

ELIJAH: FINAL PORTRAITS

Review: Geo-politics

Major Empires and Foreign Threats (maps and names)

Assyria and Egypt – looming super-powers

Aram – the names ben-Hadad and Hazael are important

Phoenicia – “source” of Baal worship; the Jezebel connection

Moab – rebellion against Israel after Ahab’s death (2 Kings 1:1) – cf. Mesha Stele

Edom – a deputy was ruling (1 Kings 22:47)

Israel and Judah: Defensive and Offensive (pun intended) Alliances

- Omri with Phoenicia (1 Kings 16:31-33)
- Ahab vs ben-Hadad (1 Kings 20)
- Ahab with Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22)

Review: Elijah’s Whereabouts and Activities

From mountain (Carmel) to mountain (Horeb) – 1 Kings 17-19

Partially under the radar screen

- Pronounced judgment on Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21)
- Micaiah is high-profile instead – just imagine the terror of the court prophets to challenge the king (and queen) (1 Kings 22)

Keeping the Dynastic Successions in Order

<u>Ahab (North)</u>	<u>Jehoshaphat (South)</u>
Ahaziah	Jehoram
Joram (Jehoram)	Ahaziah

Final Portrait # 1 – Calling Down Fire! (2 Kings 1)

Our overarching question: What do we make of these details [below]?

- Baal-zebul, god of Ekron – Ahaziah’s “go-to”
- Message: the LORD → angel of the LORD → Elijah → Ahaziah (repeated three times)
- In the meantime, Elijah retreated to a hilltop
- Note his appearance (2 Kings 1:8; cf John Baptist – Matt 3:4)
- Two companies of fifty men sent from the king to bring him (“man of God” – *’ish ha’elohim*) down – not benign measures
- Fire (*’esh*) came down (twice)

- Third commander approached in humility and fear (of God’s consuming fire)
- Note the angel of the LORD’s instructions: what might they tell us?

Final Portrait # 2 – Transported to Heaven in the Whirlwind and the Chariot of Fire (2 Kings 2)

Here our task is to note the structures in this remarkable narrative

- We are “warned” that something supernatural is about to happen
- Rhetoric drives the initial steps forward; it runs like this:
 - “Stay here; the Lord has sent me to . . . [Bethel, Jericho, the Jordan]”
 - “As surely as the LORD lives. . . . I will not leave you”
 - [At Bethel, Jericho] The company of the prophets: “Do you know . . .?”
 - “Yes, but don’t speak of it”
 - Rhetoric ceased before the Jordan – “and they walked on”*
- Fifty men of company of prophets watching from a distance
- And then there is a chiasmic structure:
 - Cloak – struck water
 - Water divided right and left – dry ground
 - “What shall I do for you?”
 - “inherit double portion of Spirit” [spiritual “heir”]
 - “If you see me . . .
 - Chariot, horses, fire, whirlwind**
 - My Father – chariots and horsemen of Israel**
 - Saw him no more
 - Picked up fallen cloak
 - Struck the water: “Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?”
 - Water divided right and left and he crossed over
 - Prophets searched for three days

Addenda: Elisha’s First Miracles! [double portion of the Spirit?]

- Healing the waters of Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-22)
- Fending off a gang (2 Kings 2:23-35) - *what shall we do with this?*