

## Eliyahu ~ Part 13

In my last post, **Eliyahu Creator's Message of Power** in 1 Kings 19:9-14. In this post, **Eliyahu** hears **The Lord's Message of Hope** in 1 Kings 19:15-21.

### The Lord Gives Eliyahu His Marching Orders

<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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."

### The Call of Elisha

<sup>19</sup> So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yokes of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Eliyahu passed by him and cast his cloak upon him. <sup>20</sup> And he left the oxen and ran after Eliyahu 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?" <sup>21</sup> 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 Eliyahu and assisted him. ~ 1 Kings 19:15-21 (ESV)

**Eliyahu** had nothing new to say to the Lord, but the Lord had a new message of hope for His frustrated servant. The Lord had many reasons for rejecting His servant and leaving him to die in the cave, but He didn't take that approach.

First, the Lord told **Eliyahu** to return to the place of duty. When we're out of the Lord's will, we have to retrace our steps and make a new beginning (Genesis 13:3; 35:1-3). The honest answer to the question "**What are you doing here, Eliyahu?**" (verse 9) Was "*Nothing! I'm having a personal pity party!*" But **Eliyahu** was called to serve, and there were tasks to perform.

When **Yoshua** was brokenhearted because of Israel's defeat at Ai, he spent a day on his face before God; but God's answer was, "**Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?**" ~ Joshua 7:10. When **Sh'mu'el** mourned over the failure of Saul, God rebuked him. "**Adonai said to Sh'mu'el, 'How much longer are you going to go on grieving for Sha'ul, now that I have rejected him as king over Isra'el? Fill your horn with oil, and set out; I will send you to Yishai the Beit-Lachmi because I have chosen myself a king from among his sons.'**" ~ 1 Samuel 16:1. **Sh'mu'el** went and anointed David to be the next king.

*No matter how much or how often His servants fail Him, God is never at a loss to know what to do.* Our job is to obey His Word and get up and do it!

**Eliyahu's** first responsibility was to anoint **Hazael** to be king of Syria. This was a Gentile nation, but it was still the Lord who chose the leaders. Then he was to anoint **Jehu** to be king of Israel, for even though the nation had divided, Israel was still under the divine covenant and was responsible to the Lord. His third task was to anoint **Elisha** to be his successor. **Eliyahu** had complained because the past generation had failed and the present age hadn't done any better (v. 4). Now God called him to help equip the future generation by anointing two kings and a prophet. This is the **Tanach** version of 2 Timothy 2:2.

The people the Lord named weren't especially significant in the social structure of that day. **Hazael** was a servant to King Bed-hadad, **Jehu** was a captain of the army, and **Elisha** was a farmer. But by the time **Elisha**

and **Jehu** completed their work, **Ba'al** worship was almost wiped out in Israel (2 Kings 10:18-31). No one generation can do everything, but each generation must see to it that people in the next generation are called and trained and that the tools are made available for them to continue the work of the Lord. God was calling **Eliyahu** to stop weeping over the past and running away from the present. It was time for him to start preparing others for the future. Could that be an early example of God's plan for discipleship? When God is in command, there is always hope.

But the Lord did more than send His servant out to recruit new workers. He also assured him that his work and their work would not be in vain. God would use the swords of **Hazael** and **Jehu**, and the words and works of **Elisha**, to accomplish His purposes in the land. Even more, He assured **Eliyahu** that his ministry hadn't been a failure, for there were still 7,000 people in the land who were faithful to **Adonai**. The Lord didn't command **Eliyahu** to gather all 7,000 faithful people together in a mass meeting and preach a sermon. There's certainly a place for sermons and large meetings, but we must never underestimate the importance of working with individuals. **Yeshua** spoke to huge crowds, but He always had time for individuals and their needs.

Without delay, **Eliyahu** retraced his steps and returned to the place of duty. It was approximately 150 miles from **Sinai** to **Abel-meholah** where he would find **Elisha** plowing a field. **Elisha's** name means "*God has salvation*." The fact that **Elisha** was using twelve yoke of oxen—twenty-four expensive animals—indicates that his family was probably better off financially than most Israeli. **Eliyahu** didn't say a word to the young man but merely cast his mantle (outer garment) over him to indicate that the Lord had called him to serve the prophet and then be his successor. **Elisha** and his family were part of that "*remnant of grace*" that God had set apart for Himself. No matter how bleak the days may seem, God has His people and knows when to call them.

As you review the chapter, you can see the mistakes that **Eliyahu** made and how the Lord overruled them and accomplished His will. **Eliyahu** walked by sight and not by faith, yet the Lord sustained him. He looked at himself and his failures instead of at God's greatness and power. He was more concerned about doing more than his ancestors had done in the past instead of calling and preparing new servants for the future. He isolated himself from God's people and thereby lost the strength and encouragement of their fellowship and prayers. But let's not be too hard on **Eliyahu**, for he did have a sensitive ear to the still, small voice of the Lord, and he did obey what God told him to do. The Lord rebuked him gently and brought him out of his cave and back into active service. Let's keep these things in mind and recall them the next time we're under our broom tree or in our cave!

Finally, let's be among those who look to the future and seek to enlist others to serve the Lord. To glamorize or criticize the past accomplishes little; what's important is that we do our job in the present and disciple others to continue it after we're gone. God buried His workers, but His work goes right on.

In my next post, we continue to explore the Biblical story of **Eliyahu**. In this passage, we will skip chapter 20 and the first half of chapter 21 before we pick back up with **Eliyahu** where he delivers **God's Sentence to Ach'av** in **1 Kings 21:17-29**. To keep the flow of the story going, I will briefly summarize what was happening in **1 Kings 20:1 to 21:16**.