

OLD TESTAMENT GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Green Mountain 1st Ward, Lakewood, Colorado

8 August 2010

Page 1

Lesson 29: "He Took Up ... the Mantle of Elijah" (2 Kings 2; 5–6)

Introduction

The prophet Elijah wore a mantle. We do not know exactly what the mantle looked like, but it apparently was a cloak made of cloth. The passing of the mantle from Elijah to Elisha symbolized the passing of prophetic authority to Elisha.

In modern times we sometimes speak of the "mantle" of authority that the prophet receives when he is ordained and set apart. Although the prophet today does not carry a cloak or piece of cloth, God bestows the keys of the priesthood on him. These keys give him the power to act in God's name as the leader of the Church on the earth. When a prophet dies, this mantle of authority is given to the new prophet.



As a chariot with horses of fire swept Elijah toward heaven, he dropped his well-worn cloak to his faithful follower, Elisha
By William Henry Margetson

Elisha succeeds Elijah as the prophet. (2 Kings 2:1–18)

2 Kings 2:2-10 - Elijah was Elisha's "master"—his priesthood leader.

2 Kings 2:11-13 - After Elijah was taken up into heaven, Elisha took up his mantle. Today, the current President of the Church has the mantle of the prophet. In speaking of how this mantle transferred when the prophet dies, **President Joseph Fielding Smith** explained:

"There is no mystery about the choosing of the successor to the President of the Church. The Lord settled this a long time ago, and the senior apostle automatically becomes the presiding officer of the Church, and he is so sustained by the Council of the Twelve which becomes the presiding body of the Church when there is no First Presidency. The president is not elected, but he has to be

sustained both by his brethren of the Council and by the members of the Church" (Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954-56], 3:156).

President Gordon B. Hinckley explained how this procedure was followed when he was ordained and set apart as the prophet and President of the Church following the death of President Howard W. Hunter:

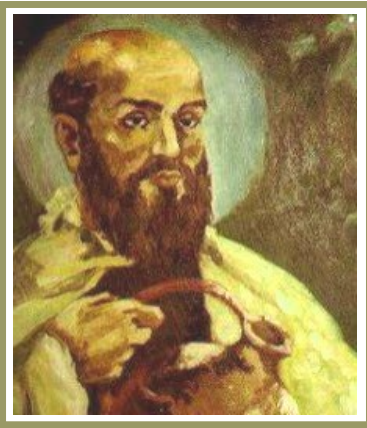
Lesson Highlights

- Elisha succeeds Elijah as the prophet.
- Elisha heals Naaman of leprosy.
- Elisha guides Israel in a war with Syria.

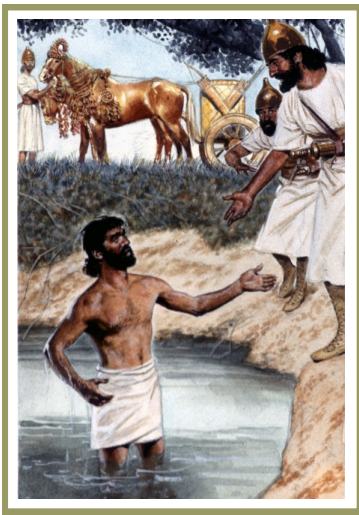
A study of this lesson will help us understand how the authority (mantle) passes from one prophet to another, encourage us to obey the words of the prophets, and assure us that the power of God is greater than any other power.

Next Week

#30 "Come to the House of the Lord"
(2 Chronicles 29–30; 32; 34)



Elisha the Prophet



Healing Naaman of leprosy

And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

—2 Kings 5:13

“With President Hunter’s passing, the First Presidency was dissolved. Brother Monson and I, who had served as his counselors, took our places in the Quorum of the Twelve, which became the presiding authority of the Church. [A few days later] all of the living ordained Apostles gathered in a spirit of fasting and prayer in the upper room of the temple. Here we sang a sacred hymn and prayed together. We partook of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, renewing in that sacred, symbolic testament our covenants and our relationship with Him who is our divine Redeemer. The Presidency was then reorganized, following a precedent well established through generations of the past [this precedent is explained in the preceding statement by President Joseph Fielding Smith]. There was no campaigning, no contest, no ambition for office. It was

quiet, peaceful, simple, and sacred. It was done after the pattern which the Lord Himself had put in place”

(Ensign, May 1995, 69).

As he did anciently, the Savior has given the keys of the priesthood to each of the latter-day Apostles. However, only the President of the Church, who is the senior living Apostle, may use these keys (or authorize others to use them) on behalf of the entire Church (see D&C 132:7).

2 Kings 2:14-15 - When they saw Elisha duplicate Elijah’s miracle of parting the waters of Jordan, the people responded by bowing to Elisha and recognizing his authority.

D&C 43:2-3, 7 - We immediately accept and sustain a newly ordained President of the Church because we know that God has chosen him to

be his prophet.

Soon after Elijah had been taken into heaven, the people wanted to send 50 strong men to look for him.

2 Kings 2:16 - Elisha told the people not to search for Elijah (or his body).

2 Kings 2:17 - The people pleaded with Elisha until he permitted the men to go search for Elijah.

2 Kings 2:18 – When the 50 men came back without finding Elijah, Elisha reminded them that he had told them not to go. We learn from the experience of those 50 men that we should follow the counsel of the prophet the first time we hear it and not argue with or ignore the prophet’s counsel. If we sometimes wait for prophets to repeat counsel before we follow it, we are in error and need to repent quickly.

Elisha heals Naaman of leprosy. (2 Kings 5)

2 Kings 5:1 – Naaman was the captain of the Syrian army, but he was afflicted with leprosy.

2 Kings 5:2-9 - He went to Elisha in hope of being healed by the prophet.

2 Kings 5:10 - Elisha’s messenger told Naaman to wash in the Jordan seven times to be healed.

2 Kings 5:11-13 - At first, Naaman refused to follow Elisha’s instructions, but Naaman’s servants convinced him to do what Elisha had told him to do—even if it was a simple thing.

2 Kings 5:14 - Naaman dipped himself seven times in the Jordan River “and he was clean”.

The story of Naaman teaches

us a valuable principle about following the counsel of the prophet—do it—even when we may not like or understand it or when it may be about small and simple matters. We can increase our willingness to follow the counsel of Church leaders if we thank our Heavenly Father for them daily in our prayers and acknowledge the leaders as the Lord’s chosen spokespersons.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar asked, “*Are we not sometimes like Naaman, looking for big or important things to do and bypassing simple things which could change our lives and heal us of our afflictions?*” (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 80).

After recounting the story of Naaman, **Elder Gordon B. Hinckley** said: “*The way of the gospel is a simple way. Some of the requirements may appear to you as elementary and unnecessary. Do not spurn them. Humble yourselves and walk in obedience. I promise that the results that follow will be marvelous to behold and satisfying to experience*” (Ensign, Nov. 1976, 96).

2 Kings 5:15 - Learning from his healing, Naaman declared that the God of Israel is the only God.

2 Kings 5:15 - Naaman tried to give Elisha a reward after being healed, but Elisha refused Naaman’s offer because it is important to serve without concern for earthly rewards.

Elisha guides Israel in a war with Syria. (2 Kings 6:8-18)

2 Kings 6:8-10 - Elisha helped the king of Israel in the war against Syria.

2 Kings 6:11-14 - When the

king of Syria learned what Elisha was doing in using his prophetic powers to aid the king of Israel, he tried to capture him in Dothan.

2 Kings 6:15 - Elisha’s servant responded with concern when he saw the Syrian horses and chariots surrounding the city.

2 Kings 6:16 - Elisha simply told his servant, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them", teaching the eternal principle that God is more powerful than any earthly army.

Modern-day circumstances might lead some of us to believe that we are helpless against the evils of the world because we are such a minority in the battle against evil, but we should have confidence that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them" as we battle against the evils of our day.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: "*When I read this wonderful story as a boy, I always identified with the young serv-*

ant of Elisha. I thought, If I am ever surrounded by the forces of evil while I am in the Lord's service, I hope the Lord will open my eyes and give me faith to understand that when we are in the work of the Lord, those who are with us are always more powerful than those who oppose us" (Ensign, Nov. 1992, 39).

D&C 84:87-88 - The confidence that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them" helps us as we take the gospel to all people.

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "*We have not as yet carried the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. But we have made great strides. We have gone*

wherever we are permitted to go. God is at the helm, and doors will be opened by His power according to His divine will. Of that I am confident. Of that I am certain" (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 70-71).

2 Kings 6:17 - Elisha prayed in his servant's behalf that he be allowed to see the Lord's army. At first, the servant didn't see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire that God had sent because his spiritual eyes weren't open. Think about what we can do to open our eyes more fully to the power of God in our own lives and in the world.

"The measure of your true conversion ... is whether or not you are so living that you see the power of God resting upon the leaders of this church and that testimony goes down into your heart like fire."

—President Harold B. Lee (The Teachings of Harold B. Lee, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 520.)

Conclusion

The President of the Church is a prophet of God. It is important that we sustain new Church leaders and follow the counsel of the prophets. We have ample testimony in the scriptures and from our modern prophets that the power of God is greater than any other power.

Additional Teaching

Elisha's miracles

Elisha performed many great miracles, showing compassion for the people and giving further evidence that he was Elijah's authorized successor.

He parted the waters of Jordan, healed the waters of Jericho, multiplied a widow's oil, raised a boy from the dead, healed people who had been poisoned, fed the hungry, healed Naaman's

leprosy, caused an ax to float, and guided kings in war. You may want to review some of these miracles from **2 Kings 2-6**.

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- Why do we sometimes wait for prophets to repeat counsel before we follow it? What counsel have Church leaders given us in recent years? How have you been blessed as you have followed this counsel?
- What are some of the small, simple things we have been asked to do by the prophet or other Church leaders? Why are these things sometimes hard to do? How can we increase our willingness to follow the counsel of Church leaders?
- How has obedience in simple things strengthened your testimony?