

Promised Land 2 Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Eight: The Ministries of Elijah and Elisha - 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 13

Read 1 Kings 17.

- 1) According to the information in Deuteronomy 18:17-22, 1 Samuel 3:19-20, and 2 Chronicles 24:19, how could you define a prophet? **One whose words are put into their mouth by the Lord. As such, all their words will be proved true (in time). A prophet is God's spokesman. Often, God used them to call His people to repentance.**
- 2) Record:
 - a) information about the spiritual climate in Israel at the time when Elijah ministered (recall the previous lesson on Ahab), including the name of Israel's state religion (see 1 Kings 16:29-34, 18:3-4, and 21:25-26) **King Ahab was the son of Omri, who had been more evil than any of Israel's previous kings. Ahab instituted Baalism as Israel's state religion. He married Jezebel, a princess of Phoenicia (the northwestern neighbor of Israel, known for their wealth, extreme immorality, and vile worship practices). According to the Greek writer Menander, Jezebel's father Ethbaal (whose name means "I am with Baal") was not only king of the Sidonians (the capital city of Phoenicia) but was also high priest of Baal and murdered his way to the throne by assassinating his brothers. Jezebel made a mission of killing the Lord's prophets. As a result, many of them were in hiding.**
 - b) ways the Lord provided for Elijah **God made two miraculous physical provisions for Elijah's sustenance. At the Kerith Ravine, God sent a raven to feed him bread and meat in the morning and evening. When the brook dried up, the Lord provided for Elijah through a foreign widow (perhaps Ahab was too close to discovering Elijah, so God sent him out of the country). Luke 4:23-28 seems to indicate that either God sent Elijah to her out of concern for this foreign widow or that Elijah was sent to her because no women of faith could be found within Israel. Her nearly depleted provisions were miraculously sustained throughout the famine and, through Elijah's prayers, the Lord brought her dead son back to life.**
 - c) Elijah's circumstances (would you say that they were pleasant?) **God provided for Elijah in miraculous ways, surely a marvel to Elijah! From a temporal point of view, his circumstances were desperate: he was in hiding, running for his life.**
- 3) Considering your answers, read Matthew 16:24-25, John 10:10b and John 16:33. What should the Christian expect his or her life to be like? **Jesus told His disciples that they must deny themselves and take up their cross to follow Him. He also told them to expect trouble in life. Interestingly, in John 10:10b, an apparent contradiction exists: He says He came to give us "life to the full." The Christian should expect to face trouble and persecution in this life (as Elijah did) but, at the same time, have such fullness of inner life that they experience unspeakable joy, contentment, and hope. This "contradiction" is a mystery to the non-believer, but not to those who follow Christ.**

Read 1 Kings 18-19.

- 4) Find a verse or two that:
 - a) describes Jezebel's relationship to the prophets of the Lord and the prophets of Baal **1 Kings 18:4 says she was killing off the Lord's prophets, while 18:19 says 450 prophets of Baal and another 400 of Asherah ate "at her table."**
 - b) identifies Elijah's purpose in setting up the confrontation with the priests of Baal **1 Kings 18:21 says Elijah wanted the people to choose between Yahweh and Baal, not to "waver between two opinions." 1 Kings 18:36-37 says Elijah prayed that God would answer, so that all Israel would know that He is God and that He was turning their hearts back to Him.**

- c) speaks of the Lord's purposes in both chapters 1 Kings 18:1 says the Lord planned to send rain. Apparently, Elijah's confrontation with the Israelites and the prophets of Baal was a precursor, so that when the rain came, Israel would "know He is God" (18:36). 18:37 also says God was turning the people's hearts back to Him. 19:17 says God planned to put to the sword all involved in killing the Lord's prophets and seeking to kill Elijah.
 - d) gives Jezebel's intentions concerning Elijah following the confrontation 19:2 says Jezebel told Elijah she would have him killed by the next day.
 - e) speaks of Elijah's physical state 18:46 says that he ran at superhuman speed in the power of the Lord. 19:5 shows Elijah's exhaustion. 19:8 tells that he traveled 40 days and nights, strengthened by food from heaven.
 - f) speaks of Elijah's emotional state 18:27 says Elijah taunted the priests of Baal (he sounded almost humored by their frantic behavior). 19:4 suggests that Elijah was depressed; he prayed that he might die. 18:22, 19:10 and 14 indicate that Elijah felt completely alone.
 - g) gives Elijah's understanding about how many followers of the Lord remained In 18:22, Elijah said, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left" (also 19:10 and 14).
- 5) Compare God's use of fearsome elements to indicate His power and presence to the Israelites in Exodus 19:9, 16-19; 20:18-19 to the demonstration of His power and presence in 1 Kings 19:11-13. No explanation about why Elijah did not experience God in the power of the elements, but rather, in the gentle whisper is given. Can you suggest a possible reason? God displayed the elements as part of His self-revelation to the Israelites (a theophany) in Exodus 16:17-19. His revelation to Elijah, which, interestingly, occurred on the same mountain (Exodus 33:18-23 [Horeb is also known as Sinai]) bears some similarities. Many suggestions have been made about the "still small voice" that followed the display of the elements. One thought is that the manner in which God revealed Himself reflected His answer to Elijah's physical and emotional state: although He had used Elijah in bold ways in the past, He was now commissioning him with a gentler role (that of training Elisha). Whether or not the elements and the quiet voice were intended to make this prophetic statement, God's quiet voice certainly ministered to the exhausted and discouraged servant's need for peace and comfort. More than anything, Elijah needed God's word. While some seek the miraculous, God's word is what gives us guidance, assurance, and sustenance.
- 6) 1 Kings 19:21 says Elisha became Elijah's attendant. Considering what you read in chapter 19, how was this part of God's answer to Elijah's depression? Twice, Elijah stated twice that he believed he was the only prophet of the Lord remaining (19:10, 14). The Lord answered Elijah's concerns and depression through Elisha. Elisha would put to the sword any of Elijah's enemies who escaped the swords of Hazael and Jehu (19:17) and he provided Elijah with friendship and fellowship.
- 7) Read James 5:17-18.
- a) What did you learn about Elijah in 1 Kings 19 that supports the idea that he was "just like us"? According to 1 Kings 19, he experienced physical and emotional ups and downs, just like anyone.
 - b) What will you ask God to accomplish through you today, in spite of your own frailty and vulnerability? **Personal sharing**

Read 2 Kings 1:1-2:18 and 2 Chronicles 21:1-15.

- 8) According to the closing verses of 1 Kings and the passages above, with which kings, besides Ahab, did Elijah have influence? Elijah also had influence in Israel with Ahaziah, son of Ahab and possibly Joram (also known as Jehoram), son of Ahab. In Judah, Elijah had influence with Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat (he wrote a letter to him).
- 9) What strikes you as most interesting about the events of Elijah's departure in 2 Kings 2:1-18? **Personal opinions**

- 10) Only Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah are recorded in the Bible as having gone to heaven without experiencing death.
- According to Matthew 17:1-8, when did Elijah reappear on earth? **Elijah and Moses met Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration during Christ's earthly ministry. Peter, James, and John witnessed the remarkable event. In a less literal sense, Elijah also reappeared in the ministry of John the Baptist (John 17:9-13).**
 - Read Jesus' words in Matthew 22:32 and Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:8 and Titus 1:2. Are you confident that believers who have died are alive today in heaven? Are you confident that *you* will one day be at home with the Lord? If so, which brother or sister in Christ do you need to love more deeply, knowing that you will live with one another throughout eternity (see 1 Peter 4:7-8)?
Personal sharing

Read questions 11-15, then skim 2 Kings 2:19-8:15, 9:1-3, and 13:14-21. You may choose to cover this reading in two sittings, as reflected by the division after question 13.

- 11) Make a list of the kinds of people to whom the Lord used Elisha to minister. **Elisha ministered a very broad spectrum of people, including the men of Jericho (2:19), the kings of Judah and Israel (while they were at war against Moab [2 Kings 3]), the wife of one of the prophets (4:1-7), a wealthy Shunammite woman and her son (4:8-36), the "company of prophets" (4:38-41 and 6:1-7), the "people" (possibly, another reference to the company of prophets [4:42]), Naaman, the commander of the army of Aram, Israel's enemy (2 Kings 5), the king of Israel (Elisha served as an ongoing military informant [6:8-10]), his own servant (6:15-17), his enemies (8:7-13), and the future king of Israel (9:1-3).**
- 12) Compare 2 Kings 5:1, 14-15 with Jesus' words in Luke 4:24-27. What point did Jesus make and what do you learn from these passages about God's interest in people living outside Israel? **Commenting on the Israelites' history of lacking faith, Jesus said that a prophet has no honor in his hometown, comparing it to the time of Elijah and Elisha (a time when the Israelites had rejected God's word), in which foreigners, like Naaman and the widow of Zarephath, welcomed the word of God. John 3:16 says that God loves the world; He chose Israel to be a light to the nations. When God's people fail to represent Him, He uses other methods to reach the people of the world.**
- 13) Elisha's servant's eyes were opened and he saw that the invisible forces of God were far superior to the visible enemy that surrounded him. After reading the story in 2 Kings 6:8-23, who will you ask the Lord to give this same confidence (those who are for them are more than those who are against them)? If you need to ask this for yourself, will you share the threat you feel with your discussion group so they can also pray for you? **Personal sharing**

Continue skimming 2 Kings 2:19-8:15, 9:1-3, and 13:14-21, keeping the questions below in mind.

- 14) Record what you learn about Elisha's personal qualities in these chapters. **Elisha was concerned about others (2:19-21; 4:14), especially the company of prophets and their families (4:1-2; 4:40-41; 4:42; 6:1-6; 6:16-17); was bald or balding (2:23); had a fiery temper at times (2:24; 13:19); declined personal benefit from his ministry (5:16); was a man of great faith (6:15-17); was anxious to help Israel (6:10, 8:12, 13:19); and was a man of great power (13:21).**
- 15) Reread 1 Kings 19:15-16.
- According to the passages listed above, which of Elijah's God-given assignments were passed on to Elisha? **2 Kings 9:1-3 records that it was Elisha who sent a prophet to anoint Jehu king over Israel, even though the Lord had given this assignment to Elijah in 1 Kings 19. The Lord also told Elijah to anoint Hazael king of Aram. 2 Kings 8:7-15 tells of Elisha's encounter with Hazael, which may have constituted the anointing.**
 - Who are you currently training to eventually take over the work the Lord has given you? Do you need to also begin training some other individuals? **Personal sharing**