

CHAPEL - SHELTON COLLEGE, Cape May, N. J.

Oct. 20, 1966

Theme: Elijah meant more for the protection of the land than a lot of soldiers.

Chariots & Horsemen (or Elijah & Vietnam)

Perhaps when I have finished you will be better to judge which would be the better title for the message.

The message is based upon two passages of Scripture, both in 2 Kings. The first is 2 Ki. 2:9-12 (reading text . . .) Chariot and horsemen.

The other passage is 2 Ki. 13:14--20 (reading text . . .) These two passages are united together by the fact they describe the last scene in the lives of two men, Elijah and his follower, Elisha. It's interesting that in each case we have somebody saying, My Father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. What does that mean? I'm sure many people, when they read this scene in connection with Elijah's life, have a complete misunderstanding of it. The very previous verse says there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire and Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven. So people think that when Elijah saw it and cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof he was referring to the chariot of and horses of fire that took Elijah up to heaven. But why would that be the chariot of Israel? Why would he use that term if that is what he meant?

Sometimes we get truth by seeing similar phrases. I think you here by comparing the death of Elijah and the death of Elisha. But other times, the fact that the same phrase is used twice can mislead you and can cause you to think there is a relation when there isn't. Actually I'm quite convinced that what Elisha meant was, My father (that is Elijah) --this one to whom I look up to, this one who is now taken from us, he is the chariot and the horsemen of Israel. He is the protection of Israel. He is its greatest defense. Today we would say, My father, my father, the bombers and the tanks of Israel. We would use some such term as that today, because the chariots and horsemen at that time were the exact equivalent of the bombers and tanks of today. Of course if we have any question that that's what it means in connection with Elijah's life, I think it's made absolutely clear in the later Tips(?) because when Elisha died there was no chariot to take him up to heaven. He was buried. He died a natural death. There was no such thing to cause a misunderstanding. But it's interesting to notice that when Elijah died one man was there. Elisha stood there and said, My father, My father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. When Elisha died, it was the king of Israel who said, the head of the nation, he recognized that Elisha was the greatest protection the nation had. He was the greatest source of deliverance from its enemies.

Now, I'm not sure Joash did recognize that. Maybe he would say, things the people would like to hear, but at least the fact he said it shows that many of the people of Israel recognized it, and either the king recognized it or the king was a good politician which the king as a good politician ~~wish~~ wishing to have the support of the people said what he knew they would approve of. But it's interesting to see that in one case, one man says this, and in the other the king says this probably to appear to the great mass of the nation by showing his ~~support~~ recognition of the importance of religion in their lives.

In days like this I think the verse is very appropriate to us --"the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Israel had great need of protection. Israel was a little country with great countries round about that were a threat to her and eventually destroyed her.