

BOOK OF 1 KINGS
ELIJAH AND ELISHA-PART 1
1 KINGS 19:19

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Introduction

The Summer Olympics were supposed to be this Summer in Tokyo but have been postponed just as other sporting events have been because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I don't watch a lot of TV, but I do enjoy watching the Olympians every two years both the winter Olympians and the summer Olympians. It is amazing to see the athletes who spend their lives preparing for the short amount of time that they compete on the world stage.

One of the things I love to watch in the Summer Olympics are the relay races of the track teams. The relay race involves passing a baton or stick from one runner to another. In fact, the successful passing of the baton is one of the secrets to winning the race. It has to be passed smoothly and quickly and done within a certain distance within the lane that you are assigned to.

The runners have to be careful not to drop the baton. No matter how fast the runners are, if the baton exchange is flubbed up, they will not win! (e.g. US team with the best runners lost because of a baton drop!) It is a team effort with everyone doing their part.

In many ways, life is like a relay race. **In this section of Scripture, we see the Prophet Elijah passing the baton of the ministry, so to speak, to a young man named Elisha.**

In this transition stage, we will see how Elisha was sold out for God! In fact, he was so sold out for God that he **"burned the bridges"** of his former life, so to speak, behind him!

Elisha teaches us here that when it comes to serving the LORD, there should be no turning back! There is to be 100% commitment to the LORD! He teaches us that when serving the LORD, there should be but one direction for us to go—FORWARD!

Let's look here as Elijah finds Elisha, in obedience to what the LORD told him to do, and then he passes the baton of ministry to Elisha.

I. WE NEED TO REMEMBER WHAT ELIJAH HAD BEEN TOLD BY THE LORD! (Vs 15-16)

We saw this in our previous study of this Chapter. Here Elijah was told to **anoint Hazael to be king over Syria** and to **anoint Jehu to be king over Israel** and **anoint Elisha to be a prophet "in thy room"** or we might say **"in your place."**

So we need to understand that **the LORD is the one who chose Elisha, it was not Elijah himself.** This is important because the call of God was on Elisha's life! The LORD directed Elijah to anoint Elisha to take his own place in ministry as a prophet of the LORD!

There were all kind of prophets in Israel, but **we KNOW that the LORD had called Elijah and now we see the LORD told Elijah that Elisha was His next man up** to **"receive the baton"** of the ministry so to speak!

Elijah had been a great spokesman for the LORD before Ahab and Jezebel. He had run his leg of the race! And now **as the LORD is preparing to take Elijah off of the scene, he calls for Elisha to fill the upcoming vacancy as a prophet of God!**

There Are Several Things I'd Like To Point Out Here:

A. No One Is Irreplaceable In The Ministry!

In my 64 years of life in this world I have had the opportunity to see men of God come and men of God go!

There is NO man of God who is or ever has been irreplaceable! Now I've seen some that acted like they thought they were, but none in fact are! When I pass off the scene, someone else will step up and take my place here as Pastor of this Church!

In many ways we will see that Elisha will be like Elijah, but they were both individuals used by the LORD in their own way! Elijah was NOT the standard, **THE LORD IS THE STANDARD!**

No One Is Irreplaceable In The Ministry!

- B. The LORD Is The One That Does The Calling, Not Man!**
Elijah had been told to anoint Elisha as his replacement, but **the LORD is the One Who did the choosing—not Elijah and not Elisha!**

That is important! **For one to stick in the ministry, they must have the call of the LORD upon their lives!**

The ministry is not an easy life! That’s not a complaint. That is a statement of fact! The ministry is often full of hardship that has to be endured and is often full of being rejected as one fulfills the call of the LORD on one’s life!

Look at what Paul told the young preacher Timothy in his second letter to him. Look at *2 Timothy 1:8-14; 2:1-7*.

What I’m saying is that **one MUST have the call of the LORD on their life because of the nature of the ministry!**

- C. The LORD Is The One That Determines When One’s Ministry Is Over!**

We saw this in the study of the first part of this Chapter! Elijah was ready for his ministry to be over before the LORD was!

WE NEED TO REMEMBER WHAT ELIJAH HAD BEEN TOLD BY THE LORD!

- II. WE NEED TO SEE THE OBEDIENCE OF ELIJAH HERE!**
(Vs 19)

We’re told that Elijah obeyed the last command from the LORD first! Elijah went straightway to find Elisha and cast his mantle on him!

We’re not told the reason for this, but no doubt part of the reason would have been to take Elisha under his tutelage for a season and train him!

(Paul took Timothy under his tutelage and we just read there in *2 Timothy 2:2* that Paul encouraged him to train others also!)

It is important for us to see that this man of God, Elijah, took the passing of the baton of the ministry to Elisha very seriously!

- III. WE SEE ELIJAH STANDS BOTH IN COMPARISON AND CONTRAST TO ELISHA! (Vs 19)**

After the Lord encouraged Elijah that he was not alone and that there were 7000 others who were faithful to the LORD, he commenced to find and anoint Elisha as he was commanded to do by the Lord.

When Elijah encountered Elisha for the first time, he found Elisha working hard, plowing fields. **God never calls idle, lazy men. Instead, He calls men who are faithful, diligent, and hardworking and are faithful in everyday duties.**

Luke 16:10-11 – “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”

It appears that Shaphat, Elisha’s father, was a wealthy farmer. The twelve yoke of oxen in the field indicate this fact. Yet, he did not spoil his son or allow his son to stand around idle while the servants did all the work!

Elisha's father knew the importance of building character through hard work. It is good for young people to learn how to work! Amen!

Lamentations 3:27 – “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.”

Too many kids are spoiled by their parents giving them everything! Children should be taught the value of possessions by learning to work for those possessions!

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Elisha was plowing. That was some very strenuous work. Ancient plows were often made out of tree trunks with branches forming in opposite directions. During the times of the kings, plows were made of iron.

The plows were pulled by oxen. Twelve yoke of oxen were in this field. Elisha didn't know it, but he was guiding his last team of oxen.

Elisha here was about to enter the ministry and become a great man of God. In fact, Elisha is called a man of God some 29 times, more than anyone else in the Bible!

We see in God's call of Elisha how that God uses different kinds of men. In fact these two men—Elijah and Elisha, though similar in some ways were very different individuals!

A. We've Seen The Prophet Elijah.

Elijah (whose name means "God Is Jehovah") appeared suddenly on the scene with little to nothing known of his background other than that he was a Tishbite who was of the inhabitants of Gilead! (*1 Kings 17:1*)

Scripture is silent about his past. He just suddenly appeared on the scene to boldly rebuke the godless leader Ahab and to reawaken and restore his nation, the nation of Israel!

So, he is initially presented in Scripture as a fearless, bold, revival preacher who wasn't afraid to rebuke a king and call the nation of Israel back to her God!

We've seen how he was involved in some miracles!
(The widow's provisions sustained; the widow's dead son resurrected; Calling fire down from Heaven; running ahead of Ahab's chariot for 20 miles and beating him to Jezreel!)

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He is presented and also remembered as a mighty intercessor who prayed with faith and intensity!
(1 Kings 17: 20, 22; 18:36-38; James 5:17)

Nevertheless, we have just seen that Elijah was also a man that became both discouraged and depressed! (*1 Kings 19:4*)

He didn't know everything, in fact his fallibility is exposed as we compare *verses 4 and 18* here.

But, even with all that, he was a God-inspired prophet who trusted in the LORD for some great things and showed his trust in the LORD by his obedience to the LORD. When we get to the next book we will see that he had a glorious end to his time on earth!

2 Kings 2:11 – "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." (Type of the Rapture)

Elijah is even divinely honored in the New Testament!

1) Elijah is divinely honored in the life of John the Baptist who came in the Spirit and power of Elijah.

Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 4:5 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:"

2) Elijah was divinely honored by what Jesus said of John the Baptist:

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Matthew 11:14 – “And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.”

Matthew 17:10-12 – “10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? 11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. 12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.”

Elijah and John the Baptist Had Similarities:

1. Their austere manner and dress as well as their familiarity with deserts and solitude.
2. Their strong reproof of prevailing evils.
3. Their calling for repentance.
4. Their exposure to the wrath of a wicked ruler.
5. Their continued influence after death through their disciples.
6. Their fruitful labors in turning folks to God.

2) Elijah was divinely honored by being present at Jesus’ Transfiguration.

Matthew 17:3 – “And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.”

We’ve Seen The Prophet Elijah...

B. We See The Prophet Elisha.

The names of Elijah and Elisha are similar but diverse: (Sometimes I’ll even say one when I mean the other!)

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While Elijah’s name means “*God is Jehovah*” – **suggesting the Law**, Elisha’s name means “*God is Saviour*” and suggests **grace**.

Elisha's name sends a message that salvation is not in man, government, idols, or superstitions. That is something for US to remember during this COVID-19 pandemic!

His message to his generation was: God is the salvation of mankind. That is our message too! Salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Elisha left a peaceful occupation (a plow boy) to become a model spiritual leader!

We will see that Elijah prepared Elisha for his commission and that the two became devoted to each other!

As we go through and view Elisha’s life in our journey through the last part of 1 Kings and the first part of 2 Kings, we will see him as **a man of God...a man of faith...a man of swift action...a man of spiritual power...a man of courage...a man of sympathy...a man of help...a man of blessing...a man of clear understanding...a man of force and might...a man who knew secrets...a man of foresight...a man of unerring counsel...and a man of tears and sorrow!**

C. Let’s Look At The Comparison Between Elijah And Elisha.

Their ministries were very similar in some ways that we will see.

Both of them parted water miraculously,
Both worked in a famine,
Both multiplied the food of a widow,
Both raised a boy from the dead, and
Both brought the judgment of death.

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D. Let's Look At The Contrasts Between Elijah And Elisha.

On the whole, Elijah's work was destructive—he was the prophet of fire. In contrast, we will see that Elisha's task was more merciful and beneficial.

Elisha will spend ten years under the tutelage of Elijah. So Elijah's recorded ministry is about 13 ½ years while Elisha will serve the Lord at least 64 years.

Conclusion

There are many other comparisons and contrasts that could be made and no doubt have been made by many.

But remember this: God used both of these men in great and mighty ways despite their differences!

Well, what we've seen thus far just scratches the surface here. We'll see more about Elisha following God's call here next week, Lord willing!