

Here in 1 Kings, again, we do find a few similarities between Jesus and Elijah:

1. Elijah was tempted in the wilderness 40 days (1 Kings 19:8).

*Mark 1:13 And He was there **in the wilderness forty days**, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.*

2. Elijah was led to believe God had forsaken Him (1 Kings 19:10).

*Mark 15:34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, **why have You forsaken Me?**"*

3. Elijah selected his successor(s) after his wilderness temptation and spent some time with him before going to Heaven.

### **1 Kings 19:19-21**

**So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth.** So he was at the rear of the 12 yoke of oxen. Perhaps this means they all belonged to him, but the text allows that there were others plowing with other yoke of oxen. This would answer the question later as to why he sacrificed his yoke. It was his way of showing he wasn't returning.

"...being the last in the line, he could do, without stopping the others. It is probable too that, Elisha being the last, Elijah's action would not have been observed by the rest."<sup>1</sup>

**Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle<sup>2</sup> on him.** This was the apparent "hand off" of the ministry of Elijah to Elisha. **20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you."** How fast was Elijah moving? The last chapter says that he was quite the runner. Was he known for this? Was this quick handoff a clue to Elisha that this was Elijah's mantle he had just had received? Is this why he had to run to ask for permission to have a final feast? **And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?"** **21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.**

### **1:14-15**

**14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, 17. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** Now look, that word "repentance" is actually related to the rest of the directions Jesus gives. Repentance, then, is related to "the Gospel of the Kingdom" and "believing."

"Repentance is a sort of John the Baptist thing"

No, it's actually kind of a "Jesus thing" too which means that it was "a God thing." We're supposed to be repenting. Why? We have naturally unbelieving hearts that are naturally not ready for the King.

In the context of John's baptism of confession and repentance of sin, repentance means to turn from that wicked sin that is keeping one from being ready for a coming king.

---

<sup>1</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *1 Kings*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 464.

<sup>2</sup> Zechariah 13:4 seems to show us that it was a coat much like John the Baptist's in Mark 1:6.

**and believe in the gospel.**” So, the talk we’re about to see about “fishing for men” is connected to the message of Jesus and John the Baptist.

### 1:16-20

**1:16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; did you notice He found them employed?<sup>3</sup> for they were fishermen. 17 Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me,** The last time anyone did that was in 1 Kings 19 with Elijah calling Elisha. The disciples respond much like Elisha: Elisha burned the plows and offered a sacrifice of oxen and there hasn't been another prophet who has come by since that time and said, "Hey, come with me. You're going to take over for me eventually." Well, in Mark 16:18, the disciples “take over” in what we call the “Great Commission.”

**and I will make you become fishers of men.”** At this point we could continue on about how we need to consider the intricacies of catching souls. We could banter with delight concerning the depth and temperature and season and lure and line weight and particular behavior of particular fish at particular times, and we could consider the speed or reaction of the fisherman. We would certainly admit that not all souls require the same attention or the same effort, but alas!...they all have the same need (they must be caught). **18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.** Clearly, Mark (nor Matthew) felt it essential to their agenda to explain why they “left immediately.” What caused this? Consider Luke 5:2-11 and you’ll find Luke adds more detail helpful.<sup>4</sup> In doing this, you will see my desire to reinforce the practice of allowing the other records of Scripture to keep us from making grave mistakes in interpretation—in this case addressing “why did these disciples abandon their work to follow Jesus?”<sup>5</sup> Does it seem strange to consider a “Christian who is not a disciple?” The concept of a disciple who doesn’t fish for men is equally as foreign.

**19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee,** This was quite probably the brother of Zecharias, John the Baptist’s father, while Salome his wife was probably the mother of Mary. This would make James and John first cousins of Jesus. **and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. 20 And immediately He called them,** undoubtedly in the same manner in which he called the other two.

Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, in their book *Transformational Groups*,<sup>6</sup> give five amazing things about the timing of Jesus in his calling of these men, and I have adapted them to our passage here:

1. **He called them before they were believers.** In our understanding of the Gospel, these men were not—in this passage—believers of the Gospel. Think about how God is preparing folks before they even come to full faith. Many were working in a ministry in a church for years before the Lord opened your heart to the truth of the Gospel. Or consider how God takes something you had an interest in before you came to faith and is now using that to reach others now that you have believed the Gospel and have been saved.
2. **He called them before they were ready.** He decided that there were worse things than a lack of perceived readiness: One of those “worse things” was disobedience.
3. **He called them before they could clearly understand the mission:** There’s very little chance that these fishermen knew what they were really going to do to “catch....men.”

“catch them with what? For what? When? For how long?”

But my! How we are spoiled! We are so thirsty for control we want all the answers about each turn before we say “yes” to something. Jesus is too kind to trick you. I’ve heard it said that nobody waits until all the lights are green on the route to work before they leave the house, or they’d never leave the house!

---

<sup>3</sup>Perhaps Matthew 20:1-11 allows for Christ to employ the “idle.” This, of course, involves soteriology.

<sup>4</sup>Jesus had just proven Himself to be the Master of all fish.

<sup>5</sup>It should also be pointed out that Jesus, according to John 1, had probably already enlisted them closer to the location of John’s baptism. See comments in my commentary on Matthew (chapter 4) for more thoughts on this.

<sup>6</sup>(Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 159-166.

4. **He called them before they were worthy of His time.** I don't have much to say about this other than you are worthy of my time. We have a wonderful system in place. It's called membership. That's one of the reasons we maintain a membership list. We have people who need a pastor and one of the chief ways they acknowledge that reality is by joining a church.
5. **He called them knowing some would not be winners.** Let's be honest, we all know somebody we have put time into that we wish we had not...but time spent on behalf of Jesus for somebody that proves to be a real downer for the ministry is no waste of time at all.

**and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.** Why did these men feel at liberty to leave their dad and why didn't their dad follow quickly behind and say, "Wait just a minute, you get back here and play your part of this family business?" Why did these men feel the liberty or even the compulsion to follow Christ? Maybe there is some historically-contextual demand that they leave when a Rabbi calls, or maybe it was their right to take a leave of absence? We have already addressed the "why", in part, when we discussed Luke 5, but the "why/how" of the possibility of their departure (why they even could depart) remains a textual mystery to me.<sup>7</sup>

Implications:

1. When somebody calls you, it may be God calling you.

It feels even silly saying it, but let's be honest, if this is God's group of people (SRBC), and we are in God's idea of organization ("a church"), then there is nothing else more important on this earth when it comes to doing the Lord's work than this body. God's organization comprised of machinery operated by God's blood-bought redeemed is God's focus. And if it's God's focus...it shouldn't be your 5<sup>th</sup> priority behind sports or vocational aspirations.

So if this is actually true, it's also true that a man who calls you to follow him may have it wrong...but he may have it right. After all, are we really doing missions? If the book starts with "I'll make you fishers of men, and then for 3.5 years, the Master of the fish makes them fishermen and then leaves them to 'fish' when He returns to Heaven and defines it as 'preaching the gospel to every creature'," then ask yourself whether this Sandy Ridge Baptist Church, member of the SBC; supporter of the IMB; supporter of the NAMB; carrier and proponent of a Missions committee is really involved with missions—since "missions" is "catching fish" through training with a "fisherman" and is also called by the "Master fisherman" as "preaching the Gospel to every creature." SO WHAT AM I DOING TO HELP YOU CATCH MEN?

2. When you come, you can't carry everything.
  - a. Gotta leave some old sins behind.
  - b. Gotta leave some old good things behind.
    - i. Interests
    - ii. Hobbies
    - iii. Amusements
3. When you come, so comes your wallet.

But let us never forget that we are talking about catching men and women (mankind) in a net:

Now it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen. And there were many fish in the waters all around. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes filled with fish. And the fish were hungry.

Year after year these who called themselves fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, they talked about the abundance of fish, and how they might go about fishing.

---

<sup>7</sup>Again, some guessing (albeit educated guessing) is done in the commentary on Matthew 4.

Continually they searched for new and better definitions of fishing. They sponsored costly nationwide and worldwide congresses and meetings and conferences and training sessions to discuss fishing and to promote fishing and hear about all the ways of fishing.

These fishermen built large, beautiful buildings called "Fishing Headquarters." The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish. But one thing they didn't do, however after the conferences and the discussions and the buildings and everything; they didn't fish.

They organized a board to send out fishermen to where there were many fish that were yet unfished. The board was formed by those who had the great vision and courage to speak about fishing. People would weep about far-away lakes and streams and oceans where there were fish that were yet uncaught. They would define fishing, promote the idea of fishing in far-away streams and lakes where fish of different colors lived.

Also the board hired staffs and appointed committees at several echelons and held many meetings to define fishing, defend fishing, to decide what new streams should be fished next. But the staff and committee members did not fish.

Expensive training centers were built to teach fishermen how to fish. Those who taught had doctorates in fishology, but the teachers, behold, they did not fish. They only taught fishing. Year after year, graduates were sent to do full-time fishing, some to distant waters filled with fish.

Further, the fishermen built large printing houses to publish fishing guides. Speaker's bureaus were built and provided to schedule special speakers on the subject of fishing.

Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded, and were sent to fish. But like the fishermen back home, they really never fished.

Some also said they wanted to be part of the fishing party, but they felt called to furnish fishing equipment instead. Others felt their job was to relate to the fish in a good way so the fish would know the difference between good and bad fishermen.

After one stirring meeting on "The Necessity for Fishing," a young fellow left the meeting and went fishing. The next day he reported he had caught two outstanding fish. He was honored for his excellent catch and scheduled to visit all the big meetings possible to tell how he caught the fish.

So he quit fishing so he would have time to tell about the experience to the other fishermen. He was also placed on the Fishermen's General Board as a person having considerable experience fishing.

Now it's true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. Some lived near the water, but they didn't fish. They bore the smell of dead fish every day near that water, but they didn't fish. They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen's clubs and the fact that they claimed to be fishermen, but they never fished.

They wondered about those who felt it was of little use to attend weekly meetings to talk about fishing. After all, were they not following the Master who said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men?"

Imagine how hurt some of them were one day when a person suggested that those who didn't catch fish were really not fishermen after all, no matter how much they claimed to be, no matter how much they said they were, no matter how many books they wrote about fishing, how many conferences they attended about fishing, how much they rejoiced over stories of big catches from the past. Is a person a fisherman if year after year he never catches a fish?

We are not allowed to even entertain the idea of being a disciple of Jesus if you do not fish. I'm not saying you're not saved, I'm saying it's an embarrassment for disciples of Jesus to not be fishermen. I'm not saying that you have to be as good of a fisherman as anyone around you. I'm saying that if you don't fish, you probably shouldn't be too rowdy about claiming to be a follower of Jesus. People who are reserved in their testimony...it's hard to catch fish when you're not casting the net. We are not allowed to just finance fishing. We are not allowed to just build big buildings for fish to come to once they are caught. We are not allowed to just have a comfortable place for fish to be. We are commanded to go fishing. We are commanded to fish everywhere.

There are reasons to believe these men were not "common hands." They were more fishing bosses. These people were pretty wealthy.<sup>8</sup> You don't get to own boats by being a pauper. You don't get nets and crews by being ignorant peasants. These people are well-to-do and so when you were to say to them, "What is the first thing you were expected to be when you were called to be his disciple?" They would have said, "We were supposed to be fishermen of men."

He's looking for persistent and patient people. People who don't get angry because the sinner doesn't get the Gospel the first time remembering that, "I wasn't that soft and tender to the Gospel the first time either." And sometimes it's because they are rebellious, and sometimes it's simply because they have clouded thoughts. We have to be people that just hate to lose a fish.

---

<sup>8</sup>They had homes or access to homes in Jerusalem (John took Mary to his own home in John 19). Multiple homes is a sign of wealth.