

Last week we left Elijah and Elisha discussing Elijah's departure from this earth with Elijah allowing his servant to ask of him something that would bless Elisha. Elisha's response was to ask for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, which was essentially a double portion of God's blessing for the sake of Elijah's ministry of judgment.

How did Elijah respond to Elisha's request?

2 Kings 2:10 ¹⁰ He said, "You have asked a hard thing. *Nevertheless*, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be *so*."

So, did Elijah know in advance that God would in fact bless Elisha in this way?

No. He simply knew the outcome based upon the way God took Elijah to be with Himself.

And now we come to the means by which God would take Elijah.

2 Kings 2:11-15 ¹¹ As they were going along and talking, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. ¹² Elisha saw *it* and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. ¹³ He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over. ¹⁵ Now when the sons of the prophets who *were* at Jericho opposite *him* saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

Notice what happens here. Elijah and Elisha are not camping out waiting for God to act. They're not standing still. They were walking towards Jericho as they were both on the east side of Jericho, as we see in verse 15.

As they were walking along they were talking, probably talking about how awesome a day it had been and how the future ministry

of Elisha was going to involve the same elements that Elijah had been dealing with the previous few years, with Jezebel still in the picture.

But then an interesting thing happens.

2 Kings 2:11 ¹¹ As they were going along and talking, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.

As they are walking and talking behold a chariot of fire and horses. In some of your translations there is a word or two words that describe behold. The word is “appeared” as in the NIV, or “there appeared”, as in the NASB, or KJV. Those words are not in the original Hebrew, but are inserted in our English translations to describe behold.

^{ESV} **2 Kings 2:11** And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Even without the words “there appeared”, when we see the word behold what is the sense of the situation with Elijah and Elisha?

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the situation surrounding Elijah and Elisha changed.

What changed?

The sudden and unexpected appearance of horses and chariots.

But there is an adjective that describes these horses and chariots and what is that?

Fire or fiery.

The Hebrew word is simply *esh* and it can mean fire, but it can also be literally translated blaze or blazing.

And so, what is being described here in regards to the description of these horses and chariots?

They’re blazing, they appear to be on fire from a human perspective. Now, before we get to the blazing aspect of these horses and chariots we need to ask another question.

How did Elijah and Elisha know these were horses and chariots?

Because they were horses and chariots. They were familiar to the both of them. When they saw these things they immediately identified them with horses and chariots they had seen in the past in other places.

But this leads to the next question.

Where did these horses and chariots come from?

2 Kings 2:11 ¹¹ Then it came about as they were going along and talking, that behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.

They came from heaven as the text clearly shows because this is where they end up leaving to.

Alright, so we need to ask some more questions.

If these horses and chariots are from heaven then how do they present themselves to Elijah and Elisha, and by this I mean, are they spiritual horses and chariots or are they physical horses and chariots?

If they are physical how do we know this from verse 11?

Because they take up space and time in the act of separating Elijah and Elisha. It would be the same as if I were to walk up to two people who are standing close to each other and I stepped in between the two of them.

Under normal circumstances if I stepped in between two people what would be the normal reaction from those two people?

To step to one side. Why?

Because in a physical world two solid objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

Well, someone may argue that these could in fact be spiritual horses and chariots that only appeared physical but were in fact

not. Like a hologram that has no substance other than light Elijah and Elisha were fooled into thinking they were physical and stepped aside.

Now, it is true that there are many instances in the O.T. where a spiritual being appears to physical human beings in some physical form.

Can you think of any?

The Lord walking in the cool of the day in the Garden of Eden after man's fall into sin.

The burning bush that Moses encountered that God used to communicate to Moses.

The Lord and three angels that appeared to Abraham before the angels went down to Sodom and Gomorrah.

In all of these instances would we agree that these beings were not from planet earth?

But simply because they aren't from planet earth does this mean that there was not a true physical form that was taken by these beings and even God?

The burning bush was a bush. The three men that appeared to Abraham, for all intents and purposes, were men. They walked and talked and ate. They didn't float above the ground. They were physical and they interacted with this physical world.

But there is something that is noteworthy about these three men with Abraham, for example, or even the man who wrestled with Jacob.

Though they interacted with men in a physical form, were they in fact human beings?

No. Why for example can't angels be human?

Because they were created by God after their own kind, like every other creature. But unlike every other creature on this planet what was the restriction on the angels as far as procreating?

This is not something that angels could do, nor were they created for this purpose. This by the way eliminates the possibility that angels could cohabit with human beings as some suggest in the days of Noah before the flood.

Genesis 6:1-4 ^{NAU} Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. ³ Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore *children* to them. Those were the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.

Some will take this passage and say that this was the beginning of the end for mankind because they sinned the sin of intermingling with angels, or more correctly, demons. Their offspring then became even more evil because they are now half bred with demons.

There are two problems with this. The first is the obvious. Everything in Genesis 1, as it relates to living things, is made after their kind, be it grass, vegetables, fruit, fish or beasts that roam the earth; without exception.

What does this mean, for example in the animal world?

And antelope cannot have offspring with a lion. Why?

They are not of the same kind.

Can a lion have offspring with a Tiger?

Yes. Why?

Because they are both cats.

As to angels and humans we know that angels do not marry. How do we know this?

With Jesus' explanation about the resurrection Jesus says this.

Mark 12:24-25 ²⁴ Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not ¹understand the Scriptures, or the

power of God? ²⁵ "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Well, what does that imply about angels?

That they don't marry. Well, that simply means they don't marry one another, it doesn't preclude they couldn't marry human beings as Gen.6:1-2 clearly states.

Genesis 6:1-2 ^{NAS} Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.

Though the phrase, sons of God, can be used of angels, it also used of human beings. But the context of Genesis 6 is very clear as verse one states, "Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them."

The phrase, sons of God, in the context there in verse one is clearly describing who these men were. The term Nephilim in verse 4 of Genesis 6 is simply describing another group of men.

Genesis 6:4 ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore *children* to them. Those were the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.

The Nephilim are simply put in a time frame as existing during the time when the sons of God came into the daughters of men, not that the Nephilim are somehow of angelic substance.

So, as we go back to our text in 2Kings we still have to ask how is it that a horse or a chariot show up on planet earth, if in fact they are not true horses and chariots, albeit horses and chariots of fire from heaven?

Let's assume for the sake of argument that these horses and chariots are spiritual entities. Do they not, however, appear as physical as they take up time and space to the point where they separate both Elijah and Elisha?

So, while they're on planet earth they have a physical form.

In fact, what are we told about Elijah's participation in the appearance of these horses and chariots?

2 Kings 2:11 ¹¹ Then it came about as they were going along and talking, that behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.

Is Elijah taken to heaven as a physical human being or is he now assuming some sort of spiritual existence devoid of his body?

No. He's just as human and physical both before and after his departure into heaven.

So, does it not stand to reason that a physical man climbed into a physical chariot pulled by physical horses to return to a place that would accommodate his physical existence?

So, where are these horses and chariots today, and for that matter Elijah?

In heaven.

So, is heaven physical or spiritual?

It's both. The same question could be asked of you and me.

Are we physical or spiritual?

Both. How can that be?

That's the way God created us.

And so, could heavenly horses and chariots be both physical and spiritual?

When we talk about things we can't see in heaven we automatically place only a spiritual aspect to them. But as we've seen before simply because you can't see something doesn't make it only spiritual, whether it's an atom or the wind.

In fact, simply because we can't see the residents or structure of heaven doesn't make heaven a real place, and by definition, a place is something that takes up space and time. Remember, heaven was created. Heaven is not a place that was created for God because God needs no place to live and thrive.

And so, simply because we can't see the dimension in which heaven exists doesn't make it any less real and any less physical. In fact, later in 2Kings the servant of Elisha experiences this.

2 Kings 6:15-17 ¹⁵ Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶ So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

So, as we look at the time frame in which these two men were experiencing the army that was about to attack them, at what time were these horses and chariots on the surrounding mountains there?

Both before and after the enemy army was there. So, simply because the servant of Elisha couldn't see the heavenly horses and chariots didn't mean they weren't there the entire time.

It's the same with you and me today. There is an array of heavenly beings and objects that are potentially surrounding us all the time, be they angels, horses, chariots and so forth. We just can't see them, even though as we see from our text they would stand out like a sore thumb as they are blazing under other circumstances.

And so, Elijah is taken physically, without experiencing death, to heaven by the agency of physical chariots and horses.

But are there only horses and chariots involved in this rescue operation for Elijah?

2 Kings 2:12 ¹² And Elisha saw *it* and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

When Elijah is suddenly taken out of sight by these horses and chariot what does Elisha say?

He speaks of what he saw, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen. Unless the horses alone were given the duty to pick

up Elijah, who else might have been part of this operation, identified as horsemen?

The same beings described in Hebrews who have one very important role in the lives of God's people.

Hebrews 1:13-14 ¹³ But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet"? ¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

So, it wasn't just chariots and horses pulling the chariots, but additional horses and horsemen who would be none other than angels sent by God to rescue Elijah.

And this fiery sight would have been awesome. Remember, at what time of day would this have been as we've seen that this event was taking place at the end of their travels which was about a 25 mile hike through 3 different cities finally ending up on the east side of the Jordan?

This would have been near the end of the day and the night sky would have been lit up by this fiery parade of horses and chariots and angels riding the horses.

And this raises even more questions. In verse 11, how many chariots are involved?

One.

In verse 12 how many chariots are involved?

Plural chariots and horsemen.

What is a horsemen?

A person who rides a horse.

Why would an angel ride a horse if an angel is a spirit being with no need to be transported by a horse?

If both the angels and horses are spiritual then what's the point of a spirit being riding another spirit being?

Riding, galloping, picking up human beings all involve aspects that can only be described as physical.

Elijah, was physically taken to heaven on a chariot that can only be described as accommodating his physical body, which would have been physical, by beings that pulled that chariot, namely horses, and could be physically seen by both Elijah and Elisha, and flanked by other horses and their horsemen, namely angels who are operating as physical agents.

It's my contention from what the word of God clearly shows us in many different places that whatever these ministering spirits are they have a physical presence whenever they are used by God to minister to physical human beings whether we can see them or not, as in the case of Elisha and his servant. This doesn't make them human beings, it only makes them physical beings at any given time in God's economy.