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STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF KINGS.

(Condensed from Peloubet's Notes.)

Lesson VIII. Feb. 22. 2 Kings 2: 12-22.

ELIJAH'S SUCCESSOR.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."—Zech. 4: 6.

EXPLANATORY.

THE DEPARTING PROPHET'S LEGACY. 12. "And Elisha saw it." The ascension of Elijah, the seeing of which was one of the signs by which he might know that his request was granted, and he should receive the double portion of Elijah's spirit. "And he cried, My father, my father." Elijah had been a father to him, in his care and training, in love, and in legacy. "The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof (Rev. Ver., *chariots*). Though the noun in the Hebrew is in the singular, it has a plural sense here, and signifies the chariotry, the mounted force of the nation, to which Elijah's presence is here compared. An instructive tribute to the heroic saint, who had been Israel's strong defence against the ravages of idolatry. One such man as Elijah is more than equivalent to an entire army. Such was Luther for the German people. Think of the dreadful defeat which, as with the waving of his hand, he brought upon the destroyers of his people at Mount Carmel. His anger became a blazing flame, which consumed a whole host of lying priests. And what a wall of protection was this man about the believers in the land! He was their champion and standard-bearer. More terrible was he to Ahab and to Jezebel, in his invisible armor, than a whole host of Syrians and Philistines. He was the phalanx and bulwark of Israel. Yet once this man was discouraged under the broom tree, and wished to die.

GOOD MEN are still the true army of salvation and defence for any nation. It is their example, their teaching, their influence, their wisdom, their religion that preserves the nation from destruction. Not in armies, but in righteousness; not in navies, but in the prevalence of true religion, is found the safeguard of a people.

"Rent them." A common mode of expressing grief. "In two pieces." From top to bottom.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS brings the eternal world very near. They leave the gates ajar, and rays of heavenly blessing shine upon us. The world is forever better for their having lived in it, and heaven is dearer because we hope to meet them there.

13. "He took up also the mantle of Elijah." The same mantle which the ascended prophet had cast upon him at Abel-Meholah was a symbolic call to the prophetic office, and now leaves to him as a bequest and sign that his prayer is fulfilled, and that he must undertake the leadership of the prophets. "Went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan." The same man, and not the same, like many another who has gone to the gate of heaven with a departing saint. He could no more lean on Elijah, but he found that he had received as the prophet's dying legacy, 1. Elijah's Mantle, 2. Elijah's God, 3. Elijah's Spirit, 4. Elijah's Office.

THE PROOFS THAT ELISHA WAS ELIJAH'S SUCCESSOR. According to Elijah's word Elisha was to be his successor; but how was Elisha to be sure that he had received the gift, and how could he make others accept him as their leader, and recognize him as the prophet of Jehovah? The remainder of this chapter, together with the next, is the answer to this question.

I. THE FIRST PROOF,—THE MIRACULOUS PATH THROUGH THE RIVER. Elisha was now standing by the river; and the sons of the prophets were watching him from the heights, near Jericho. 14. "And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him." The mantle came flying towards him, heavily laden, with an onerous commission, but also with a precious blessing as the robe of an heir of heaven, reminding him of the love and kindness of God. It was significant that it came from the open heaven. What else could he perceive in it but the investiture and call of God? So every minister should be able to say, I have received my commission from heaven—my call is of God. "And smote the waters." He acts upon the faith that he would receive from God the power which he had desired. "And said, Where is the Lord God (Rev. Ver., the God) of Elijah? The question does not imply any doubt of God's presence, of which Elisha had so lately seen a manifestation, but should rather be explained an an entreaty for His power to show itself, and give a foretaste of the spirit of Elijah which had been promised. "And Elisha went over." His first miracle is identical in nature with Elijah's last, showing that the father's power rests upon his spiritual son. The passage through the Jordan bears witness that the Lord opens paths for those whom He has chosen and called to be His messengers and servants.

15. "And when the sons of the prophets." The fifty who had gone out to a height to watch Elijah and Elisha as they went across the Jordan (2 Kings 2: 7), and were waiting for his return. "They said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." They saw that he could do the same miracles as his master, that he had God's credentials as his successor. It was the same spirit, though it manifested itself in Elisha in a different way than in Elijah (see 1 Cor. 12: 4-6). The spirit of the Gospel, the faith and truth of the fathers, the same Holy Spirit that worked in the saints of old, these are our credentials to-day, though the methods of the spirit may vary in form. "And bowed themselves to the ground before him." Thus expressing their acknowledgement of him as their head, and the divinely appointed successor of Elijah.

II. SECOND PROOF,—HIS REPORT CONFIRMED BY INVESTIGATION. 16. "Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men." Doubtless some from among the company of the prophets are meant. Strong men would be needed on account of the difficulty and the danger of the search. "Let them go, . . . and seek thy master." They would solve all doubts by a personal investigation. That is the way to solve doubts and questionings concerning religion. Dr. Nelson, in his book on infidelity, says that he never knew an infidel who fairly investigated the claims of the Gospel to remain an infidel. "Lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up (in the whirlwind), and cast him upon some mountain." The sons of the prophets appear to have thought that the body of Elijah might be discovered somewhere, though God had taken away his soul. It cannot be supposed after what they had before said to Elisha that the Lord would take away his master from him on that day, that they expected to find Elijah somewhere alive. Others, as Canon Cook and Dr. Todd, think that they expected to find Elijah alive. "And he said, Ye shall not send." He denied their request because the search was useless, the body could not be found. Elisha, moreover, was absolutely certain, and expected them to believe his word.

17. "They urged him till he was ashamed" to refuse his consent any longer. It would seem as if he feared they might find his story untrue if they should investigate. "They sought three days." Fifty men searched three fruitless days, and then returned. Let us hope this result helped them to loftier and more just views of what Elijah's translation signified.

18. "Did I not say unto you, Go not?" Your search has simply confirmed my word. This result must have increased their respect for Elisha.

THIRD PROOF.—A MIRACLE OF BLESSING.—Vers. 19-22. The former proofs were for the sons of the prophets, this one was for the people as well. 19. "And the men of the city." These are the ordinary inhabitants. "Said unto Elisha." It is good making use of a prophet while we have him. "The situation of this city is pleasant." The situation of Jericho, near the passage of the Jordan, was such as to attract a considerable population after it was rebuilt; and for the sake of the prosperity which came to them in other ways they were content to dwell in such an unwholesome place. Jericho was a part of that country which, in Gen. 13: 10, is compared to the garden of the Lord. Why did they not ask Elijah before this? The city had been rebuilt from its long time ruin during the reign of Ahab (1 Kings 16: 34), not long before this, and was just coming into a consciousness of its needs with its increasing population. Probably, too, the spring had been originally good, but was infected some way from the ruins of the old city. Moreover, Elisha was far more a man of the people, less stern and distant, than was Elijah; and the authorities could more easily ask such a favor of him. "But the water is naught." This word is of frequent occurence in the English of the sixteenth century in the sense of bad. So, too, naughty. Compare Jer. 24: 2, naughty figs. "And the ground barren" (Rev. Ver., and the land miscarrieth).

20. "Bring me a new cruse (bowl or dish, in the Hebrew a different word from that translated cruse in 1 King 17: 12), "and put salt therein." The purity and freshness of the vessel were to typify the purification wrought upon the spring. Salt, too, is significant of preservation and purity.

21. "And he went forth unto the spring of the waters." The fountain or source of the spring which supplied the streams of Jericho. The spring referred to is no doubt the present spring Ain es Sultan, the only spring near to Jericho, the waters of which spread over the plain of Jericho, 35 minutes' distance from the present village and castle. "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters." This clearly shows that the salt was not the means whereby the healing was wrought, but only as an outward sign to point to the work which was supernaturally performed. Salt would naturally make the water worse, not better; and even if it were helpful, one dish of salt could not purify a spring that supplied a whole city with water, much less make it permanently good.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. Good men are the true defenders of their country. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom.

2. Those who remain must take up the work of those whom God takes home to Himself.

3. Not the forms and methods of the ancient worthies, but their spirit, is needed in their successors.

4. There is power and comfort in remembering what God has done for the fathers and the church of the past. The same power works for us, the same love enfolds us.

5. Still must we go on, saying, "The king is dead! God save the king!"

6. The spirit of inquiry and investigation is right, but even more does it confirm the Word of God.

7. Even the best of saints should take an interest in the worldly prosperity and happiness of the people.

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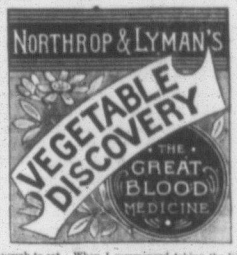

enough to eat. When I commenced taking the Discovery my weight was only 132½ lbs, when I finished the fifth bottle it was 172½ lbs, or an increase of about half a pound per day, and I never felt better in my life. No one can tell how thankful I am for what this wonderful medicine has done for me. It has rooted out of my system every vestige of the worst type of Jaundice, and **I don't believe there is a case of Jaundice, Liver Complaint or Dyspepsia that it will not cure.**

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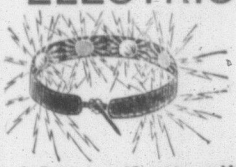

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