

Portraits of a Prophet 10

Obedience in the Second Half

11.19.23

Introduction: Today's stories of Elijah and Elisha are some of the most famous in Scripture.

A. If this is the first time you've ever heard these stories, I'm excited for you.

1. I've heard many sermons, and read these stories many times and they are more exciting each time I read them.

2. An easy way to remember who is who, remember that "J" comes before "S," so Elijah came first, then Elisha.

3. For most of my life reading these passages, I can see myself in the younger Elisha, being called into ministry.

a. I get excited by the picture of a mantle, which refers to a wide, loose-fitting robe or outer garment (UBS).

1. This mantle of Elijah's not only gave him cover and protection from the physical elements.

2. But the mantle became the symbol of Elijah's prophetic authority and all that he had been through.

3. The mantle was a constant and present reminder of who God was, what God had done, and what God had asked his prophet to do.

b. As I have read and preached through these portraits of Elijah's life, I have been encouraged and challenged.

1. We see God's intensity in dealing with sin.

2. We see God's grace and compassion for a mighty but weary prophet.
3. We recognize that we all enter into seasons where we need Divine Peace, Provision, and Presence.
4. Today, we paint one last portrait: A portrait of reluctant obedience.

Background to the Text: One Last Portrait of Elijah.

A. After 1 Kings 19, Elijah recedes into the background for roughly five years.

1. During this time, God used a few other prophets.
2. These prophets have been trained and schooled to hear God's voice, and God uses them to announce judgment upon kings, just like Elijah had done before.

B. Elijah doesn't reappear until 2 Kings 1.

1. We won't read this story, but Elijah announces to a new king, Ahaziah, that he will die of his injuries from a fall because he did not seek the Lord.
2. Ahaziah doesn't like this, so he sends a few companies of soldiers to arrest Elijah.
3. Elijah calls down fire from heaven and kills them.
4. In the New Testament, when James and John want to call down fire from heaven, this is probably the story they had in mind.
 - a. Of course, Jesus tells them no.
 - b. **Just because there is biblical precedent, that does not mean there is biblical permission.**

C. For our message today, I want to point us to two passages that detail Elijah's second half.

1. We will discuss the results of Elijah's encounter with God.

2. We will read of the appointment of Elijah's successor.
3. The last we see of Elijah is his "rapture."
4. Today, I want to speak to you concerning Anointing, Encounter, and Obedience.

D. I've wrestled with this ALL week.

1. I don't know why I'm preaching this today like I am.
2. My preparation included an intense "heaviness."
3. And what generally are passages of Scripture worthy of shouting and excitement, I feel a weight in my Spirit that I cannot explain.

TEXT

1 Kings 19:19–21 (CSB)

ELISHA'S APPOINTMENT AS ELIJAH'S SUCCESSOR

¹⁹Elijah left there and found Elisha son of Shaphat as he was plowing. Twelve teams of oxen were in front of him, and he was with the twelfth team. Elijah walked by him and threw his mantle over him. ²⁰Elisha left the oxen, ran to follow Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow you."

"Go on back," he replied, "for what have I done to you?"

²¹So he turned back from following him, took the team of oxen, and slaughtered them. With the oxen's wooden yoke and plow, he cooked the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he left, followed Elijah, and served him.

2 Kings 2:1–14 (CSB)

ELIJAH IN THE WHIRLWIND

2 The time had come for the LORD to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal, ²and Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD is sending me on to Bethel."

But Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

³Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?"

He said, "Yes, I know. Be quiet."

⁴Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; the LORD is sending me to Jericho."

But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho.

⁵Then the sons of the prophets who were in Jericho came up to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?"

He said, "Yes, I know. Be quiet."

⁶Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD is sending me to the Jordan."

But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.

⁷Fifty men from the sons of the prophets came and stood observing them at a distance while the two of them stood by the Jordan. ⁸Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water, which parted to the right and left. Then the two of them crossed over on dry ground. ⁹When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken from you."

So Elisha answered, "Please, let me inherit two shares (a double portion) of your spirit."

¹⁰Elijah replied, "You have asked for something difficult. If you see me being taken from you, you will have it. If not, you won't."

¹¹As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire with horses of fire suddenly appeared and separated the two of them. Then Elijah went up into heaven in the whirlwind. ¹²As Elisha watched, he kept crying out, "My father, my father, the chariots and horsemen of Israel!"

ELISHA SUCCEEDS ELIJAH

When he could see him no longer, he took hold of his own clothes, tore them in two, ¹³picked up the mantle that had fallen off Elijah, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴He took the mantle Elijah had dropped, and he struck the water. "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" he asked. He struck the water himself, and it parted to the right and the left, and Elisha crossed over.

1. At the Cave, Elijah was told to do THREE things:

1 Kings 19:15–16 (CSB)

¹⁵Then the LORD said to him, “Go and return by the way you came to the Wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive, you are to anoint Hazael as king over Aram. ¹⁶You are to anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel and Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah as prophet in your place.

A. Elijah’s instructions were to go and:

1. Anoint Hazael as king of Aram (an enemy)
2. Anoint Jehu king over Israel (a violent man)
3. Anoint Elisha prophet over Israel (a farmer)

B. Of the three, Elijah was only obedient to the third.

1. We have no explanation.

- a. Elijah does not return the way he came.
- b. Elijah does not anoint Hazael first or at all.

2. The language of God’s command is for Elijah to anoint, to smear with oil, these three men for God’s selected purposes.

- a. Anointing with oil was the primary way to indicate the Lord’s appointment to a role.
- b. But Elijah doesn’t anoint anyone, including his successor, Elisha.

C. It was between 5-10 years before Hazael and Jehu were anointed as kings.

1. And for FIVE years, we do not see Elijah having any further ministry in Israel.

- a. He is still the primary prophet.
- b. He is still mighty, still called, and still loved by God.

c. But whatever he did for five years is not recorded in Scripture.

2. From 1 Kings 19 to 2 Kings 1 is FIVE years.

3. I want to emphasize what I said at the beginning of the series:

a. The men and women of Scripture are NOT our biblical heroes.

b. They are not the patterns for our faith.

c. Jesus is the only perfect, sinless example.

d. Today, I certainly do not stand in a position to judge Elijah, for he was a mighty man of God.

e. However, the last images we have of this mighty man of God are discouraging.

2. A reluctant obedience by a mature prophet.

A. Elijah finds Elisha and calls him to walk with him as successor and servant.

1. Elisha is called to replace Elijah.

2. But the calling to succession begins with the calling to serve.

B. Elijah doesn't seem excited to call Elisha to follow him.

1. Elijah seems reluctant or half-hearted in anointing Elisha. (No oil)

2. He simply throws his mantle over Elisha's shoulder and tells him to follow.

a. But Elisha doesn't hold on to the mantle.

b. It isn't his, yet, but a promise of future ministry.

C. Years later, when it is time for Elijah to be taken to heaven, Elijah again shows reluctance for Elisha to come along.

1. Three times, Elijah tells Elisha to stay back and not to keep following.
2. Three times, Elisha says he will remain with Elijah till the end.
3. Scripture doesn't explain Elijah's hesitation, but it seems to me that Elijah was never the same after his episode with Jezebel.
4. The man who willingly pronounced the coming drought, accepted Divine provision from ravens and widows, and called fire down from heaven, is now very reluctant to do all that God has asked him to do.

3. Elijah's reluctance is contrasted with Elisha.

A. As Elijah calls Elisha to follow, Elisha is ready and willing.

1. Elisha sacrificed much to follow the call.
2. Obviously, he is wealthy enough to have 12 teams of oxen and servants to lead 11 of them.
3. His family-owned land was large enough to need 12 teams of oxen.

B. Elisha was walking away from a season of harvest.

1. This realization came to me Friday:
2. What was Elisha doing?
 - a. He was plowing.
 - b. Plowing anticipates a harvest.
 - c. What have they not had in the past three years due to drought and famine? A HARVEST.
3. Now that things have turned the corner, God sends a prophet to call him out of the plowing field and into the ministry field.

C. Elisha's excitement and willingness are a sharp contrast to the older prophet.

1. Elisha says goodbye to his parents.
2. Then, he kills his oxen, cooks them over his farm implements, and feasts with the servants.
3. There is nothing to come back to for Elisha.
4. He is 100% committed to God through his service to Elijah.

4. Elijah leaves in glory.

A. God honors Elijah by “Rapturing” him with a physical and visible taking away.

1. The only other person who did not die in Scripture is Enoch, way back in Genesis.
2. Elisha picks up the “mantle” of succession
3. Elisha leaves, in the power of the Lord, and immediately performs multiple miracles.
4. **However, I cannot shake off this newly acquired realization: Elijah didn't finish his work.**

B. Yes, it worked out in the end.

1. Yes, Elijah is still the hero of the story, so to speak.
2. God still loved him and honored him, and Elijah was the prophetic father of John the Baptist, who came in the spirit of Elijah.
3. There is a possibility that in the last days, one of the two witnesses spoken of in Revelation is Elijah.

C. There is no question that Elijah went to heaven and was a faithful man of God.

1. Yet, Elijah didn't obey the word of the Lord to anoint Hazael and Jehu.
2. Elisha had to orchestrate this in 2 Kings 8-9.

D. We see a comparison to another great man of God, Moses.

1. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because he was not obedient.
2. It was his successor, Joshua, who led Israel across the Jordan.
3. And it was Joshua who, at Gilgal, had to lead the people into obedience by circumcising the wilderness generation.

5. Obedience and Anointing in the Second-Half.

A. If we ask a five-year-old to lie down on the floor and get back up, there are no problems, hesitations, hindrances, or aches or pains.

1. At 35, it is still very doable, but there might be a few more grunts.
2. At 50,60,70, what used to be easy is now more difficult, complicated, and painful.

B. A posture of obedience doesn't get easier with age.

1. The need for a posture of obedience doesn't diminish with age.
2. A posture of obedience is the difference between finishing and finishing well.
3. Sometimes, the older and more established we are, the HARDER obedience can seem.
4. Are you still willing, as a senior saint, to go and do what you don't want to do?
 - a. Elijah doesn't want to anoint Hazael king, for he is an enemy.
 - b. Jehu was a very violent man
 - c. But are you willing to still be obedient in the second half of life?

C. Future generations need the examples of obedience and anointing of the previous generations.

1. Elisha's admiration of Elijah was so great that he asked for a double portion of the Spirit that was on Elijah.
2. Elisha DOES perform twice the miracles that Elijah does.
3. Elisha isn't asking to outdo his spiritual father; he is asking for the firstborn son's portion of Elijah's anointing and spirit.
 - a. Elisha wants to walk in the power and authority of his spiritual father.
 - b. Elisha is willing to pick up the mantle of Elijah and help lead and bring direction to Israel.
 - c. Father, give me a double portion of your spirit!
4. Even though it feels like I'm being harsh on Elijah, the truth of the matter is that **Elijah had something worth wanting.**
 - a. Does the upcoming generations want what we have?
 - b. Are they hoping to receive this heritage we are creating?
 - c. Do they desire to have the spiritual power and authority of their parents?

D. **Elijah's mantle was a physical symbol of a spiritual inheritance.**

1. The mantle was the symbol of all that was being passed down.
 - a. It was the garment that sheltered Elijah in the Wadi.
 - b. It was the garment that Elijah wrapped himself in while in prayer and supplication.
 - c. The mantle may still have been wet from striking the Jordan.
2. Elisha, too, prayed in it, sweat in it, and cried in it, and it has been suggested that this mantle was preserved somehow and was the same mantle that John the Baptist wore several hundred years later.

- a. It may seem weird or kind of gross to have a garment like this.
- b. Yet, if I brought you a game-used Patrick Mahomes jersey, you would make that the centerpiece of your house.
- c. Do we value the Lord's anointing and our spiritual heritage?

Apply: It's time to Cross the Jordan.

A. I have the great privilege of pastoring a multi-generational church.

1. For some of us, God is calling us to new things, new people, and new places.

a. It is as though we are like Elisha, crossing the Jordan for the first time.

b. Will the God of Elijah meet us here too?

2. Others are more like Elijah, full of life and ministry experience, yet God isn't done with you yet.

a. Maybe God is clarifying your call: will you be obedient?

b. Maybe God is asking you to prepare the next generation to continue in the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit?

B. For the past several weeks, I have felt that we are on the precipice, a place of decision.

1. This morning, I want to encourage all of us to say YES to Jesus.

2. To Go, Say, Be, Do, and Become all that He is calling us to.

3. For the young, may you experience the joy of being led by the Holy Spirit.

a. May the mantle that you receive drip with the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of the saints.

b. May God use you to do TWICE what previous generations have done.

c. May you find joy in leaving behind the good so that you may embrace the great and marvelous plans God has for you!

4. To the senior saints, may you remain faithful.

a. May retirement not be a time of ceasing but a season of greater harvest.

b. May you willingly share the mantle that God had entrusted to you so many years ago!

c. May these years be marked with your obedience and God's anointing.