

1 **God's Call**

1 Kings 19:15-21

2 **Review**

- For the last several months we have been looking at the Divided Kingdom period of Israel and Judah.
- We have spent several weeks focused in on the reign of Ahab in the Northern Kingdom, since Scripture spends more time on this one reign than on any other in 1-2 Kings or 2 Chronicles.

3 **Review**

- Our major players are:
 - Ahab: The unrighteous king of the Northern kingdom, Ahab is more wicked than any of the kings before him because he had made Baal worship the national religion.
 - Jezebel: Ahab's ungodly pagan wife, who helped introduce Baal worship.
 - Elijah: The first of the major prophets of the Divided Kingdom Period

4 **Review**

- In 1 Kings 18, Elijah confronted the false prophets on Mt. Carmel, defeated them, and slaughtered them.
- In 1 Kings 19, Elijah has been suffering severe depression and been on the run of wicked queen Jezebel, who has sworn to kill him.
- Near the end of chapter 19, God deals with Elijah's depression, and then sends him on a new mission.

5 **1 Kings 19:15-16**

- *And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place.*

6 **1 Kings 19:17-18**

- *And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."*

7 **1 Kings 19:19**

- *So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him.*

8 **1) God's call transcends people**

- God calls Elijah to three specific tasks:
 - Anoint Hazael to be king over Syria
 - Anoint Jehu to be king over Israel
 - Anoint Elisha to be Elijah's successor
- However, it is only the third of these tasks that he personally actually carries out. The other two are left to his successor, Elisha.

9 **Orders and Order**

- It is interesting to notice that Elijah immediately goes about obeying God's commands, but he does so in reverse order – he goes first to anoint Elisha as his replacement.

10 **Orders and Order**

- Is this disobedience?
- Scripture does not seem to treat it as such. Since Elisha will receive a "double portion" of Elijah's spirit, Elisha's anointing of these two will really be simply a continuation of Elijah's ministry.
- Note that Jehu in turn is actually anointed by one of Elisha's servants, not by Elisha himself.

11 **Orders and Order**

- To understand why Elijah seems to delay and why Elisha eventually carries out the other two-thirds of God's command, we need to look at the precise timing for the two events that remain on Elijah's to-do list:
 - The anointing of Hazael
 - The anointing of Jehu

12  **Hazael**

- Hazael was to be the king of Syria. He is either the son or second-in-command to Hadadezer (Ben-Hadad in Scripture), the current king of Syria (Aram-Damascus to historians).
 - Hadadezer’s name means “Hadad [Baal] is my help.”
 - Hazael’s name means, “God has seen.”
 - The Aramaeans were responsible for the spread of Aramaic, which eventually became the *lingua franca* for the whole region and the official language of the Persian Empire.

13  **Hazael**

- Hadadezer becomes ill in 2 Kings 8 and sends Hazael to Elisha to ask if he will recover from his illness
- Elisha tells Hazael that the king will recover, but that he will die shortly thereafter and Hazael will be king over Assyria.
- The next day after Hazael’s return, Hazael smothers the king in his bed, thus fulfilling Elisha’s prophecy.

14  **Hazael**

- Note that Hadadezer’s illness and Hazael’s meeting with Elisha took place in God’s precise timing.
- They took place after God had already called Elijah up into heaven.
- So God purposefully assigned Elijah a task that He knew Elijah would not be able to complete within his lifetime.

15  **Jehu**

- We know a little about Jehu before he became king.
- He was a military commander and servant of Ahaziah, then king of Israel and the last of the house of Ahab.
- Jehu was a ferocious man known primarily for the way he drove his chariots – wildly.

16  **Jehu**

- Jehu’s name means “Jehovah is He.”
- Jehu initially had the support of the worshipper’s of Jehovah and would later be responsible for the slaughter of every Baal worshipper remaining in Israel, and the death of two wicked kings and Jezebel herself.

17  **Jehu**

- Eventually, though, Jehu would become corrupt and experience the judgment of God by encouraging the calf worship at Bethel and Dan that had originally been the source of Israel’s stumbling.

18  **A multi-generational vision**

- Once again, the main events of Jehu’s life take place after God has already called Elijah into heaven.
- What we see, then, is that God has given Elijah a calling and a vision that stretch beyond his own lifetime. It is quite literally a “multi-generational” vision.
- Thus, the most important part of Elijah’s call was that he pass the vision on to his successor.

19  **God’s call is not limited by people**

- God can call and use whomever He chooses – and He could accomplish his will with Elisha just as well as with Elijah.
- God will very often give us a vision or a calling that cannot be fully fulfilled in our lifetime, such as with David in the building of the temple.
- Our job is to take the charge that God has entrusted to us and pass it on to the next generation.

20  **2) God’s call transcends occupation**

- Keep in mind that there is a School of the Prophets in Gilead, and that this was likely where God chose Elijah from (Elijah was an inhabitant of Gilead).
- However, despite this fact, the man who God chose to be Elijah’s successor was neither prophet nor priest.

21  **The Valley of Feasting**

- Elisha was an inhabitant of the fairly wealthy valley of Abel-meholah, the "Valley of feasting."
- We know Elisha was from a well-to-do family – it says that he was "plowing" with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him. That is, twenty-four oxen in total, two oxen to a yoke, each yoke pulling a plow.

22 **Elisha**

- Elisha is himself bringing up the rear with the last yoke of oxen, and thus he is overseeing the work of his family's servants.
- The picture we get of Elisha, then, is that before God calls him Elisha is a hard-working, successful, well-to-do young man who has been entrusted with the care of the family (his parents are still alive) estates.

23 **Elijah vs. Elisha**

- Contrast this with Elijah – often we assume the two must be similar since their names are so very nearly the same, but there are some startling contrasts:
- Elijah was a fiery, strangely-dressed mountain man. He was a powerful man and possibly a Nazarite, which would mean he had never had a haircut in his life.
- Elisha is a wealthy farmer who grew up in a valley known for its feasts and celebrations.

24 **God's call is not limited by occupation**

- The point here is that not only can God give a call or a vision that goes beyond one person's lifetime, but he also calls people who would not always be considered to be a natural choice for ministry.

25 **The Apostles**

- Note the Apostles:
 - Andrew – Fisherman
 - Simon Peter – Fisherman
 - James – Fisherman
 - John – Fisherman
 - Phillip – Businessman
 - Nathaniel – Businessman
 - Matthew – Tax collector
 - Thomas – Carpenter and stone mason; Fisherman
 - James Alpheus – Fisherman
 - Judas (not Iscariot) – Fisherman
 - Simon the Zealot – Merchant
 - Judas Iscariot – Fish Dryer

26 **The Apostles**

- Not a single one of Christ's twelve apostles had any sort of religious training or background to prepare them for the ministry
- Note that this is not to discount the value of training or preparation (note Paul) – we just need to keep in mind that it is not the only thing of importance. God's call is not limited to those who have a seminary degree.

27 **Education, calling, and power**

- God does not mean to by any means discount training or preparation. After his calling, Elisha will spend several years as Elijah's servant before he becomes a prophet in his own right.
- The point is that calling & power are an important prerequisite to training and preparation.
- Calling without training is ineffective, but training without calling is pointless.

28 **3) God's call transcends earthly affection**

- When Elijah calls Elisha, Elisha immediately obeys, but asks if he may go and say goodbye to his parents first.
- Elijah's response seems strange on the outset:
- *And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and*

then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" (1Ki 19:20)

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29  **3) God's call transcends earthly affection**

- Initially this response seems a little odd until we understand what Elijah is saying.
- He is saying in effect, "Go ahead – but remember that I'm not the one who has done this to you. God is the one who is calling you."

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30  **God's Call, not Elijah's**

- If the call had come from Elijah himself – Elijah, who was not very popular in Israel at the moment and who everybody knew Jezebel wanted to kill – Elisha would have likely come to his senses, or his parents might have talked him out of it.

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31  **God's Call, not Elijah's**

- So Elijah's reminder that this call comes not just from him but from God serves as a reminder to us:
 - The call of God on our life to service must transcend every consideration of our own plans, desires, or preferences.
 - This may often mean subjecting ourselves to hardships or giving up relationships when we would rather not.

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32  **What Elisha loved more**

- *And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him. (1Ki 19:21)*

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33  **What Elisha loved more**

- By slaughtering and boiling his yoke of oxen, Elisha is symbolically burning his ships behind him.
- There is no turning back. He has forever renounced his old life and career, and said goodbye to his old relationships – from this point onward he will be forever given over to God's service.

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34  **What do you love more?**

- Note that it is only at this point that Elisha's ministry starts.
- What do you love more?
 - Are you experiencing the call of God on your life right now?
 - Are you passing His calling on to those who come after you?
 - Are you still clinging to the relationships or activities that are holding you back from training and service?

35  **What happens when we don't heed God's call?**

- This week we have seen a positive example of an individual who heeded God's call and was willing to give up everything to prepare himself for the ministry.
- Next week we will look at an individual who was not willing to faithfully carry out God's calling, even when it would have cost him nothing.