time of the camp, of which you'll have plenty, you go home and you read from the 7th chapter of Luke through to the 12th chapter of Luke and make a note of how many times the life of Elijah and Elisha are referred to, and you'll be astounded. As the Lord drew upon the examples of these great men without naming them, but by taking things from their history. Remember the 12th chapter of Luke in the life of Elijah, 'consider the ravens of the field', 'let your loins be girded and your lights burning', 'have I come to send fire on the earth?', when you see a little cloud rise up out of the west; where did all that language come from? There are 4 allusions in the 12th chapter, but look at this one!

In this 9th chapter of Luke we read this in verse 51, and I want you to notice the language, b&s, 'and it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up'(where was Elijah going?) it had come to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, ah, yes, it didn't happen until 10 years later, but 10 years is a short period of time, b&s, this was the end of His ministry, and it came to pass when the time was come for Elijah to be received up too, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Abel-meholah. And so at a time when the Lord was leaving this earth, and leaving it

in the care of His disciples, we read that 'He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. And He sent messengers before His face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?' Now it's remarkable, b&s, that Elisha would have been with Elijah when he brought down fire from heaven, on those two bands of 50. He'd have seen that, he'd have been there! because it was after that Elijah had picked him up that he went before Ahaziah the king who sent to Baal-zebul the god of Ekron, and because he sent the captains of 50 to take Elijah, that Elijah brought down fire from heaven; Elisha would have seen that, he would have been right alongside of him as James and John were alongside the Lord, 'but He turned and rebuked them and said, 'look, you know not what manner of spirit you are of'. What was the spirit and power of Elijah? fire from heaven? the Lord didn't think so. He said to James and John, you don't know, James and John, what manner of spirit you are of; you're different than that! And that's what Elisha learnt, b&s, he was different than that; he didn't kill anybody, he didn't call down fire from heaven, he was a different spirit. That wasn't his work and the Lord went on to say, verse 56, 'For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village', that's interesting, the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them, so they bypassed a particular village and they went to another and left them alone. You know what Elijah would have done, don't you? he would have burnt a path right through the centre of that village, but they just circumvented it; if they didn't want to hear the Word of God, that was their responsibility. It was a privilege to listen to it, b&s, God doesn't force it down your neck, He's not the LORD God of hosts in that sense, He won't enforce His covenant upon you, if you don't want to hear it, that's alright! You'll reap the whirlwind in the finality of things, but for the time being you go around and somebody else will. And that was the work of Elisha!

And then the Lord says in verse 59 and 'He said unto another, follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, that are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, 'No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God', where do you think He's getting that from? Look at the context of that chapter, b&s, you can't miss the allusion, the allusion is to Elisha. Now when you come back here, you see that the Lord is quoting from an example of Elisha, or from a lesson of Elijah, which ever way you look at it, but it's a very powerful lesson. Now what happened? Well, Elisha wanted to go back and kiss his father good-bye, he requested this of Elijah, isn't this what the Lord said they shouldn't do? Yes, but you look at the context of this, so we read in verse 19 of 1 Kings 19 'So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, (and he was the twelfth), and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him', (and the mantle, of course, was the symbol of his office). 'And 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'. Now this seems to be what the Lord said they shouldn't do, and this is right too; now look at the answer of Elijah to him. 'go back again, he said, for what have I done to

thee?' Now what does that mean? If we can grasp the meaning of that, I think we have the answer to our problem. Now from all the authorities that I've looked up, b&s, the sum total of the opinion seems to be that the meaning of that phrase is this, that Elisha ran after Elijah having got the mantle, and caught up to him and said, 'look, let me go back and kiss my father and my mother and then I will follow thee'. And Elijah seems to have said to him, if you go back, consider what I've done to thee; consider, Elisha, the privilege and the responsibility of that mantle, what that means. Now consider that! Many people have said that Elijah graciously condescended to allow Elisha to go and kiss his father and his mother, as of course, the custom of the time was, and this of course, he allowed him to do. I don't doubt that, b&s, but the point that Elijah was driving home to this young man was, that he must be prepared to break all family ties for the things of God if necessary. And he said 'if you go back, you consider the great privilege I've given you'. Now the record states what he did, and it doesn't say he went and kissed his father and his mother.

Perhaps he did that, I don't know. The record states that he doesn't; it leaves it out, it doesn't say he kissed his father and his mother. What he did do, b&s, was to go straight back, and he took a yoke of oxen, he slew them, they cut off the plough, slashed it to pieces, burnt the lot, up they went in smoke and he followed Elijah. 'He that puteth his hand to the plough and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God; there was a man that's fit for the kingdom of God. He burnt the lot, lock, stock and barrel, up it went and he followed his lord. Now that's the principle of the thing, b&s, there's the principle of the thing. He had no ties in this life, and I believe that when he ran to Elijah, in the flush of excitement, perhaps requesting to back and kiss his mother and father that perhaps he hadn't truly considered the tremendous privilege that had been conferred upon him, but when Elijah impressed him, 'you go back, but what have I done to thee, Elisha; consider my boy, consider the privileges, consider the responsibilities of being a Christadelphian. Consider what God's prodding you to do, son!' And having had that drilling in his mind, look what he did! You can imagine him in the middle of that field, cutting the oxen straight, dissecting them as the manner of the burnt offering was, cutting up the plough, servants holding the heads in fire, as they see the finest possessions going up in smoke. 'Have a feast' he said, and then he was off! Remarkable, b&s, and away he went, and do you know, that boy is never heard of again in that record, for ten years. You don't hear a thing about him not until ten years later, when Elisha reappears in that story, and yet, b&s, the whole of that time he had earned himself a reputation, and he was known by his faithful ministrations to Elijah, as an inseparable companion. So we have in 2 Kings chapter 3 and verse 11, the things for which he was remembered in those intervening ten years.

In 2 Kings chapter 3 and verse 11, 'But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of Yahweh that we may inquire of Him?' And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat which poured water on the hands of Elijah', and that, b&s, is the comment upon him, how people came to understand him in those ten years. They looked upon him as the man who poured water upon the hands of Elijah. And this was an eastern custom performed only by the closest and intimate friends, that one should wash his hands while the other one dutifully humbly and

faithfully poured water over them, allowing his master to wash his hands; and it was considered, b&s, the occupation of only the most trusted, faithful and intimate servant. And that's how Elisha became known! What a tragedy that the man he had to succeed him was Gehazi who was known in the record of scripture as the boy of Elisha. That's all! just the boy! But here's one that poured water on the hands of his lord. And that's how intimate those two great men became, b&s, in the ten years that intervened between the calling of Elisha and the time when he reappears as Elijah is taken from him and he commences his ministry.

And I want to conclude this session, by making a brief comparison of these two men, as they would have moved together through Israel. Have a look at them! How you do get on in the truth with your brothers and sisters? Well, we have our times I suppose, we do agree on a number of things, but I reckon, b&s, if anybody were to attack us from without, we'd stamp them out of this world, because we really think a lot of each other; I don't dispute or doubt that for one moment. I think, b&s, the ties that bind us are deeper than what we appreciate. And it will be the acid test of time and circumstance that will really underline that to us all. Yet what sort of people are we? Well, some of us come from the wilds of Gilead, others from the meadow of the dance; some are old and some are young, we all have different personalities and yet we are welded together, and you know, when I'm doing these studies, I like to transport myself in thought, I like to take in all these details and walk with these men and to see how they would have grown up together and grown together as a unit, so that when they walked from Gilgal finally to Beth-el down to Jericho and across the Jordan and the two stood together on the lip of the Jordan, they seemed to be inseparable; and the only thing that parted them in the finality was the chariots of Yahweh which split them asunder. It was the chariot of Yahweh that finally split them, and it was only the chariot of Yahweh that could split them, b&s, because they were inseparable!

You can look at them; here's a man from the wilds of Gilead, the lord of hair, you saw him at camp when he was introduced with the bars of Beethoven's 5th symphony and on he came! the lord of hair; a fearsome individual and as we pointed out in that story of Elijah, b&s, as one writer said, 'there was a similarity between the man and the region from whence he came, for Gilead was stern, harsh, bleak, majestic and awful, so was Elijah. And he was just like the region from whence he came, and he struck terror into the hearts of all those that saw him, and so by a mere description Ahaziah said, 'ahhh, Elijah!', he knew him by the very description of him.

But here we have one who wasn't the lord of hair at all, he didn't have any! that's not funny!!! but you know, the peculiar part about it is this, he was a young man and evidently from the record, he had gone bald prematurely; quite a young man you see! Here is a terrific contrast and there first of all was the contrast in appearances.

Now you take the contrast in their surroundings, as I said, you take the way that we've been reading about Elijah, he's either in Gilead or he's up there in the stern and shaggy hill of Carmel, the wooded hill of Carmel, you know, looking over the plain of Jezreel or he's under a juniper tree or he's over at the brook Cherith; you never find him anywhere

else but in the haunts of the wilderness, do you? he's a man of the field, he's almost isolated from society. To Jesus when He drew upon the great lesson of Elijah in the 12th chapter of Luke, the great lesson that he had to teach was, that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesses. That was the lesson of Elijah; oh! what a lesson for 20th century Christadelphians!

He didn't take by contrast Elisha, but it doesn't necessarily mean, b&s, that the comforts of this life can rule out faith, because Elisha was in the fertile part of the land. His father's property was such that he had to have 12 yoke of oxen to plow the ground and he was always found in society. For example he had a home in Samaria, he had a home in Gilgal, but he was more often than not found on the top of Carmel; but nonetheless he moved in society. Why the woman of Shunem had built him a little room, and fitted it out, so that all that was necessary, a bed to sleep on, a table to eat from, and that which was most necessary, a lamp for bible study. And there, b&s, he became intimately related to the woman and the husband in that house; he knew Jehoram of Israel, he was on good terms with him. Not only that, but Elisha knew the captain of the host, so that he said to the woman of Shunem, 'I can speak to the king or the captain of the host if you like. Not only that, b&s, but on one occasion, Elisha visited Damascus and he was treated as a king in Damascus, by Ben-hadad and Hazael, enemies of Israel. See the difference, that was the tremendous difference, characteristically the men were miles apart.

Now, you've got several other contrasts with them; for example you've got Elijah's stern nature, his blazing indictment against immorality and idolatry. His intolerance of anything else that absolute purity of faith and practice; but you have the gentle compassion of Elisha. You've got Elisha leading a whole army of men blind, not blind in the sense that they couldn't see as the word indicates, but confused in their minds so that they didn't know what was happening, and Elisha leads the whole army of Syria into Samaria; just leads them like a flock of sheep, takes them into Samaria and says, 'here they are' and Israel says 'good, we kill them all'. And he said, 'no, you won't, you'll leave them alone.' 'Give them a meal and feed them, look after them, wash their feet and send them home'. Look at the difference! You've got Naaman the Syrian with a problem; he's come into the truth but he's done things in the past that are perhaps inexcusable in his mind; he's got associations with idolatry which he's going to find difficult, and he finds a sympathetic compassionate Elisha issuing instructions and trying to help him in this situation; you can imagine the advice that Elijah would have given him, he would have blown him apart; and you've got all these differences, but you know, b&s, if ever a difference between these two men is highlighted, it's highlighted in the first public miracle they both performed.

You never seen anything like it, because Elijah walked in, right into the court of Ahab, where all the gorgeously appavelled prophets of Baal were, 400 prophets of Baal and Jezebel's 450 boyfriends, the prophets of the groves, 850 of them, in the ivory palace of Samaria, and in strolls this apparition of Gilead. And his first miracle was this, he said, 'there shall not be dew nor rain except by my hand' and then he left. So that he closed up the heavens and the earth was baked. But Elisha's first miracle was at Jericho and

he said, 'there shall not be anymore barren land or death; behold, I send you Elisha the prophet lest I come and smite the earth with a curse'. And Elijah's first thing was to smite the earth with a curse, that was the first thing he did. He smote the earth with a curse literally, and the first thing that Elisha did was to lift that curse from Jericho. And there, b&s, set before us, dramatically set before us, was the essential difference of these two men. And as we go on to our next session, which we hope to tonight, we're going to show that Elisha's work, once Elijah had departed, and he was given free reign to exercise the authority that God had given him, he went his own way, he built his own principles; he didn't deny the principles of Elijah. Oh, no, he'd never do that! but he, b&s, was going to implement the principles of the truth in the way that he thought was best. And he is found in association with a group of people known as 'the sons of the prophets'. And we're going to learn more about them, but just to put your mind at rest as to who they were, let me tell you who they were, they were Christadelphians.