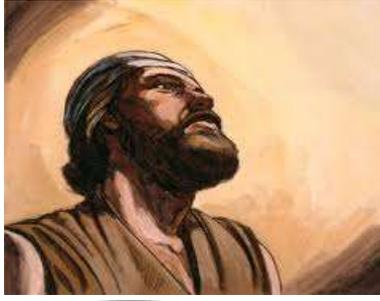


STUDY THREE



Elijah

YOU HAVE TURNED MY MOURNING INTO DANCING FOR JOY!

What a turn-about for Elijah!

- Abandoned by his servant (19v3) and now he can't get rid of him (19v19-21; 2 Kngs 2v2,4,6)! In every case, it is not that Elijah is trying to make Elisha leave but as with Jesus' challenging call to 'take up your cross and follow Me', Elisha has to *choose* freely to follow Elijah and to *keep on* following him. Anything that is simply based on, 'Elijah told me to...' is not a call and will not stand the test. And like those fishermen, Elisha leaves *everything* behind – *forever* (19v21).
- He feels there are no prophets left (19v10,14) and now there are schools of them, active and out in the open (2 Kngs 2v3,5)!
- He feels a failure and full of fear (19v3-4,14) and now his ministry will continue and he has a renewed God-given purpose for his life (19v15-18).
- He wants to die (19v4) and now he is striding towards Heaven (2 Kngs 2v1,9; cf Phil.1v21-23)!

ANOTHER MOSES: ELIJAH

- Fleeing in fear for his life (19v1-3,14), just as Moses did (Ex.2v15).
- He meets with God at Mount Horeb (19v8), just as Moses did (Ex.3v1).
- He is (re)commissioned and sent back (19v15-17), just as Moses was (Ex.3v7-10).
- He will have a helper (19v16) just as Moses had (Aaron Ex.4v14-16; Joshua Num.11v28).
- He meets with God at a cave (19v9) just as Moses did (Ex.33v22).
- He cannot look at God (19v13), as nor could Moses (Ex.33v20-22).
- The Jordan river marks the boundary and completion of his ministry (2 Kngs 2v8-12), as it did for Moses (Deut.3v23-27; 34v1-4).
- A cloak parts the Jordan (2 Kngs 2v8) and a staff parts the Red Sea (Ex.14v16,21).
- He has no known burial place (2 Kngs 2v11-12), as neither did Moses (Deut.34v5-6).

ANOTHER JOSHUA: ELISHA

- Both the name Elisha and the name Joshua, mean 'God is salvation' / 'God saves'.
- At the River Jordan his ministry and authority is publicly demonstrated and affirmed (2 Kngs 2v15), as was that of Joshua (Josh.3v7ff).
- The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha (2 Kngs 2v9,15) as did the spirit of Moses upon Joshua (Num.11v16-17,25; 27v18-23; Deut. 34v9). The 'double portion' is the right of the first-born i.e. the one who inherits most (Deut.21v17).
- The Jordan parts before him (2 Kngs 2v13-14), as it did for Joshua (Josh.3v14-17), thus inaugurating their ministries.

ELIJAH'S FALL – *Elijah was afraid and ran for his life...*

'I've had enough...I'm not better...I've been very zealous for the Lord...I'm the only one left...they're trying to kill me.'

- Did Elijah's fall have to happen?
- Did it have to happen like that?

Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.' (Lk.22v31-32)

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son... (Rom.8v28-29).

- Elijah's fear-filled and aimless journey (19v1-5), becomes a purposeful journey, sustained, empowered and directed by God (19v5-8).
- The fear and the fall become the occasion for him to pour out his heart to the Lord but also to hear God's voice once again (19v9ff).
- The fear and the fall become the occasion for a profound encounter with God (19v11f).
- The fear and the fall become the occasion for a deeper call and commissioning than before (19v15-16).
- The fear and the fall become the occasion for another to be called into ministry (19v16,19-21).

For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jer.29v11-13).

BUT VERY TRULY *I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away...(Jn.16v7).*

It is clear why Moses' ministry came to an end. The people were about to cross the Jordan and Moses (and we) know that this is not for him. Under God, he got the people of God out of Egypt but it will be Joshua, under God, who will bring them into the Promised Land.

However, there is no such indication with Elijah as to why this is God's time and his time (literally) to pass the mantle on to another. He had certainly been an Inspirer and Encourager to the people and to the prophets – don't compromise, don't hide, stand up and be counted!: he had called Elisha out of one life and into another (even as Jesus had called the disciples) and had given him the opportunity to grow into that new life: and he had been a Teacher and Role model for him. And of course this is the model for every generation where believers are discipled, equipped and trained so that they in turn may disciple, equip and train others, even as it is now Elisha's call to guard and to guide the new generation of the prophets. (e.g. Ex.18v1,13-26; 2 Tim.2v1-2).

Even as Elijah is called away into something new, so it is now the time for Elisha and for the prophets and for the people of God to continue the work of God. The only thing that matters is contained in the words of the prophets of Jericho after Elijah was taken up into Heaven. *'The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha.'* (2 Kngs 2v15). The work of God will go on!

AND FOR US?

'Where now is the Lord God of Elijah? He is waiting for Elijah to call upon him'.

(James Gilmour: Missionary to Mongolia 1843-1891)